

# The Vicar Writes...

Dear Friends

Philippians 2 v7: He emptied himself taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are and being in every way like a human being.

By experiencing the same griefs and going through the same trials, Jesus shows us how to deal with them and triumph over them.

When exposed to stress, human beings are vulnerable and weak and the physical strength gives out. Jesus, on his way to be crucified, having been further weakened by the Roman custom of scourging, falls beneath the weight of the cross, not once but three times.

Jesus was vulnerable. He was no stranger to tears. He knew the pain of rejection and ingratitude. He was falsely accused, mocked and despised. He was the object of jealousy and resentment. He experienced cold and heat, hunger and thirst. He knew what it was to be tired.

Throughout his life we see a very human Jesus in the midst of struggle. He is aware of his own lack of strength and wisdom and repeatedly draws apart to pray, seeking God's will for him and the strength to carry it out.

In the Garden of Gethsemane we see Jesus at his most human, struggling with fear and anxiety. Like us, he needs the comfort and support of his friends. The situation which lies ahead seems to him to be beyond his strength; he is struggling to choose the right way and yet knows that even now he could so easily escape from his enemies.

St. Mark describes the struggle "and he began to feel the terror and anguish and he said to them 'my soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Wait here and stay awake'".

He prays, "Abba, Father, for you everything is possible, take this cup away from me, but let it be as you, not I, would have it".

He returns to the comfort of his friends, but they fail him and are asleep. He wakes them and goes to struggle in prayer once more. Again he goes back to get comfort, only this time, finding them asleep, he finds the strength to go on alone. In other words, he has fought the battle and won.

We question God so much when we meet with pain and suffering, whereas Jesus uses the most loving name for his Father - Abba - even in the midst of his agonising struggle. The struggle is not about a lack of trust in God, but an overcoming of human frailty and fear. We know his victorious struggle and crucifixion brought about the salvation of mankind. Jesus tells us to take up our cross, whatever pain that may be, and follow him, not to avoid it.

Who knows what God could do through us if only, with Jesus, we could say "Thy will be done".

With all good wishes  
Andrew

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY

A very special **Happy Birthday** to Geoff Hayward who celebrates his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on 1<sup>st</sup> March.



## **Christ The Redeemer in 2014**

Clive and I had been on Fred Olsen's cruise ship Black Watch since the beginning of the month. We had already called in several ports and successfully crossed the Equator. Now we were heading for Rio de Janeiro and the iconic statue which had been on our wish list to see for many years. The temperature was 34C and we were 1,102 nautical miles from home.

That morning we joined other passengers to gaze at the spectacular coastline, which we could see in the distance. As we sailed closer we could clearly see the high rise buildings of the city in the shade of the mountains. One was the Sugar Loaf Mountain with cable cars traversing from one mountain to the taller one, and one was Mount Corcovado at 710 metres high with the tiny white statue shining on the top.

When we had eventually docked and escaped the ship, we climbed aboard the coach which would take us through the busy city centre to the railway station. Hanging from the entrance ceiling were hundreds of colourful flags from every country in the world. Giant photographs of the funicular train and of the statue seen from various angles, covered the walls.

The Corcovado railway was built in 1884 using an innovative cog system that was brought to Brazil from Switzerland. At 3827 metres long with four stations, the fourth one was only 40 meters below the summit. On board the train a Samba Band played and passengers were encouraged to dance in the tiny corridor causing much amusement! As we climbed up the side of the mountain, through the windows we could see the world famous statue

getting bigger and bigger. Out of the train and another queue for the lift to take us further up, followed by an escalator to the very top. We came out into the cool fresh air and stood beneath the amazing statue of **Christ the Redeemer**. Towering above us the huge figure was breathtaking. The sun shone over his shoulder and it was as if he was blessing all the tourists who were milling about underneath his feet. We stayed for an hour wandering around the base, taking photographs, looking up at Christ and looking far down into the city of Rio (where the World Cup Football was to be held that summer and the Olympics in 2016). It was wonderful! On board ship we had attended a lecture during which we were shown photos, showing how during a recent violent thunderstorm, the right hand of Christ was hit by lightning. We saw photographs of men having climbed up inside and out over the arm to repair the damaged fingers. By the time we were there, all was well with the hand. Lightning had also caused much damage in 2008. Renovation costs must be on going and enormous!

### **Some facts - if you have time!**

In the early 1920s, the Catholic Church, which had effectively ruled Brazil since 1550, was starting to lose the support of Brazilian citizens who were coming under socialist political and economic influences from Europe after the Great War. Rio de Janeiro's powerful Catholic Circle decided to create a religious monument to bring its people closer together and to keep them in the fold of the church.

It was eventually decided that the Corcovado Mountain was the perfect spot for the monument. After many designs were put forward for this prestigious project, it was finally created by French sculptor Paul Landowski, built by



Brazilian engineer Heitor da Silva Costa, in collaboration with French engineer Albert Caquot. Romanian sculptor Gheorghe Leonida fashioned the face. Made in reinforced concrete with an outer layer of sandstone, the Art Deco statue took nine years to build and was completed in 1931. Standing 30 meters tall, its horizontally stretched arms spanning 28 metres. The Christ the Redeemer statue has become emblematic of both the city of Rio de Janeiro and the whole nation of Brazil. The pedestal of the statue was hollow and in 2006 a small chapel was built there and used for services including weddings and baptisms.

*Rosemary Gameson*

## **THE ASHING SERVICE**

Such a strange name for a church service! Why would anyone be attracted to attend such a thing?

This year Ash Wednesday is close to the start of March; on the Second of the month. As the first day of Lent the service is used to physically place a sign of the cross on each person's forehead using ashes made from the previous year's palm crosses.

The use of ashes has a long history in Jewish and Christian worship; the Old Testament referring to sackcloth and ashes over twenty times.

There is clearly a visual link with the blackness of evil and sin but also the 'dirtiness' that spreads everywhere from it. We all know how a small amount of mud on the shoes walked into the house will soon go everywhere and

take a much harder and longer clean-up operation than if it was wiped off before entering.

In Christian records, ashes are used for penitents by the sixth century, but it is not until the beginning of the eleventh century that the faithful took part in a ceremony on the Wednesday before Lent that included the imposition of ashes. Still later this came to be called Ash Wednesday.

Over the centuries the emphasis of meaning for the imposed ashes has changed, from a preparation for baptism, a renewal of baptismal vows, to an understanding of a community's preparation for the event of the Paschal mystery of rebirth at Easter.

It reminds of what is past and what is to come, and it encourages us to think again of how we can change that journey should we wish to do so.

The Imposition of Ashes is a powerful nonverbal and experiential way of participating in the call to repentance and reconciliation. It is 'felt' in the heart and soul – as well as on the skin.

And can be one of the most profound experiences of humility as we enter together as a Christian community across the globe our journey towards the Cross and the Resurrection.

As the priest says the traditional words over you, *"Remember that you are but dust, and to dust you will return. Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ. Amen."* what will you be focusing upon?

*The Rev'd Dr. Jo White*

## **THE STORY OF THE YELLOW RIBBONS**

We are loved with everlasting love! One of the greatest and most comforting doctrines taught in the Bible is the love of God for His people. In the Law and in the Prophets; in the poetical and historical books; in Gospels and Letters – all agree to tell us what God said to His people through Jeremiah. “I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3).

It was that love that moved the Father to send His Son into the world (John 3:16). Paul writes glowingly of “that great love with which He loved us” (Ephesians 2:4). John emphasises the same great truth in a magnificent creed of just three words: ‘God is love’ (1 John 4:8). Quite simply there is nothing in all creation more reassuring, more comforting, more encouraging, more uplifting than to know that God loves us. And we can go further and put it in personal terms as Paul did. ‘He loved me and gave Himself for me’ (Galations 2:21).

How can we illustrate the illimitable love of God? One such illustration was told by the Rev John Wilbur Chapman of Indiana, an ordained Presbyterian minister who in 1893 went into full-time evangelistic ministry.

One evening Chapman was travelling by train in a rural part of Kansas. The other passenger in the carriage was a young man who kept glancing out the window and then covering his face with his hands. Chapman asked if he could help.

The young man confessed that many years before he had run away from home and ‘sown his wild oats.’ He had not written to his parents at all, until a few weeks before, telling them that he would be travelling on this train. At a certain

point it passed very close to his home. In the letter he had begged his parents' forgiveness and asked if they wanted him to come home. If so, they were to tie a yellow ribbon on the old apple tree that grew right beside the railway lines.

"Sir," he said to Chapman, "the train will soon pass my home but I'm afraid to look. If there's a yellow ribbon on the tree, I'll get off at the next station and go home. If there's no ribbon, I'll just travel on. But I'm too afraid to look out for the tree." So Chapman offered to look for him.

"You can open your eyes now," he said a few minutes later. The returning prodigal looked at Chapman with tears and quivering lips. 'All is well,' said the evangelist. 'There is a yellow ribbon on the apple tree. In fact, there's far more than one. Every branch is hanging with yellow ribbons, scores and scores of them. Your parents love you that much, they want you to come home.'

If parents can love their wayward children like that, how much greater is the love of God! Truly, we are loved with everlasting love.

*Dr Herbert McGonigle, former Senior Lecturer in Historical Theology & Church History, Nazarene Theological College, Manchester*

# **SHROVE TUESDAY**

(1<sup>st</sup> March)

Ever wonder why we eat pancakes just before Lent? The tradition dates back to Anglo-Saxon times, when Christians spent Lent in repentance and severe fasting.



So on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, the church bell would summon them to confession, where they would be 'shriven', or absolved from their sins, which gives us *Shrove* Tuesday. At home, they would then eat up their last eggs and fat, and making a pancake was the easiest way to do this. For the next 47 days, they pretty well starved themselves.

Pancakes feature in cookery books as far back as 1439, and today's pancake races are in remembrance of a panicked woman back in 1445 in Olney, Buckinghamshire. She was making pancakes when she heard the shriving bell calling her to confession. Afraid she'd be late, she ran to the church in a panic, still in her apron, and still holding the pan.

Flipping pancakes is also centuries old. A poem from Pasquil's Palin in 1619 runs: "And every man and maide doe take their turne, And tosse their Pancakes up for feare they burne."

Some people have noted that the ingredients of pancakes can be used to highlight four significant things about this time of year: eggs stand for creation, flour is the staff of life, while salt keeps things wholesome, and milk stands for purity. Shrove Tuesday is always 47 days before Easter Sunday and falls between 3rd February and 9th March.



Thurs	17	10.00 am	Parish Art Group
Fri	18	10.30 am <b>5.00 pm</b>	<b><i>Coffee Morning in hall Lent Devotion and Compline</i></b>

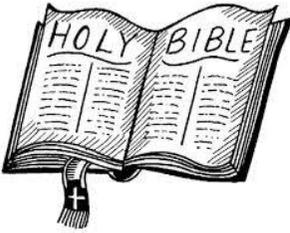
**LENT 3**

Sun	20	8.00 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Parish Communion
Wed	23	10.30 am <b>5.00 pm</b>	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i> <b><i>Lent Devotion and Compline</i></b>
Thurs	24	3.30 pm	Magazine collation
Fri	25	10.30 am <b>5.00 pm</b>	Mums and Toddlers <b><i>Lent Devotion and Compline</i></b>

**MOTHERING SUNDAY**

Sun	27	8.00 am 10.30 am	Holy Communion Matins
Tues	29	10.00 am	Craft Group
Wed	30	10.30 am <b>5.00 pm</b>	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i> <b><i>Lent Devotion and Compline</i></b>
Thurs	31	10.00 am	Parish Art Group
Fri	1	10.30 am <b>5.00 pm</b>	<b><i>Coffee Morning in hall Lent Devotion and Compline</i></b>

**ADVANCE NOTICE:** Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April, 11.00 am,  
Annual Parochial Church Meeting in the hall.



## **SUNDAY READINGS** **IN MARCH**

### **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> March - Lent 1**

OLD TESTAMENT: Deuteronomy 26.1-11

*The ritual tithe prescribed by the law must be given in a spirit of thanksgiving to God for his mercy and generosity.*

NEW TESTAMENT: Romans 10.8-13

*Those who proclaim that Jesus is Lord and believe in their hearts that God raised him from the dead will be saved.*

GOSPEL: Luke 4.1-13

*Jesus' experience in the wilderness portrays temptation as the power of Satan which tries to lure us into self-centred, not God-centred, behaviour.*

### **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> March - Lent 2**

OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis 15.1-12, 17-18

*The Lord told Abraham that he would have many descendants who would be given the land between Egypt and the Euphrates.*

NEW TESTAMENT: Luke 13.31-end

*Jesus declares his love for Jerusalem and tells those questioning him that he will die there and that the Temple will be abandoned.*

### **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> March - Lent 3**

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 55.1-9

*God offers mercy and blessing to those who turn to him. Other nations will see through Israel's example.*

NEW TESTAMENT: 1 Corinthians 10.1-13

*Paul warns his readers of being complacent like the Israelites had been in the wilderness.*

GOSPEL: Luke 13.1-9

*Jesus tells the people to turn from their sins or die. He tells the parable of the unfruitful fig tree which must bear fruit if it is not to be cut down.*

**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> March - Mothering Sunday**

NEW TESTAMENT: Luke 2.33-35

*When Jesus is presented in the Temple, Simeon speaks especially to Mary, his mother.*

**COMPLINE AND LENT DEVOTION**

This year we will be retuning to our normal format during Lent. On Wednesdays and Fridays during Lent, beginning on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> March and ending on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April, we will be meeting in the Lady Chapel in church at 5.00 pm for a short service. It will be no longer than 30 minutes.

Do not feel you have to come to all the services. Just come along when you feel able to.

## **THE MARIE CURIE APPEAL**

This March the UK's leading end of life charity Marie Curie will once again be asking people across the UK to support its Great Daffodil Appeal.

Money raised from the flagship fundraising appeal will help the charity's doctors, nurses and hospice staff continue their vital work providing expert care to people at the end of life, and their families. Funds raised also go towards the Marie Curie Information and Support Line, which provides support for people dealing with all aspects of end of life including bereavement.

Last year Marie Curie provided direct support to more than 69,000 people – a 15% rise on the previous year – which is more than ever before.

Marie Curie would like to encourage as many people as possible to give their money or time through volunteering, donating, and fundraising. This could include taking part in a Step into Spring challenge, organising a fundraising event, purchasing products from the Marie Curie online shop, or donating.



This year, for the first time in two years, Marie Curie's volunteer collectors will be back on the streets donning their daffodil hats and selling the charity's iconic daffodil pins.

During the Great Daffodil Appeal, on 23rd March, Marie Curie is inviting everyone in the UK to take part in the National Day of Reflection. It will be a day to come together

and support the millions of people who are grieving and remember those we have lost.

You can show your support for the day by wearing a daffodil pin and joining the minute's silence at 12 noon. Or take part by joining one of the many local events happening across the UK or join one of the online talks for inspiration, support and reflection.

For more information on the National Day of Reflection and how to support Marie Curie's Great Daffodil Appeal this March, visit: [mariecurie.org.uk](http://mariecurie.org.uk)

## **REMEMBERING MOTHERS**

The honouring of mothers goes back to Roman times. Each Spring, a pagan festival honoured Cybele, supreme Goddess of Fertility and Mother of all the Gods. Other celebrations paid tribute to Mother Earth. From the Middle Ages, in England, it became traditional for outdoor labourers and craftsmen to have a day off in Lent. Later, domestic servants were also given short leave to visit their mother and family.

These brief holidays became opportunities to go to church. This might have been their home church or their nearest cathedral. The Services at the 'mother' church symbolised the coming together of families. The term 'Mothering Sunday' dates from the 16th century. This year it falls on the 27th March.

'Mother's Day' is a secular festival. It originated in 1908 after a woman called Anna Jarvis held a church memorial

service for her mother in West Virginia, USA. She was a peace activist and a nurse. She founded Mother's Day Work Clubs to address public health issues. Anna wanted people to honour the mother of the family, maternal bonds, and the influence of mothers in society. Before she died Anna regretted the commercialism that followed and expressed that this was never her intention.

Many mothers are mentioned in the Bible along with interesting stories about them. These include Eve, Hagar, Leah, Ruth and Bathsheba, to mention only a few. A few times God enabled childless women to have a baby: Rachel, Rebekah, Manoah's wife (unnamed) and Hannah who eventually gave birth to Joseph, Jacob, Samson and Samuel respectively. There was also Sarah, wife of Abraham, who aged 90 became the mother of Isaac.

It is possible that these miraculous births were remembered by the Virgin Mary. She was certainly aware that her elderly relative was pregnant. These events foreshadowed angel Gabriel's announcement that Mary was going to have a baby. Then added "For nothing is impossible with God." (Luke 1:37)

On our Mothering Sunday, what else can we remember about mothers and give thanks to God for them?

*Lester Amann*

## **ST. PATRICK** *(17<sup>th</sup> March)*

St Patrick is the patron saint of Ireland. If you've ever been in New York on St Patrick's Day, you'd think he was the patron saint of New York as well... the flamboyant parade is full of American/Irish razzmatazz.

It's all a far cry from the hard life of this 5th century humble Christian who became in time both bishop and apostle of Ireland. Patrick was born the son of a town councillor in the west of England, between the Severn and the Clyde. But as a young man he was captured by Irish pirates, kidnapped to Ireland, and reduced to slavery. He was made to tend his master's herds.

Desolate and despairing, Patrick turned to prayer. He found God was there for him, even in such desperate circumstances. He spent much time in prayer, and his faith grew and deepened, in contrast to his earlier years, when he "knew not the true God".

Then, after six gruelling, lonely years he was told in a dream he would soon go to his own country. He either escaped or was freed, made his way to a port 200 miles away and eventually persuaded some sailors to take him with them away from Ireland.

After various adventures in other lands, including near-starvation, Patrick landed on English soil at last, and returned to his family. But he was much changed. He had enjoyed his life of plenty before; now he wanted to devote the rest of his life to Christ. Patrick received some form of training for the priesthood, but not the higher education he really wanted.

But by 435, well-educated or not, Patrick was badly needed. Palladius' mission to the Irish had failed, and so the Pope sent Patrick back to the land of his slavery. He set up his see at Armagh and worked principally in the north. He urged the Irish to greater spirituality, set up a school, and made several missionary journeys.

Patrick's writings are the first literature certainly identified from the British Church. They reveal sincere simplicity and a deep pastoral care. He wanted to abolish paganism, idolatry, and was ready for imprisonment or death in the following of Christ.

Patrick remains the most popular of the Irish saints. The principal cathedral of New York is dedicated to him, as, of course, is the Anglican cathedral of Dublin.

### **TO MAKE YOU SMILE .....**

The minister came to see me the other day. He said that at my age I should be thinking of the hereafter. I told him, "Oh, I do it all the time. No matter where I am – in the bedroom, upstairs, in the kitchen, or down in the basement – I ask myself, 'Now, what am I here after?'"

In Swansea there used to be a well-known firm of solicitors called W G Christian and Sons. A letter sent to them from overseas was addressed simply: W. G. Christian, South Wales. It eventually arrived at their office with a note from the Post Office attached. It read: "No Christians in Cardiff – try Swansea

## **FROM THE REGISTERS**

### **Funerals**

8 <sup>th</sup> February	Robert Edward Turnbull (87)
15 <sup>th</sup> February	Daphne Cynthia Wilson (92)
2 <sup>nd</sup> March	Jean Betty Phillips (98)

## **ALTAR FLOWERS**

Sunday 6 <sup>th</sup> March	No Flowers (Lent)
Sunday 13 <sup>th</sup> March	No Flowers (Lent)
Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> March	No Flowers (Lent)
Mothering Sunday	Susanne King



## **MAGAZINE DEADLINE**

The deadline for the April issue of the  
Church Magazine is  
**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March**