

Dear friends,

Twenty years ago, on the feast of St. Peter in Canterbury Cathedral, Archbishop Rowan Williams ordained me priest. To celebrate that occasion, on this St. Peter's day, I'd like to involve the whole RMC in hosting a celebratory variety evening that will showcase the local talent we have in our churches on **Wednesday the 28th June** in the evening (the actual date in 2003) followed by a catered party in the Peter hall afterwards and on Sunday 2nd (St. Peter's day this year) I've invited the Archdeacon back to St. Peter's to preach (he really enjoyed himself last time), but if he can't make it you'll just have to put up with me again! We normally have a BBQ after the patronal festival of course but this year the day clashes with the Music festival so we'll need to have it a little later. The income generated and the profile-raising nature of the music festival for St. Peter's is too important to mess with! Let's let our hair down and rejoice in what we have and celebrate all the green shoots that are emerging across the RMC on the 28th June.

In that same vein we also want to stage our annual vicarage Garden party on the **15th July** this year and we are also planning to re-start our very popular dinner clubs at the East Devon Golf club. We thought holding two a year would be appropriate – so we are going for **the 20th April and the 14th September**. More details of those events nearer the time. So, we have plenty of Jollies planned. Let's now concentrate on other matters. Those on the three PCCs in the RMC are reminded that on Tuesday we have our joint PCC meeting in the Peter Hall at 19.00 and this is what is happening this coming Sunday.

Sunday 5th February – 3 before Lent – Proper 1

Reverend Colin Randall will be presiding at both services at St. Peter's, I will be presiding at All Saints East Budleigh at 9.30am and at St. Michael's Otterton John Archibald will preside at the 11am service.

Note: The church of England differs slightly from the revised common lectionary in the way it designates these Sundays so while we say "3 before Lent" in our lectionaries you may find them under "Epiphany 5" or (date between 3rd and 9th February).

Isaiah 58: 1-9. The prophets' rants against an almost armour-plated complacency in the Jewish people which resists all calls to reform or examine what their real priorities are, fill the pages of the Old Testament. The

people do fast, a sign of humility and dependence on God, and wonder why God does not respond. It is because of the usual disconnect between religious observance and their way of life. Correct religious observance needs to go hand in hand with transformation of character and social justice.

1 Corinthians 2: 1-12 (13-16). Whatever methods Paul may have used to persuade people that the gospel is good news he says it is, he is clear that in the end it is not lofty wisdom or clever arguments that convince people's hearts it is God himself by his spirit. Conversion is a work of God, which may let us off the hook, though we are to show the power of the gospel in our lives and let God do the rest and not rely on thinking we have to know every answer to every question and speak eloquently about our faith. So, relax. Let go and let God.

Matthew 5: 13-20. In the sermon on the mount Jesus is addressing the Jewish people specifically. They were supposed to be the Light to the gentiles and an example to the whole world how-to live-in harmony with God. Jesus starts by reminding them of their special vocation. But all is not well – what happens when the “salt has lost its saltiness” and they forget their special role in the world. Slavish reliance on the observing the letter of the law, at the expense of underlying love or justice for your fellow man.

Lent course

There will be a four session Lent course starting in March, not always on the same night every week – a mixture of Tuesdays and Wednesdays. The course is based on Richard Rohr's book “The Universal Christ”. Fr. Richard comes from a radical Mystical and contemplative school of catholic theology in the same vein and stable as Julian of Norwich, William Blake and Thomas Merton and while you don't need to have necessarily read the book, it would give a solid background to the course and is £9.55 for a paperback copy or under a Fiver for a Kindle version. The dates are as follows.

Lent Course. – The Universal Christ

Everything is sacred

4 session course.

Tuesday 14th March – The four worldviews

Wednesay 22nd March – Spiritual transformation.

Tuesday 28th March – Christ is everywhere

Wednesday 5th April – Contemplation

Thought for the day

Part and parcel of being a priest is moving around from place to place and having to (hopefully) fit in to new communities. However superficially different places may be from each other, common themes, common hopes and fears and common personalities appear in every place. It doesn't matter whether it is a city, suburban and rural backdrop – people are just people.

So from being converted to Christianity in my mid-thirties in Sandgate Kent and moving to Mirfield and then to Margate, then Bucharest and Sofia to Gainford, and then Winston to Tynemouth or indeed East Budleigh, Otterton or Budleigh Salterton, the priestly function remains the same and the rich variety of God's people remains the same. How God moves and chooses to act in each location changes though his nature and purposes remain constant.

One always hopes that one makes or has made a positive impression and made a positive impact in all these places and in case I forget to say so nearer the time I want to thank all the people who have known and changed me over the years through good times and bad times. We are all members of one body.

The prayer for Today is an old favourite from Fr. Harry Williams, the Mirfield Father who had such a profound influence on me. Harry was “honest to God”

**O God I am hellishly angry
I think so and so is a swine
I am tortured by worry about this or that.
I am pretty certain I have missed my chances in life
And that this or that has left me feeling terribly depressed
But nonetheless here I am like this,
Feeling both bloody and bloody-minded,
And I am going to stay here for ten minutes.
You are most unlikely to give me anything. I know that.
But I'm going to stay for the ten minutes nonetheless.**

Love and peace,

Martin