

The Vicar Writes...

Dear Friends

One of the main characters in the Easter story is Judas. After his betrayal of Jesus we see him realising the enormity of what he has done and eventually he is so taken over by guilt that he hangs himself. He was throwing away more than thirty pieces of silver – he was throwing away his life. If only he had waited. Judas died at the dawn of forgiveness, while Jesus was on his way to the cross, on the way to that greatest act of reconciliation which brings us, sinful as we are, back into fellowship with God. Jesus would have done the same for Judas. One can only think that Judas believed that there was no hope for him, because he had denied everything of real value. But so did Peter and there was forgiveness for him – Jesus forgave and restored. Thomas refused to believe – Jesus made a special point of meeting his need. Would he not have done the same for Judas? There can be only one answer.

God's love, incarnate in Jesus, brought forgiveness for all who will take it – Judas or me – and that is our confidence, our hope, our certainty. If only Judas had waited, what a witness he would have made! Think of Paul, the killer of Christians, the enemy of Christ, and yet later exulting "Christ lives in me". I wonder what the gospel according to Judas could have been and what his life could have been like?

Wishing you a very happy Easter,

Andrew

EASTER SERVICES

| | | |
|---------------------------------|----------|---|
| Thursday 18 th April | 7.00 pm | Holy Communion for Maundy Thursday |
| Good Friday | 12 noon | A meditation on the Stations of the Cross |
| Saturday 20 th April | 6.00 pm | Service of Light and blessing of Easter baskets |
| Easter Day | 8.00 am | Holy Communion |
| | 10.30 am | Parish Communion |

FOOLING AROUND - April 1st

I was about six when I began to enjoy April Fool's Day. My older brother was very clever at appropriate hoaxes, not only deceiving me but also mum and dad. On the whole my childish efforts were encouraged. The day was full of laughs, even at school, where the teachers would try to trick us and all day long no one quite believed anything they were told. So it went on, year after year, though I think it all seems as a bit unsophisticated for the modern generation.

You couldn't say that, though, about probably the most famous April Fool's effort of all time. In the 1960's BBC TV broadcast a feature on the spaghetti farms of Italy. Even

those of us who bought our spaghetti in the supermarket from the pasta shelves began to wonder if we'd been wrong. Italian farmers explained their work and the progress of the spaghetti plants was carefully filmed, from planting to reaping. And all in the BBC's most serious documentary manner. It took a while to appreciate that this was Aunty playing games. Whatever next!

The odd thing is that no one is quite sure of the origin of this very British tradition. Most attribute it to changes in Britain's calendar in the 1700s, when New Year's Day moved from March 25th to January 1st. Not surprisingly, the change caused a lot of confusion and mistakes around the start of April. Others look further back, to the ancient Roman feast of Hilaria, when the goddess Cybele was celebrated with pranks and jokes around the spring equinox, March 25th. Either way a touch of hilarity at the end of Lent does not seem amiss. Go to Greece, where the resurrection of Jesus is celebrated with fireworks and parties to see how it might work.

Canon David Winter

The Beatitudes - 'Blessed are the Poor in Spirit'

Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12). The word ***blessed*** describes how we can live under God's blessing. Jesus talks about the '*beautiful attitudes*' (Billy Graham) that characterise followers of Jesus. They speak more about '*who we are*' than '*what we do*' and reflect perfectly the character of Jesus that He wants to develop in us.

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' is the first beatitude (5:3). To be *'poor in spirit'* is not simply being poor economically, as the word used means *'being dependent on others for support'*. It is the opposite of spiritual pride, recognising that we all fall short of God's standards in our thoughts, words and actions. It's not just about what we do for God, but what He has done for us through Jesus' death on the cross. As we bring our sin, guilt, shame and failure to Him, in grace He offers us His love, acceptance and forgiveness. We come with empty hands: *'Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling'* (Augustus Toplady).

This is well illustrated by the tax collector in Jesus' parable: *'God have mercy on me, a sinner'* (Luke 18:13). It is cry that says *'O God, I am in a mess. I've got nothing to offer. I haven't begun to pray or hear you properly. I am spiritually poor'* To those who cry out like this, Jesus says *'theirs is the kingdom of heaven'* (v3). The kingdom of God flings open its doors to beggars!

'There is nothing we can do to make God love us more; there is nothing we can do to make God love us less.' (Philip Yancey: *What's So Amazing About Grace*).

The Rev'd Paul Hardingham

EASTER JOY

I remember vividly a simple poster I saw on the notice board of our local Methodist Chapel. It had a silhouette of three crosses on a hill, and underneath the words, 'FOR

YOU'. Nothing fancy or clever, but a clear presentation of the Easter message, and it struck me deeply.

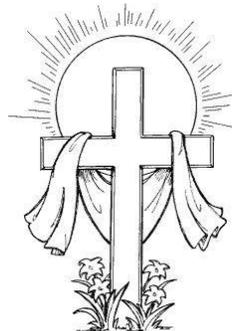
At Easter our thoughts are drawn to the death and resurrection of Jesus. These events are central to our faith, but sometimes we can over-complicate their meaning. The heart of it, though, remains very simple: Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and on the third day was raised to life (1Corinthians 15:3).

He died to show his love for you. He gave his life as a demonstration or proof of the love He has for each one of us, no matter who we are or what we have done. He was motivated to lay down His life for us, not out of duty or obligation, but compassionate love. See Romans 5:8

He died to set you free. Sin has entangled every one of us. We are under it's power and unable to ourselves to loosen its grip. At the cross Jesus dealt with sin once and for all by dying in our place. Now, when we turn to Him for help, we can be released from the hold it has on us and find complete forgiveness.

He died to bring you home. The Cross makes it possible for us to be reconciled to God. Like the prodigal son we were once far away from God, but now because we have been forgiven, we can return to our true home in God. A welcome awaits us, and a joy-filled reunion is possible. This Easter, why not think about these two simple words: FOR YOU.

The Rev'd Tony Horsfall



THE BEAUTY OF GOOD FRIDAY

Some of the most beautiful things in the world have an ugly side. What about the emperor penguin chick, nestling in a feathery pouch above its parent's feet? There's a lovely moment when mum and dad greet each other over the gaping beak of their fuzz-ball offspring. Heads bent together, making a heart shape in the air, we can't help seeing a reflection of our own ideals of love in the pair.

But the reality of what those birds are going through is even more gruelling than human parenthood. Father penguin has spent all winter sheltering the egg from freezing hurricane-force winds, while mother penguin was feeding at sea. When the chick hatched its parents started an exhausting game of tag, taking it in turns to walk across the ice and risk being eaten by leopard seals or killer whales in order to catch fish for their new offspring.

The living world is truly wonderful in so many ways, but the darker side of the picture is never far away. Creation is groaning (Romans 8:22), and waiting to be rescued. Enter Jesus, through whom all of creation was made. The king of the universe came to live with us, bringing His great love and wisdom to the human population of first-century Israel. The Creator was relating to His creation in a very personal way, and this could have been a totally beautiful picture.

But there is a horrifically ugly side of Jesus' story that threatens to obscure the beauty of what He did on Good Friday. It was a brutal and terrifying day when human sinfulness resulted in the Son of God being executed by His enemies, but thankfully there was much more to it than that. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ set off a seismic wave of spiritual events whose effects are still rippling out across the world.

So that ugly day nearly 2,000 years ago is called 'good' because of what it achieved. Those who follow Jesus find their lives are changed for the better, even if their day-to-day existence may still be incredibly tough. When people come to understand what creation is for and who it belongs to, they can begin to serve and preserve the earth as they should. These things are only whispers of what is to come, but they give me hope for the future redemption of all Creation. I can choose to dwell on the beauty of Jesus' death because it was not the end of the story – the future beckons.

This article is extracted (with permission) from [New Life: Reflections for Lent](#), edited by Amy Robinson and Wendy H Jones (£7.99).

Curate's Corner

Both Lent and Easter are times when we are called to look at things anew. In Lent, we look at our habits and our lifestyle and ask what we can do to help us grow as disciples. At Easter, we are called to reassess our entire lives in the light of the resurrection, the incredible events which took place nearly 2 millennia ago, but which still resound down the ages, giving us a glimpse of the most perfect Love, and the most perfect future.

In the bible study group last week we spent some time looking at the Lord's Prayer. We say the prayer so often by rote that there is a danger that the impact of the words might diminish. Looking at it again with fresh eyes can help us avoid this. So this month I thought I might share what we talked about with everyone (if you were present, you can stop reading now!)

*Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.*

The prayer starts by calling us to hold the name of the Lord as Holy, set aside for worship. The Name of the Lord and the Lord himself were very closely related concepts in Judaism; they were inseparable. When we pray this prayer, we are holding God above all other things in this world, as per the first commandment, and rededicating our lives to his service in all things.

*Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth,
As it is in heaven.*

These two clauses are all related to the first one; the grammar and poetry of the Greek make it clear. Together they describe the Kingdom of God, and show us how to live in it; The Kingdom of God is wherever God's name is hallowed, and his will is followed (as it is followed in heaven). The Kingdom of God is not something which is strictly limited to this time though. It continues through to the end of time, to the promised resurrection and glorification of all creation. So when we pray these few verses, we are calling into being something eternal and life changing.

Give us this day our daily bread.

The Bible often talks about this eternal kingdom with the metaphor of eating and feasting. The common translation of 'daily bread' in English actually lacks all of the rich meanings of the Greek adjective that Matthew uses. The 'essential' bread, the 'bread of tomorrow', the 'bread of the end of time' might all be good ways of thinking about it. Those things which we receive today – by the grace of God – are all but reflections of the true bounty which we will receive in the kingdom of heaven. In the Eucharist we eat of that 'bread of the end of time' when we partake spiritually of the body and blood of the risen Christ.

*And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive them that trespass against us.*

The Gospel of Matthew makes it quite clear that the forgiveness of sins is reliant on us, in turn, forgiving others. This is not a 'work' as such, the Gospel is quite clear that we don't need to do anything other than worship God through Jesus to receive Grace. But once we receive that Grace we are called upon – even expected - to act graciously ourselves; to give as we have received. It can be hard to forgive, but with God's help and in God's love it has been done even in the most extra-ordinary cases.

*And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.*

It can seem strange that God might deliberately test us. But I believe that he does – and through resisting temptation we can grow stronger in faith. This clause asks God to protect us from any trials that we cannot resist on our own, to grow stronger and closer to Him, as well as asking his protection from the malign influence of the evil one.

*For thine is the kingdom,
The power, and the glory,
For ever and ever.
Amen.*

I am often asked about the Doxology- why do we sometimes say it in the Lord's Prayer, and sometimes not. As far as I know there is no particular rationale behind it. Some versions of the Lord's Prayer in the book of Matthew have it, and others do not. It is probably a later addition for use in the liturgy of the church. It does, however, have the effect of returning the prayer to where we started; in that eternal glorification of God which is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Amen.

Tom



CALENDAR FOR APRIL

| | | | |
|-------|-----------------|---|---|
| Wed | 3 rd | 10.30 am 2.00 pm 5.00 pm 7.00 pm | Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i> Bible Study Lent Devotion Bible Study |
| Thurs | 4 th | 10.00 am | Parish Art Group |
| Fri | 5 th | 10.30 am 5.00 pm | Coffee Morning in hall Lent Devotion |

LENT 5

| | | | |
|-----|------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Sun | 7 th | 8.00 am 10.30 am 6.00 pm | Holy Communion Parish Communion Evening Prayer |
| Wed | 10 th | 10.30 am 5.00 pm | Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i> Lent Devotion |
| Fri | 12 th | 9.30 am 5.00 pm | Baby Group Lent Devotion |

Sat 13th 11.00 am **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** *in hall*

PALM SUNDAY

| | | | |
|-----|------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Sun | 14 th | 8.00 am 10.30 am 6.00 pm | Holy Communion Matins (<i>Sunday Club in hall</i>) Evening Prayer |
| Wed | 17 th | 10.30 am 2.00 pm 7.00 pm | Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i> Bible Study Bible Study |

MAUNDY THURSDAY

7.00 pm

Holy Communion for
Maundy Thursday

GOOD FRIDAY

10.30 am

***Coffee Morning in hall
with hot cross buns!***

12 noon

Stations of the Cross

**SATURDAY
20TH**

6.00 pm

Service of Light

EASTER DAY

Sun 21st

8.00 am

Holy Communion

10.30 am

Parish Communion

Tues 23rd

10.00 am

Craft Group *in hall*

Wed 24th

10.30 am

Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*

Thurs 25th

3.30 pm

Magazine collation

EASTER 2

Sun 28th

8.00 am

Holy Communion

10.30 am

Matins *(Sunday Club in hall)*

6.00 pm

Evening Prayer

MAY

Wed 1st

10.30 am

Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*

Fri 3rd

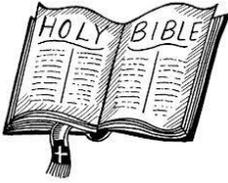
10.30 am

Coffee Morning in hall

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 8th May 11.30 am Pre-Fete Meeting in hall

The Summer Fete this year will be on Saturday 3rd August.



SUNDAY READINGS IN **APRIL**

Sunday 7th April - Lent 5

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 43.16-21

The prophet speaks of a new exodus and a new deed for which God's chosen people will honour and praise him.

NEW TESTAMENT: Philippians 3.4-14

Paul looks towards the spiritual as opposed to the benefits of the material world.

GOSPEL: John 12.1-8

Jesus visits the house of Lazarus at Bethany and is anointed by Mary. He refutes the criticism of Judas.

Sunday 14th April - Palm Sunday

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 50.4-9

The reading gives a foretaste of the Cross combined with a touch of confidence in God's ultimate redemption.

GOSPEL: Dramatised Gospel

An account of the events of Palm Sunday.

Sunday 21st April - Easter Day

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 65.17-end

The prophet tells of the time when Jerusalem and its people will be joyful and their labour fruitful as the Lord watches over them.

NEW TESTAMENT: Acts 10.34-43

Peter reminds the people of the power of Jesus, how the chosen few were commanded to preach his message and those who believe it will be forgiven.

GOSPEL: Luke 24.1-12

All except Peter do not believe the women when they tell the disciples that they found Jesus' tomb empty and that he has risen from the dead.

Sunday 28th April - Easter 2

OLD TESTAMENT: Acts 5.27-32

When the high priest reprimands the apostles for teaching in Jesus' name they reply that God must be obeyed rather than men.

NEW TESTAMENT: John 20.19-end

Two sorts of faith – one based on proof and the other upon trust – are set against one another in this response to the risen Christ.

Canford Cliffs Parish Art Group

MIDSUMMER ART SOIREE

at

**The Church of the Transfiguration
Chaddesley Glen**

Friday 7th June

7.00 - 9.00 pm

Tickets £8.00 (includes a glass of wine and canapes)

(tickets available from the office, Tony Ogg (01202 700058)
and members of the Art Group)

TO MAKE YOU SMILE.....

Moses and the Red Sea

Nine-year-old Joseph was asked by his mother what he had learned in Sunday school. 'Well, Mum, our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

"When he got to the Red Sea, Moses had his army build a pontoon bridge and all the people walked across safely. Then, he radioed HQ for reinforcements. They sent bombers to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved."

"Now, Joseph, is that really what your teacher taught you?" his mother asked, startled.

"Well, no," her son admitted. "But if I told it the way the teacher did, you'd never believe it!"

Church notice: This being Easter Sunday, we will ask Mrs Cusworth to come forward and lay an egg on the altar.

Tactful

There was once a minister who was determined that things should be done properly during each service, yet he had a great gift for being gentle and tactful.

The congregation often read the 23rd Psalm together. One Sunday before they started, he said smilingly: "Oh, may I ask the lady who always arrives at the still waters while the rest of us are in the green pastures, to wait for us this time?"

Why Easter will never go away

How do you make sense of the Resurrection? Dead men don't rise, so why believe that this particular dead man did rise?

At the end of St Luke's Gospel we read that: "they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement" (Luke 24.4). This is highly significant. The Gospels do not show us a group of disciples who were in a receptive frame of mind. After the crucifixion, they were in hiding, frightened and scattered. Then suddenly, they came out of hiding and were totally different; excited, joyful. By Pentecost they were confident, with one firm message: "You crucified Jesus, but God raised him up!"

How did they know this? Because of direct personal experience. Some of them had visited the tomb of Jesus: it was empty. Others claimed to have seen and touched the risen Lord. Were they hallucinating? People can hallucinate in groups – when taking drugs, for example. But, of course each one will see a different hallucination. But the disciples all saw the same thing. Or rather, the same person. Jesus. Were they lying? Jesus had died a humiliating death as a criminal. Perhaps they wanted to rescue His good name. So did they pretend they had seen Him?

This theory has a big problem. Their preaching led them into trouble with the authorities. They were beaten and imprisoned and some of them killed. People will die for ideas and causes which they believe in passionately. But not for things they have made up. We might suffer for our convictions, we will not suffer for our inventions.

What about the 'swoon' theory? That Jesus didn't die on the cross, despite terrible wounds. He recovered in the tomb, and then escaped. The disciples nursed Him back to health. But Roman soldiers knew when a man was dead;

and there was the guard on the tomb. Also, the events which followed simply don't fit. If the disciples had been hiding Jesus, they would have kept very low-key, and out of the way, so that the authorities did not come after Him again.

Besides, to preach that God had raised Jesus from the dead – which is exactly what they did preach – would have been a lie. Beatings and threat of death would soon have loosened their tongues. Inventions crumble under pressure; convictions hold fast.

Another reason for believing in the Resurrection is this: Jesus' continuing impact. Thousands and soon millions of people in every generation since have shared an inescapable sense of being 'accompanied' through life. Though unseen, they identify this presence as the Risen Lord.

Sometimes this experience of meeting Jesus is gentle and fitful. Sometimes it is dramatic and life-changing. This reminds us that the resurrection of Jesus is not just an interesting historical puzzle. It is a vital, present day reality. It brings wonderful comfort, assuring us of the central Christian truths: death is dead; Jesus is alive; God is love.

This central notion was captured, most movingly, by the great Albert Schweitzer: 'He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: "Follow thou me", and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfil for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the suffering which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience who He is.' Have a joyful – and a challenging – Easter.

Have you earned your tomorrow?

*Is anybody happier because you passed their way?
Does anyone remember that you spoke to them today?
This day is almost over, and its toiling time is through;
Is there anyone to utter now a kindly word of you?*

*Did you give a cheerful greeting to the friend who came along?
Or a churlish sort of "Hi" and then vanish in the throng?
Were you selfish pure and simple as you rushed along the way,
Or is someone very grateful for a deed you did today?*

*Can you say tonight, in parting with the day that's slipping fast,
That you helped a single person of the many that you passed?
Is a single heart rejoicing over what you did or said;
Does someone whose hopes were fading now with courage look
ahead?*

*Did you waste the day, or lose it, was it well or sorely spent?
Did you leave a trail of kindness or a scar of discontent?
As you close your eyes in slumber do you think that God would say,
You have earned one more tomorrow by the work you did today?*

Edgar Guest

ST. GEORGE OF THE GOLDEN LEGEND

The Saint of an English Army before he was Patron Saint of England, St George may have been a soldier, but he was no Englishman. He was an officer in the Roman army under Diocletian, who refused to abandon his faith during the Terror, and was martyred at Lydda in Palestine about the year 300 AD – supposedly 23 April. Over the years St George became the example of a Christian fighting-man, a powerful helper against evil powers affecting individual



lives. He was the soldier-hero of the Middle Ages, of whom remarkable deeds were reported.

In the Golden Legend of the 13th century, Jacobus de Voragine gave St George a handsome write-up. The story runs thus:

One day, St George rode up to the heathen city of Sylene in Lybia, where he found the citizens in great distress. A neighbouring dragon had forced them to surrender two sheep each day for its dinner, and when the sheep gave out, two of their children; and now they were about to sacrifice the King's daughter, dressed as if for her wedding. St George encountered the little party by a stagnant lake, where the dragon lived, and persuaded the sobbing Princess to tell him why she was so miserable. At that moment the dragon appeared, looking inexpressibly revolting. The Saint charged, and drove his spear into the gaping mouth. To everyone's amazement, he tumbled the monster over and over.

Then St George borrowed the Princess's girdle, tied it round the dragon's neck, and persuaded her to lead it back to Sylene herself. The sight of her approaching with the befuddled dragon on its makeshift lead emptied the town. When the inhabitants timidly crept back, St George promised to behead the dragon if they would all believe in Jesus Christ and be baptised.

It was a most effective form of evangelism, for everybody said 'yes' at once. So 15,000 people were baptised, and four carts were commissioned to remove the dragon's body. St George thus became a symbol of the war against evil, and is usually portrayed trampling the dragon of sin under his horse's hoofs. The Crusaders had a vision of him helping them against the Saracens at Antioch, during the first Crusade, and so brought the story of St George back with them from Palestine. Presently England put herself under the protection of the Saint. His day was declared a holiday in 1222. A red cross on a white field is the flag of St George.

A Lesson in Human Kindness

Years ago, I was coming back across the Channel from Le Havre after a family holiday with my children. We had to have our passports stamped on the ferry, and there was a huge queue up to these very bored immigration officers. I'd made a passport for my small son's cuddly toy, a three foot panda called Adnap (he used to hold him upside down, you see). I'd taken a photo, found a little blue book, put in a pawprint and all that sort of thing. I handed over our passports and this lugubrious man stamped them. Then I gave him Adnap's. He gave me a quizzical look and I thought "O dear". And then his eyes lit up and he took every stamp - he had about thirty - and he carefully stamped every page: "illegal", "detain at once", and so on. I can still see his face as he handed it back to me. His smile was marvellous. It slightly restores your faith in human nature.

(This was written years ago by someone whose writing I enjoyed - Anna Castley)



FROM THE REGISTERS

Funerals

14th March Margarita (Rita) Walker (96)
21st March Miriam Barnett (98)

ALTAR FLOWERS

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Sunday 7 th April | Lent (No flowers) |
| Palm Sunday | Susanne King |
| Easter Day | The Guild (Saturday 20 th April) |
| Sunday 28 th April | The Guild |



MAGAZINE DEADLINE

The deadline for the May edition of the
Church Magazine is
Friday 19th April