

The Vicar Writes...

Dear All

I would like this month to share some thoughts from Thomas Merton. Things that were important to most people were seen differently by Thomas Merton. He felt that we had an obsessive attachment to images, news and technology. In many ways a prophet for our times!! Dying, aged 53, while attending a conference in Bangkok, accidentally electrocuted, he described on a recording, How he saw life:

"This isn't a package deal where you open your hands and you get it all neatly wrapped up. What you have to do is go into this thing blind and you have to take it completely as it comes from God.

God is always giving us something and, when we think we are getting nothing, it is because we are getting what we don't know. God can give you a gift without any light, to know that you've got one."

Thomas Merton was always open to the experience of God dwelling deep within his heart.

As he himself prayed:

My Lord God

I have no idea where I am going.

I do not see the road ahead of me,

I cannot know for certain where it will end nor do I really understand myself,

I trust you always: though I may seem lost and in the shadow of death,

I will not fear, for you are with me and you will never leave me to face my troubles alone. Amen.

In the strangeness of our last year and our hope for a brighter future I think we can learn, like Thomas Merton, to trust in God, not knowing what is round the next corner, but with the faith to know that God is there with us.

With all good wishes
Andrew

SUMMER FETE: SATURDAY 31st JULY

from 2.00 pm



- It's that time of year again and we are beginning to collect items for sale, raffling, eating, giving away etc. and generally preparing for a 'bumper' occasion! Paperback and hardback novels, good quality 'white elephant'(only small items for this please and no electrical items at all), toys, handbags, jewellery, the promise of cakes baked, good items for the raffle etc. will all - as usual - be required. If you can help in any way, particularly with clearing up at the end of the day, we would be very grateful. Details of who to contact for all such items will be in next month's JUNE magazine. But in the meantime please contact Andrew (the Vicar) on 01202 700341 if you would like to contribute...in any way.

We have used most of the bottles for the Tombola so Andrew would be grateful to receive more bottles for the fete.

ASCENSION DAY - 40 DAYS WITH THE RISEN CHRIST (13th May)

40 days after Easter comes Ascension Day. These are the 40 days during which the Risen Christ appeared again and again to His disciples, following His death and resurrection. (*Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; and John 20.*)

The Gospels give us little of Christ's teachings and deeds during those 40 days. Jesus was seen by numerous of His disciples: on the road to Emmaus, by the Sea of Galilee, in houses, etc. He strengthened and encouraged His disciples, and at last opened their eyes to all that the Scriptures had promised about the Messiah. Jesus also told them that as the Father had sent Him, He was now going to send them – to all corners of the earth, as His witnesses.

Surely the most tender, moving 'farewell' in history took place on Ascension Day. Luke records the story with great poignancy: 'When Jesus had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, He lifted up His hands – and blessed them.'

As Christmas began the story of Jesus' life on earth, so Ascension Day completes it, with His return to His Father in heaven. Jesus' last act on earth was to bless His disciples. He and they had a bond as close as could be: they had just lived through three tumultuous years of public ministry and miracles – persecution and death – and resurrection! Just as we part from our nearest and dearest by still looking at them with love and memories in our eyes, so exactly did Jesus: 'While He was blessing them, He left them and was taken up into heaven.' (Luke 24:50-1) He was not forsaking them, but merely going on ahead to a kingdom which would

also be theirs one day: 'I am ascending to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God...' (John 20:17)

The disciples were surely the most favoured folk in history. Imagine being one of the last few people on earth to be face to face with Jesus, and have Him look on you with love. No wonder then that Luke goes on: 'they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God.' (Luke 24:52,53)

No wonder they praised God! They knew they would see Jesus again one day! 'I am going to prepare a place for you... I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.' (John 14:2,3) In the meantime, Jesus had work for them to do: to take the Gospel to every nation on earth.

E-MAILS - A BLESSING OR A PROBLEM?

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. (James 3 v 9-10)

I wonder what St James would say about emails! He had plenty to say about how what we say can cause lots of damage. He wrote that the tongue is a like a spark which starts a forest fire. It is easy to say a thoughtless thing or inadvertently spread gossip or speculation.

Emails are a great way of communicating. You can send a message to someone in the same parish or across the world almost instantly. Lawyers always ask, "have you got evidence in writing?" Telephone calls or face to face conversations are still evidence but it is difficult to prove what was said. Conversations are recorded so you can see the chain of who said what and when. Emails are quick and free.

Emails can, however, easily be harmful. You can accidentally send a personal or private message to the wrong person or even worse copy it to lots of people. It is also difficult to judge the tone of an email, whether it is light-hearted or serious, cross or joyful. When are on the telephone or speaking face to face it is easier to tell whether the speaker is feeling angry or light-hearted.

Sometimes we need a break. Emails are good but many people find you can never get away from them and constantly check for business messages while at home or on leave. Perhaps we should not send emails to the vicar on a Sunday night while she is watching *Strictly*. Some discussions are better face to face, and always double check who you are sending it to or copying to.

David Pickup



PENTECOST, NOT A GHOST BUT A GIFT

(23rd May)

We used to call it Whitsun – ‘White Sunday’ because long ago children marched to church in white on that day. No processions nowadays, and we’ve even changed its name. It’s now ‘Pentecost’, which is more accurate but needs explaining.

Pentecost marks a vital event in Christian history. It is celebrated 50 days after Easter. The year Jesus was crucified (which took place at the Passover), the remnant of His followers, just 120 of them, were together in an upper room in Jerusalem. They were afraid to show their faces in case the authorities arrested them. But on the day of Passover they had an amazing collective experience.

They described it in terms of wind and fire, a great surge of spiritual energy and confidence. Afraid no longer, they burst out on to the streets where crowds were gathering for the festival, led by Peter they began to tell them about Jesus and His resurrection. As they did so, although many of the people in the crowd were foreigners who spoke other languages, everyone heard them in their own tongue. Peter told them that what they were seeing was the fulfilment of an old prophecy when God would pour out His Spirit on the human race, men and women, young and old.

As a result of His words and the extraordinary spectacle, 3000 people believed and were baptised in the name of Jesus. They were the nucleus of what in 100 years would be

a Church that would turn history upside down. For Christians Pentecost is in effect the birthday of the Church.

Many people find the whole idea of the Holy Spirit mysterious and elusive. It wasn't helped by the earlier title 'Holy Ghost'. The spirit is not spiritually a 'ghost' but a precious gift.

The Rev'd Canon David Winter

FOREIGNERS?

Among the estimated 130,000 people from Hong Kong who are making their way to the UK, there are bound to be thousands of Christians. What kind of reception will they get from the churches here?



We shudder when reminded of the cold shoulder shown to the 500 Jamaicans who disembarked the SS Empire Windrush at Tilbury in 1948, and others who followed. They came in response to a recruitment drive by London Transport and the NHS. Many were practising Anglicans, so naturally they made their way to English parish churches. Many were told they didn't belong there.

St Paul's nightmare about the Church had become a reality, with the eye saying to the hand, "I don't need you." (1 Corinthians 12.21) As a result, the Church of England missed out on the faith, experience, and witness of brother and sister believers from the Caribbean.

Hong Kong citizens who hold British National Overseas passports can now apply for a work visa, enabling them to live and work in the UK, after which they may apply for permanent UK citizenship. They will bring a wealth of knowledge with them, including the experience of living under an increasingly repressive regime.

This is our chance to learn from past errors and to turn hostility into hospitality. We will soon discover that we have at least as much to receive as we have to give. UK society has already been enriched by immigrants, especially those who belong to ethnic minorities in this country, but are in the majority, worldwide. The NHS alone would collapse without them.

In Bible times, Christians who were from Jewish backgrounds found it hard to believe the Church could accommodate foreigners. First there was a division between Hebrew-speakers and Greek-speakers. An even bigger row followed, when new Christians in other countries were regarded as sub-standard. Then St Peter had a visionary experience which contradicted his narrow upbringing. This is how he summarised it:

"I now realise it is true that God treats everyone on the same basis. Those who fear him and do what is right are acceptable to him, no matter what race they belong to."
(Acts 10.34)

Chinese? African? Caribbean? European? British? The real Church will accommodate all of them and then look for others to welcome.

The Ven. John Barton

100 YEARS OF THE BRITISH LEGION

One hundred years ago, on 15th May 1921, the British Legion was founded in the aftermath of the First World War, to provide support to veterans of the British Armed Forces, their families and dependants.

It was created at a time when two million people were unemployed. More than six million had served in the war: of those who came back, 1.75 million had suffered some kind of disability, and half of those were disabled permanently.



Four organisations came together at the instigation of Lancastrian Lance Bombardier Tom Lister, who was angered at the Government's unwillingness to help, and Field Marshal Earl Haig, who had been Commander in Chief of the British Forces. The Legion campaigned for fair treatment of those who given everything for their country, and it continues this work today.

In 1922, the Legion's poppy factory opened in the Old Kent Road, London, with 40 disabled men manufacturing 1000 poppies a week. The first Poppy Day was held that same year. The Festival of Remembrance began in 1927, and the Legion became 'Royal' in 1971 – 50 years ago – on its golden anniversary.

At first membership of the Legion was confined to ex-Service personnel, but it was expanded to include serving members of the Forces in 1981.

Tim Lenton



CALENDAR FOR MAY

EASTER 5

Sun	2	8.00 am	Holy Communion
		10.30 am	Parish Communion
Wed	5	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>

EASTER 6

Sun	9	8.00 am	Holy Communion
		10.30 am	Matins
Thurs	13	10.30 am	Service for Ascension Day <i>in the Transfiguration</i>
Fri	14	9.30 am	Mums and Toddlers

EASTER 7

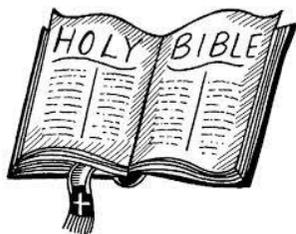
Sun	16	8.00 am	Holy Communion
		9.30 am	Family Service
		10.30 am	Parish Communion followed by Pre-Fete meeting
Wed	19	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>

PENTECOST

Sun	23	8.00 am	Holy Communion
		10.30 am	Matins
Wed	26	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>
Thurs	27	3.30 pm	Magazine collation
Fri	28	9.30 am	Mums and Toddlers

TRINITY SUNDAY

Sun	30	8.00 am	Holy Communion
		10.30 am	Parish Communion



SUNDAY READINGS **IN MAY**

Sunday 2nd May - Easter 5

FIRST READING: Acts 8.26-end

The Ethiopian official is eager to understand the scriptures. He is instructed by Philip and is then baptised.

NEW TESTAMENT: 1 John 4.7-end

God's love and ours. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

GOSPEL: John 15.1-8

Jesus uses the familiar image of the vine to signify the covenant of faith between God and Jesus' disciples.

Sunday 9th May - Easter 6

OLD TESTAMENT: Acts 10.44-end

As Peter addressed the people in the house of the Roman captain, they, who were gentiles received the Holy Spirit and were baptised in the name of Jesus.

NEW TESTAMENT: John 15.9-17

Following on from Jesus' example of the vine and the branches, we are exhorted to love one another and to bear fruit that will last.

Sunday 16th May - Easter 7

FIRST READING: Acts 1.15-17, 21-end

The disciples choose a disciple to replace Judas and Matthias is chosen by lot.

NEW TESTAMENT: 1 John 5.9-13

This passage speaks of faith in the Son of God. That if we have his life, we also have eternal life.

GOSPEL: John 17.6-19

Jesus prays for his disciples asking that they be protected from the world as they are sent out into the world.

Sunday 23rd May - Pentecost

FIRST READING: Acts 2.1-21

In the book of Acts, evidence of God the Spirit in Jesus' disciples is provided by the miraculous translation of the good news of Christ's message into the languages of all nations.

NEW TESTAMENT: John 15.26-27, 16.4-15

Jesus tells his disciples that the coming Spirit will both condemn the world for its blindness and ignorance and sustain the disciples in their faith.

Sunday 30th May - Trinity Sunday

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 6.1-8

The prophet recounts his own calling to the prophetic ministry by the one and only almighty God who is acclaimed three times holy.

NEW TESTAMENT: Romans 8.12-17

Life through the spirit. If we live by the spirit then we will become God's children and heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

GOSPEL: John 3.1-17

God is the author of the spiritual rebirth of all who would have life in his kingdom. He sent his Son into the world so that man might be saved through him.

FOUND IN A SYNAGOGUE

When you arrive in Willemstad, the capital of the Dutch Caribbean island of Curacao, by ship, you will be astonished at the sight of multi-coloured colonial houses all around you. It looks quite Disney-like. The story goes that in the 17th Century, the then Governor couldn't stand the glare from the sun on all the white buildings and declared they had to be painted colours. However, far more remarkable, is the 17th Century Mikve Israel - Emanuel Synagogue, which is the oldest surviving synagogue in the Americas.



On entering we found the floor covered in sand and somewhat naively presumed there had been a storm and the doors had come open! Not so. Not only was the floor covered in sand, but there were stars painted all over the ceiling. The synagogue's leaflet told us that this was to remind visitors and the congregation of God's promise to Abraham, after his obedience to God in being prepared to sacrifice his son, Isaac. Genesis 22.17:

"I promise that I will give you as many descendants as there are stars in the sky or grains of sand along the seashore".

The sand and stars were used as a reminder and teaching aid, like stained glass windows. The scene was remarkable, meaningful, unforgettable and unique.

Anna Castley

P.S. The synagogue's exterior was painted bright yellow, with white columns and white window surrounds.

THE THIRTY-NINE ARTICLES CONTD.

XII. OF GOOD WORKS

ALBEIT that Good Works, which are the fruits of Faith, and follow after Justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's Judgement; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and do spring out necessarily of a true and lively Faith; insomuch that by them a lively Faith may be as evidently known as a tree discerned by the fruit.

In our previous article, we learnt that it was our faith in Christ, and through Christ's own faith – that we are justified, and not through what we do or are ourselves. Now we move, for the next few articles, to the corollary of that, which is looking at what 'works' achieve. Faith is what we believe, but works are what we do. Works on their own cannot gain us anything: they are not what leads us to salvation, or they do not help us avoid 'the severity of God's Judgement'.

But that does not mean that works are worthless: our Faith *must* lead us to certain actions, springing up out of the love that God bears for us, and which we must bear into the world. For this reason, our good works are pleasing to God: it is our Faith bearing forth fruit in the world.

Without these works, without these actions, our Faith would not be 'true and lively': If someone was to claim to love football before all other sports, but never watched a match, or played it themselves, and never really engaged with it in their lives, we would be rightly sceptical of their claim. A life of faith without those 'necessary' works is like an orchard tree that never bears fruit, or as Christ puts it in Matthew 7:16-18:

By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit

XIII. OF WORKS BEFORE JUSTIFICATION

WORKS done before the grace of Christ, and the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the School-authors say) deserve grace of congruity: yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.

So what of those who have no Faith? Can someone do good in God's sight without faith? We have already addressed this issue above, but article 13 makes it doubly clear: without Faith our works are in vain, indeed, they have 'the nature of sin', inasmuch as the works are not properly orientated towards God.

XIV. OF WORKS OF SUPEREROGATION

VOLUNTARY Works besides, over, and above, God's Commandments, which they call Works of Supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety: for by them men do declare, that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake, than of bounden duty is required: whereas Christ saith plainly, When ye have done all that are commanded to you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

This article is rather mysterious: essentially if you thought that you could somehow exceed the works required of you by God in order to gain credit, like a child who, once they

have completed their daily chores volunteered to do extra work in order to be allowed an ice-cream, article 14 would be a severe disappointment. In the Pre-Reformation Catholic church this doctrine formed the basis for indulgences, in which people could go above and beyond their duty to God in order to lessen their time, or the time of their relatives, in purgatory.

XV. OF CHRIST ALONE WITHOUT SIN

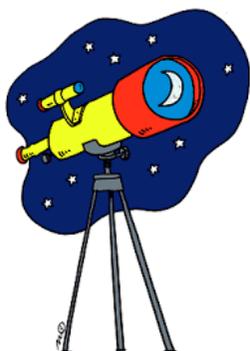
CHRIST in the truth of our nature was made like unto us in all things, sin only except, from which he was clearly void, both in his flesh, and in his spirit. He came to be the Lamb without spot, who, by sacrifice of himself once made, should take away the sins of the world, and sin, as Saint John saith, was not in him. But all we the rest, although baptized, and born again in Christ, yet offend in many things; and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

We last came across some teaching about sin in article 9, and now the articles return to this topic in order to clear up any niggles. Christ is alone among humankind to have been without sin, and to him alone is it the case that original sin does not apply. We might seek to emulate this, but it is impossible for us, even after baptism, to be spotless as Christ was (if you remember, this was a point of contention with the 'Pelegians' – more of this in article 16 next month!) It is important that Christ was spotless, for upon the cross he, who was without blame, was nonetheless punished, fulfilling the law, and providing the perfect sacrifice, needed only once as the Epistle to the Hebrews makes clear (Hebrews 7:26-28):

Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to

offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests men in all their weakness; but the oath, which came after the law, appointed the Son, who has been made perfect forever.

The Rev'd Tom Pelham



REMEMBERING AN OUTSTANDING ASTRONOMER

It was 150 years ago, on 11th May 1871, that John Herschel – British astronomer, mathematician, chemist and pioneering photographer – died at the age of 79. Among other things, he named seven of Saturn's moons and four moons of Uranus, as well as investigating colour blindness. He was also President of the Royal Astronomical Society three times.

He was the son of Sir William Herschel, a distinguished scientist who had moved from Germany to Britain and later discovered the planet Uranus, thus creating a pronunciation problem that still hasn't gone away.

Sir John Herschel, himself knighted in 1831, made many contributions to the science of photography and invented the blueprint. He was also deeply interested in the philosophy of science and pioneered an inductive approach to experiments and the construction of scientific theories.

Between 1834 and 1838 he worked in South Africa with his wife Margaret, studying and photographing Cape flora as well as continuing his astronomical interests. It was here that he met Charles Darwin, on his way home in the HMS Beagle, and had a significant influence on him. Sir John also developed and backed the use of the impressive Julian day numbering system in astronomy.

Tim Lenton

HIDING, WAITING, HOPING - FREE!

After many long months during the Covid pandemic we are at last beginning to be able to come together again. Some countries and some areas of some countries will be more open than others and we can only hope, pray and wait for all of us to be able to be 'free' again.

May, in the Church's calendar, is supremely the month of freedom.

During the first few weeks we continue to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus and reflect on the Bible stories of those who met Him after His crucifixion and resurrection. Then we celebrate His Ascension – Jesus' return to His Father.

And finally, we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit on the apostles and all those locked in that Upper Room – with the subsequent birth of His Church. Freedom indeed!

This last year has for most of us felt like a waiting time to see and hold friends and family again. We have some understanding of fear and the hope within us.

What a celebration there must have been when Jesus returned to His Father – and what a celebration also when the Holy Spirit so powerfully descended.

It is the story of those 'simple' men who were scared and hiding one day and the next day bold and outspoken that speaks to me of something outstanding happening.

As I received my anti-Covid vaccination I felt that same freedom from fear. Not that I would be 100% safe and never ill again, but rather that whatever happened now would be manageable.

This month: Have a think this month about fears that you may have held inside you in this past year and how you have been able to manage them. Have you known the Spirit of Our Lord by your side as you have walked these roads? I hope so, and I hope also that together we can help others to know His reassurance from fear. Freedom indeed.

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of all people and kindle in them the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.

The Rev'd Dr. Jo White

FRIDAY COFFEE **MORNINGS**

We hope to restart our Friday morning coffee on 21st May. Obviously this will depend upon the continued relaxation of COVID restrictions. Hopefully from then on our coffee mornings will continue on the 1st and 3rd Fridays of each month from 10.30 am until 12 noon.



ALTAR FLOWERS

Sunday 2 nd May	Sue Draper
Sunday 9 th May	Sue Draper
Sunday 16 th May	Wendy Bales
Sunday 23 rd May	Wendy Bales
Sunday 30 th May	Wendy Bales



MAGAZINE DEADLINE

The deadline for the June issue of the Church Magazine is
Friday 21st May