

The Vicar Writes...

Dear Friends

Easter speaks of three things:

First, that He died for our sins;

Second, that He was buried;

Third, that He was raised on the third day.

Paul had no doubt that Christ died, for only by doing so could he deal with our sins. Likewise, he is insistent that Christ was buried, for this was proof that He really died. But the most important for us as Christians was that He was raised on the third day. The body which had died and been laid to rest was no longer in the tomb, the tomb was empty. What a day that was - the third day! For the enemies of Jesus it was a day of the utmost confusion and consternation. Just when they thought they had finally got Him safely out of the way, there were these alarming reports that He was alive and at large - and that the tomb, so carefully sealed and guarded, was empty.

For the disciples the third day was the day when Christ's great triumph over sin and death and the powers of darkness was demonstrated to the world. It was a day when man's salvation was secured once and for all.

Belief in the Easter message requires from us faith. Often when Christians are faced with tragedy or disaster their faith increases. They feel comfort in knowing that Christ has been there before them and is with them. Those who claim no faith will often blame God, which is strange when they do not believe in Him in the first place. If instead of

the desire to blame they put their trust in Him, they would find the same peace and trust that those first disciples found on the third day.

Easter enables the believer to face life and all the unknown events of the future with trust, to look death in the face, calm and unafraid, and to confess with certainty their faith in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.

Happy Easter!

Andrew and Joanne

EASTER 2017 ON THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

My friend Shirley and I enjoyed many holidays, but quite the most memorable was a cruise to the Azores out of Bristol. We always chose the smallest and oldest boat going to the most interesting destinations, hence Marco Polo, at the time 53 years old, built in an East German shipyard and launched in 1964. There was not a diamond or casino in sight!! We were both bothered that our travel dates coincided with the Easter period and were astonished to discover (after departure), that this was indeed a Christian cruise.

On day one the passengers were asked if they would like to take part in a production of "Godspell", or help with the services. Shirley chose the former as she liked singing and dancing. I volunteered to help with the services, and was asked to read the lesson on Palm Sunday and Easter Day, and to help with the chalice. There was a retired traditional Church of England priest and his wife on board and also a much younger priest, Cindy Kent, an ex pop star from the

group "The Settlers", who was somewhat reminiscent of the Vicar of Dibley! Remarkably the two made a fine team together. They held a short service every morning of the cruise in the ship's theatre.

The first port of call was La Coruna, and we were taken to the magnificent and very impressive Cathedral Church of Santiago de Compostella - the famous pilgrimage site in north-west Spain. It was moving to see many pilgrims with the scallop shell of St. James on their rucksacks, who had walked all or part of the Camino to reach this holy place.

Palm Sunday was celebrated off the Azores, and Holy Week



was observed daily with all the usual procedures - washing the feet on Maundy Thursday (off Madeira), stripping the altar, and a solemn Good Friday service. The timings of services had to be flexible and work around Marco Polo's passage and

outings at ports. There was an Easter Day sunrise service at the ship's stern at sea near Lisbon, and later a glorious Easter Day Holy Communion with a backdrop of the Atlantic Ocean. Reading the lessons was very different to that in church. The piece of furniture used as a lectern was wobbly, the light not good, the print could have been bigger, no amplification system, and, of course, a relatively small boat afloat on the ocean rolls a lot! It was necessary to place one's feet wide apart for balance!!

As for the production of "Godspell", it was amazing. Of the five soloists two had taken part in the original West End show. There were frequent rehearsals and the ultimate experience was superb and very moving. With a small ship, and living on board for fifteen days, we got to know most of our fellow travellers - you may remember Dana, an Irish singer/pop star, the actor who played the vicar in "Dad's

Army", Sue Hodge who was the small, blonde, curly-headed actress in "Allo Allo" all told their life stories in one evening's show, a sort of "Who do you think you are?". Joining the keep fit class proved to be challenging, with a polished floor, rolling boat and led by a teenage Russian dancer built like a piece of elastic!

On the final night at sea there was a special Easter "Songs of Praise" which was fully supported by what felt like every passenger. At the end, the Cruise Entertainment Director asked the principal girl dancer to come to the front of the stage. To everyone's astonishment he knelt on one knee and asked her to marry him. The entire audience held it's breath in anticipation and when she said "yes", with great thankfulness we all cheered wildly. This was high drama indeed and we felt amazingly privileged to share their unique (and usually private) moment. This happy event was totally unexpected by all, except the prospective bridegroom and the younger priest, who had both kept the secret for the entire fifteen days on board. Cindy told us afterwards it was extremely hard to keep "mum". Needless to say everyone was thrilled to bits. What an ending to a wonderful holiday of 3643 nautical miles and many ports of interest. It will always remain totally unforgettable.



Anna Castley

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES

MAUNDY THURSDAY

7.00 p.m. Holy Communion

GOOD FRIDAY

9.30 a.m. Children's Service, followed by
craft activities in the hall

12 noon Stations of the Cross

1.00 p.m. Faure's Requiem in church

SATURDAY 16TH APRIL

6.00 p.m. Service of Light

EASTER DAY

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion

10.30 a.m. Parish Communion

PALM SUNDAY

It must have been a dramatic sight on Palm Sunday when Jesus approached Jerusalem to the adulation of the crowds. The Bible tells us that *'A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of Him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"'* (Matthew 21:8,9).

But not everyone in Jerusalem welcomed Jesus; in the very next verse we read, *'the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?"'* (10). But by the end of the week, the crowds had turned against Jesus and were demanding His crucifixion. (Matthew 27:22).

Why did they turn against Jesus so quickly? Perhaps they were disappointed because He refused to fulfil their expectations in establishing a new political kingdom. Instead, He came to change our hearts and save us from our sins by His death and resurrection. As He said during that week, *'My kingdom is not of this world.'* (John 18:36). This deeply disappointed those who hoped that He would throw out the hated Roman occupiers.

Where would we have been on that first Palm Sunday? *Among the disciples who welcomed Him or among the sceptical crowds?* It's easy to judge those who condemned Jesus, but would we have acted differently? We too can be disappointed when Jesus fails to meet our hopes and expectations of Him?

The message of Easter is that God still loves and accepts us, and because of Jesus we can be forgiven. He came for

one simple reason: *'For Christ also suffered once for sins...to bring you to God.'* (1 Peter 3:18). May we welcome Jesus afresh into our lives this Eastertime.

Canon Paul Hardingham

JESUS AND THE THIEVES ON THE CROSS

Luke's account of the crucifixion (Luke 23:32-43) emphasises the mocking of the crowd, *'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself'* (35,37,39). In their view a Messiah does not hang on a cross and suffer. In considering the two men who were crucified with Jesus, we are also confronted with the issue of how Jesus secures salvation for us.

The words of one of those crucified with Jesus reflected the crowd's taunts: *'Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us.'* He highlights the question of Jesus' identity: how can He save others, when He cannot save Himself from death? He failed to see that the cross itself was the means of salvation.



So – what kind of Messiah was Jesus?

The other criminal's response in his last moments is a moving expression of faith. When challenging the other man, he spoke of the utter injustice of the crucifixion: *'this man has done nothing wrong.'* He perceived the truth that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. In a wonderful picture of grace, *'remember me when You come into Your kingdom'*,

the second thief confessed his guilt and secured Jesus' forgiveness and mercy.

In reply, Jesus promised the man life from the moment of death; *'Today you will be with Me in paradise.'* Jesus used the picture of a *walled garden* to help the man understand His promise of protection and security in God's love and acceptance eternally.

Each one of us has to choose how we react to Jesus on the cross. Do we want Him to 'remember' us when He comes into His kingdom, or not? If you were to die tonight, how confident would you be of going to be with Jesus? *'For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God'* (1 Peter 3:18).

HANDEL'S MESSIAH

The original idea was not Handel's, but his collaborator's, Charles Jennens, a passionate Christian who wanted to demonstrate that Jesus really was the 'Christ', or Messiah. This was being denied by Deists in the 18th Century, who believed God created the world and then stayed distant from it.

Jennens combed the Old Testament for texts which anticipated God's continuing activity in the world, with the expectation of greater things to come: *Comfort ye my people; Every valley shall be exalted; And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed ...* and so on. Then there were poignant passages anticipating suffering, with deep significance for Christians: *Behold the Lamb of God; He was despised; Surely He hath borne our griefs.*

Throughout the work, there is the strong sense that God is both omnipotent and also intimately involved with the human race: *How beautiful are the feet; the kingdom of this world is become the Kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ.* The Hallelujah Chorus, the best known of the work, concludes the second part of 'Messiah', before the focus shifts mainly to the New Testament and Christ's resurrection and triumph: *The trumpet shall sound; Death where is thy sting; and finally, Worthy is the Lamb.*

Handel composed the music in 24 days, writing across the final manuscript, "To the glory of God". As he finished the Hallelujah Chorus, he said, "I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God Himself."

The work caused a stir by being presented in concert halls, rather than churches where some felt sacred works belonged. The first performance was in Dublin in 1742 and raised funds for charities. One of the soloists was Susanna Cibber, a woman of questionable reputation, whose rendering of "He was despised" so moved the Revd Patrick Delaney, that he cried out, "Woman, for this be all thy sins forgiven thee".

German-born Handel, who became a British subject and whose finances were sometimes precarious, didn't always get on with the wealthy Jennens, but the two men shared a single mission. The oratorio 'Messiah' is the result.

The Ven. John Barton



CALENDAR FOR APRIL

Fri 1 10.30 am
5.00 pm

Coffee Morning in hall
Lent Devotion and
Compline

LENT 5

Sun 3 8.00 am
10.30 am
6.00 pm

Holy Communion
Parish Communion
Evening Prayer

Wed 6 10.30 am
5.00 pm

Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*
Lent Devotion and
Compline

Fri 8 10.30 am

Mums and Toddlers

PALM SUNDAY

Sun 10 8.00 am
10.30 am

Holy Communion
Matins

Wed 13 10.30 am

Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*

Thurs 14 7.00 pm

Holy Communion for Maundy
Thursday

Fri 15 9.30 am

Children's Service followed
by craft activities

12 noon

Stations of the Cross

1.00 pm

Faure's Requiem *in church*

Sat 16 6.00 pm

Service of Light

EASTER DAY

Sun	17	8.00 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Parish Communion
Wed	20	10.30 am	NO HOLY COMMUNION <i>at</i> <i>St. Nicolas</i>
Thurs	21	3.30 pm	Magazine collation
Fri	22	10.30 am	Mums and Toddlers

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

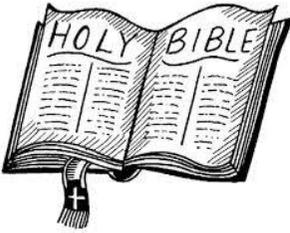
Sun	24	8.00 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Matins
Tues	26	10.00 am	Craft Group
Wed	27	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>
Thurs	28	10.00 am	Parish Art Group

THE QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE

We will be having a garden party at the Vicarage, 14
Flaghead Road, on Sunday 5th June at 3.30 pm.

Do come along and join us. Everyone would be very
welcome.

If it's a rainy day we will move the party to the church hall.



SUNDAY READINGS **IN APRIL**

Sunday 3rd 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 10th 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 17th 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 24th 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.

Sunday 1st May - Easter 3

OLD TESTAMENT: Zeph. 3. 14-end

In his vision of the Messianic age, God will come into the midst of his people with forgiveness and mercy to renew them with his love.

NEW TESTAMENT: Acts 9. 1-6

Jesus, whom Saul is persecuting, speaks to him on his way to Damascus and orders him to go into the city and await orders.

GOSPEL: John 21. 1-19

Jesus and the miraculous catch of fish and following this Jesus reinstates Peter as the head of the church.

Alleluia
He is
Risen



FOOLING AROUND

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 Auntie 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 EMPTY TOMB AND THE RISEN CHRIST

'So they (*the women*) went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.'

That's how some early manuscripts of Mark's Gospel finish. It's an unexpected twist, when you consider the confident announcement at the outset: "The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Good news? Afraid?

Mark doesn't embroider his writing. His Greek language is that of the street, and he uses short, abrupt sentences. So, he tells it straight when the women, who had remained faithful to Jesus right up to the end, were confronted with an empty grave, and the first intimation that Jesus was no longer dead. Nothing like this had ever happened. What had seemed like a tragic and inevitable finale was now flatly contradicted. These women had stumbled across something unique that God was doing. It was to be the beginning of a new era for the human race, encompassing past, present and future.

They were afraid. You bet. Matthew's Gospel tells it slightly differently: 'the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy.' Later, when the other disciples encountered the Risen Christ, we read of their joy, doubt, disbelief, gladness, wonder. Luke encapsulates these confused emotions in a single phrase, 'While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering...'

After many weeks of what we summarise as 'resurrection appearances', Luke rounds off his account with Jesus

blessing the disciples: "While He was blessing them, He withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the Temple, blessing God.'

A 21st Century disciple will contemplate the presence of the Risen Christ with wonder, adoration, and joy. Surely with trembling, too? The same Jesus, seated at the right hand of the Father, will come again to judge the living and the dead.

Though hopelessly inadequate, we are enveloped by His sacrificial love, released by the crucifixion. We dare to look up, "afraid, yet filled with joy".

The Ven. John Barton

INTERNATIONAL AND INTERDENOMINATIONAL

At SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe) in Mons, Belgium, there were fifteen different nationalities. Consequently there were many different religious groups. When building the church, the Baptists were asked to build their own as they required a total immersion tank.

When singing in the choir, I found that the Church of England joined with the American Episcopalians. Looking down the corridor I noted various doors for the numerous clergy. All the choirs had different coloured surplices, German Lutherans; Italian Catholics, etc., in blues, reds, purples and yellows. After each service we would progress into the hall, in a Royal Tournament procession, and mix for

coffee. This is how I imagined Babel so many languages not always singing from the same sheet!

There were two chapels, one of which was used by the Jews on Saturday. The seating was in a semi-circle. This was a problem when I read the lesson as I had to move my head from one area to another it was like saying, "Friends, Romans and Countrymen...lend me your ears"! At choir practice we sang different Amens with output from the Norwegians and Dutch who sang with us.

One year Archbishop Michael Ramsey, the Archbishop of Canterbury, came to preach, joined by many of the other clergy and Rabbis. This took place in a large conference room, usually used for the military, to accommodate the large congregation. What an amazing Christian experience.

Dawn Goodson

ST. GEORGE, HICCUP AND THE DRAGON

(26th April)

Have you seen the film *How to Train your Dragon*? It's set in a Viking village under attack from dragons, who steal livestock and burn down houses. Hiccup, the village Chief's son, invents a machine to capture dragons. However, when he catches one of the most dangerous dragons, he cannot kill it, when he sees that the dragon is just as frightened as he is. Through this friendship, the people and dragons eventually learn to live in harmony.

This month we celebrate St George, the patron saint of England. He is famous for slaying a dragon, a tradition

which became popular in the Middle Ages. Whether he killed an actual dragon is open to question! However, we do know that the original George was a Roman soldier at the time of Emperor Diocletian. He refused to renounce his faith, as commanded by the Emperor, resulting in his death on 23 April 303 AD.

The contrast is clear: St George slayed the evil dragon, while Hiccup refused to kill one. However, they also have something important in common. Both acted according to their conscience, defying the popular understanding of those around them and not worrying about the personal cost to themselves. St George was martyred for standing up for his faith in Jesus before a pagan emperor, while Hiccup risked rejection by his father and village because of his compassion.



Today, we are still called to stand for Christ against wrongs and injustice in daily life, whatever the personal cost. However, we also need to be ready to look our enemies in the eye and meet their hostility with love and compassion. This is why we also remember this month that Jesus died and rose again, so that we might have God's power to do this in our lives.

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sunday 3 rd April	No flowers (Lent)
Sunday 10 th April	Susanne King
Sunday 17 th April	The Flower Guild
Sunday 24 th April	Susanne King



MAGAZINE DEADLINE

The deadline for the May issue of the
Church Magazine is
Friday 15th April