

ALL SAINTS CHURCH BOYNE HILL MAIDENHEAD

PARISH NEWS

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Issue 47 17 February 2021



Dear Parishioners and Friends of All Saints, Boyne Hill,

Last Sunday at our zoom Morning Prayer we thought about ‘wow’ moments or spine-tingling experiences. This was in the context of the transfiguration when Peter, James and John experienced Jesus in all his glory. It was too, the occasion when God spoke to the disciples and said ‘Listen to him.’ God might have said, please try to notice me. I chose to reflect on our own experiences of our 2009 Holy Land Pilgrimage and the wow experiences that a number of us had in 2009. We also reflected on the birth of Jeanette’s new baby granddaughter Tawny and Greg Hurst’s beautiful reflection of his walk and the joy and refreshment he found in noticing a heron taking flight, the shoal of small fish and the face to face encounter with the roe deer buck.

We surely (hopefully) can all reflect on our own stories of awe-inspiring moments. Music that lifts and moves us, art that inspires us and acts of kindness that move us. The list of what I have called ‘Timeless moments’ could go on. This Lent I invite you to join me in trying to find a way of life that as Jesuits say ‘Sees God in all things’. I hope that you will join me in trying to discover a rule of life that helps us to reflect on Scripture, open our eyes to the Holy Spirit, to enjoy God’s gifts with gratitude and discover ways in which we support each other and the wider community. Hopefully, we will find a better balance in our lives of activity and contemplation that we may kind a calmness in our lives living in God’s presence.

To help us we will be using a book called ‘The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything’ by James Martin. This book was recommended to us at Walsingham a few years ago. The course, using the book, will begin on Wednesday 24th February at 7.30pm and finish at 8.30pm. I will give a little input from the book each week and offer you the questions within the newsletter. On the Wednesdays we will have a short talk, followed by a discussion using the questions and then a time of prayer through dwelling, noticing, and stilling. In week one of the course, I reflect on Fr Martin’s chapter on ‘The Six Paths’.

He asks us to think about our journey of faith. He assumes that we believe in God but suggests that we ask how we find God?

1. Path of Belief

This is about people whose belief in God has been part of their lives. They have been born into a religious family, they pray regularly, attend religious services and perhaps feel comfortable talking about God. Their lives are not free from suffering, but faith enables them to put suffering within a framework of meaning writes Martin.

Faith in this context means you are never alone, and the worshipping community provides companionship. In times of struggle, we can find the idea that faith is an anchor and we live with the hope that death is not the end. However, even faith like this, needs cultivating and nourishing. Like a garden you have soil, seeds and water but you need patience and hard work. The danger with this type of faith can be a sense of certainty leading to a lack of understanding of others on another path. At its worst faith of this kind can lack compassion. It can also become a stagnant faith which when tested by suffering can crumble unless we have moved from our child like faith to an adult understanding and experience.

2. The Path of Independence

Organised religion can become dull or worse meaningless. It might be better to go it alone and seek our own strength. We can search for the perfect religious community, but we fail to find one. We need to accept life in community in which everybody is more or less imperfect. If we seek perfection in the community, the search to discover it, could be a journey without an end.

3. The Path of Disbelief

On this path the person not only finds religion has no appeal but also questions the very existence of God. People want proof of God. The good side of this is that they refuse bland reassurances of religious people. Fr Martin goes on to write that some of these people think more about God than some religious people do. They can become 'secular saints'. Fr Martin discovered some of the hardest working people helping refugees in East Africa were non-believers.

The problem is that seeking a faith only from the mind closes the possibility of experiencing God and his presence through the heart. There is the well known story of the atheist and the flood experience. He says to himself during a flood that if there's a God he will save me. There's a warning on the radio of flooding, there's a fire fighter knocking on his door to get him to evacuate but he ignores as he wants God to save. Then a coastguard offers assistance before finally a police helicopter drops a rope. All offer of help is ignored until a giant wave sweeps him away. In heaven he asks God angrily why didn't you save me? God says 'I sent the firefighter, the coastguard and the police officer! What more do you want?'

4. Path of return

I would think most clergy find people on this journey. They were forced to go to church as children, then left the church before an experience in life brought them to question faith again. They may have enjoyed financial success and professional success but still ask 'Is that it?' or a death of a loved one like a parent leads to questions of mortality or they have children who ask questions of faith.

When they return, they sometimes seek a different faith to their childhood faith. I think that is the reason for the success of Alpha, Emmaus, Christianity Explored, Pilgrim and other courses. Fr Martin writes that we sometimes have left faith because of suffering or tragedy. He lost a 21 year old friend at University in a car accident. He asks a friend of the deceased how can you still believe? The friend replies I thank God for his life. She does not explain suffering but perhaps she points to a God who is in suffering. Two excellent television programmes 'Rev' and 'Broken' highlight priests who try to notice God in suffering.

5. Path of Exploration

Recently I watched a programme that looked at the making of the film 'Jesus of Nazareth' with Robert Powell acting in Franco Zeffirelli's 1977 film. Powell said how experiencing the places of the Holy Land and acting out scenes from Jesus' life led him to ask questions of faith. We can experience this path of exploration too when we visit another place of worship like the Quakers when you can experience a quiet

contemplation. I have experienced the Quaker community myself at Reading during my time at Bracknell Team ministry. Experience with other faiths can also be enlightening. I know through worshipping with Muslim and Jewish people eighteen months ago that the questions of our understanding of compassion explored through different ways was enlightening.

Exploration can lead you I guess to a different experience of believing or bring you back with a new appreciation. The trouble can be going on different paths of exploration but never finding one that is quite perfect. The path becomes the goal but not God. It was interesting to note that some people followed the same pilgrim path to Santiago on a number of occasions and wondered why the experience wasn't as rewarding on the second or third time.

6. Path of confusion

This is where people run hot and cold with their faith. People neither fall away from religion nor really connect with it. Some people are not clearly religious or non-religious and find it hard to make up their minds. Confusion can lead to laziness as it's too much energy to invest in a group that demands charity and forgiveness. Fr Martin described his own journey this way with a lukewarm Catholic background which rarely involved talking about God. He watched a documentary on the monk Thomas Merton and was drawn to this man's sense of peace and contemplative life.

Religion v Spirituality

Another question we may ask is are we spiritual or religious. Many bookshops today have plenty of books about self-help but fewer religious books. Finding the spiritual answer might be preferable to listening to a judgemental neighbour saying how much he helps the church or reads the bible or saying how he became successful because of his faith. Also, religion has many detractors saying it has led to wars, terrorist acts, persecution. Equally it has at its best love, forgiveness and charity and we see this in the lives of some of the great Saints.

If we chose to be spiritual, then we can pick and mix without commitment. Many people today discover or try to discover spiritual support through self-help courses and books. This is an individual way of living and can lack the sense of community. Religion can bring humility and help us meet our desire to come together to worship God and to meet the needs of community. Perhaps the most powerful shared religious experience I have had in my life is the time of sharing Holy Week with church communities.

As Fr Martin writes we probably need the individual spiritual journey and the connection with community that we discover in church. Whatever journey we are on we hope to discover 'God in all things'. Perhaps the key to this and I hope that this might be something more of us come to appreciate is awareness. We find ourselves back where I began. In this week's newsletter you will find Sue Nordberg's description of her granddaughter trying to climb the stairs and seeing this as a journey of faith. Where does gratitude and awe come from?

I recall experiencing in 1995 the Cliffs of Moher in the South West of the Republic of Ireland. That timeless moment shared with friends, listening to Irish music leads me to ask why does that touch me?

Happiness spent in the company of your wife or husband or partner or with friends over dinner leads us to ask where does that happiness and contentment come from?

God is not just present though in happiness. God is present when we accompany people in suffering. When someone shares a word of comfort that makes me feel loved that is powerful. This idea was explored in those two series I mentioned 'Rev' and 'Broken'. The key is found in the words of St Augustine 'Lord our hearts are restless until they rest in you.'

Questions for this week:

1. Which of the six paths to God might you be on? What paths have you experienced in the past? Have you been envious of people in path one?
2. Fr Martin writes about positives and negatives in organised religion. Love, charity, comfort and community versus negatives. What is your view of organised religion?
3. Individual spiritual life versus wisdom of community. Does the value of church community add value or make life more difficult?
4. Have you experienced emotions that surprised you? Did you experience/ notice these emotions as from God?

Hope to see you Wednesday to discuss and pray.

Also don't forget **Come and See**. This Lenten initiative from the Diocese based on the text from John 1.35-42 can be found on: <https://www.oxford.anglican.org/come-and-see>

As I wrote a couple of weeks ago you will find Bishop Steven's podcasts, testimony films and Daily pilgrim reflections. Bishop Steven's podcasts will use the Ignatian contemplative model too as he looks at the meaning of the creeds.

RESOURCES THIS WEEK:

Thursday 18 February

8.00pm Night Prayer on Zoom

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75976544021?pwd=Q1pJVtIpTytOdHg0VXhSRGxWRzIzZz09>

Meeting ID: 759 7654 4021

Password: 5rHziv

Psalm 74, Hebrews 2: 5 - end Hymn155 Unless a grain of wheat shall fall.

No Art course this week but Matthew is going to plan one for March. Thank you, Matthew, for the excellent course you shared with us.

Sunday 21 February

10.00am Morning Prayer for the First Sunday of Lent

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89125977023?pwd=R0FaSjNMK2ExNnoyVGZXNTZ4cHhwdz09>

Meeting ID: 891 2597 7023

Passcode: 369388

For the Diocesan Link for the Eucharist please see the front page of our website. The Diocesan resources can be found without internet on 01865 920930. The Church of England's new resource 'Daily Hope' which includes comforting hymns, daily prayers and reflections can be found on free telephone 0800 804 8044

6.00pm Sundays@Six with St Luke's & The Church of the Good Shepherd, Cox Green

Meeting ID: 839 6051 4349

Passcode: 945101

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83960514349?pwd=YUxYSVZSVjF1cDVTdS85cDRlZm95UT09>

Monday 22 February 7.30pm Prayer Group on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85011600714?pwd=Y0x2VWpMQ3JFUStsQ0plbEFLOEQrQT09>

Meeting ID: 850 1160 0714

Passcode: 553120

This group, following the example of our successful 'Church on the Move' from a decade ago, focusses on an area of mission that we would like to pray for. If you have anyone you would like us to pray for please let Fr Jeremy know.

Wednesday 24 10.00am – 11.00am Coffee Morning on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85980143355?pwd=Nm1kZmNLdHNMrg1sajF1OEplMVl2QT09>

All you need is a cup of coffee or tea and perhaps a biscuit or two. Then feel free to share a conversation.

Meeting ID: 859 8014 3355

Passcode: 412790

7.30pm – 8.30pm Zoom Lent discussion group on David Martin's book 'The Jesuit Guide to Almost Everything'. – 'The Six Paths'

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85193995613?pwd=S1MrNENDQlZEdlcyctUN0JQdlhDZz09>

Meeting ID: 851 9399 5613

Passcode: 429345

PRAYER INTENTIONS

Please pray for Daniel Honey whose funeral takes place at Boyn Hill Baptist Church this week.

Please pray for Jackie, Sarah, Joshua, Margaret and Jo during this very sad time.

Pray also for Evelyn, the friend of Michelle Symonds, who has died recently. We pray for Evelyn's family.

We pray at this time for Dianne Farmiloe's daughter and son battling Covid and for Christine Pocock's brother Tony in hospital with the virus.

We continue to pray for Mandy Rogers, Danielle, Nick, Fr John, Sister Mary Philip, Roger Baldery and Mark.

We give thanks for the safe birth of Jeanette's granddaughter Tawny. We pray for Simon and Sarah on the birth of their daughter.

We pray for Chris Harding studying in the Lebanon.

We pray for Chris Burnett, who starts a new career with the Royal Navy on Monday. Whilst he has been waiting he has worked hard painting the Birinus Room with Guillaume.

We continue to pray for the NHS workers and those from our community involved in the vaccination programme, especially Jeanette and Dianne. We give thanks that over 15 million people have now received their first vaccination.

We pray for Food Share as they continue to provide for people struggling to offer food to children.

In our prayers for the nation, we remember this week the elderly, isolated and vulnerable. We echo God's commitment to those most at risk of this virus by praying today for those who are particularly vulnerable and isolated: praying for their deliverance, protection and comfort. We hold before God those who care for them – that they would be strengthened and encouraged in this work.

We pray this week for families trying to offer home schooling to their children and trying to maintain their work at this time.

Pray the Parish:

The list of streets in our Parish was attached to Issue 41: this week we remember the ones beginning with H.

Church of England to 'Pray for the Nation' via the link below.

https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/202011/15348%20PftN%20Booklet_6th%20PROOF.pdf

From Charlie Mackesy:

"The greatest illusion," said the mole, 'is that life should be perfect'

May you all be blessed by God's love this week.

Fr Jeremy

Worship for SUNDAY 21 FEBRUARY The First Sunday of Lent

Sounds of Worship

Brian Graves

This week we start the season of Lent. The theme for Ash Wednesday concerns seeking the forgiveness of sins and finding a new beginning of life in God. This is closely followed by the first Sunday in Lent which focusses on Jesus' baptism, temptation in the wilderness but above all these events are about the mission to repent and believe in the Gospel.

The first hymn "Jesu lover of my soul" AM 128 is Charles Wesley's (1707 – 1788) great Lent-tide hymn set to the tune Aberystwyth composed by Joseph Parry (1841- 1903). The hymn describes how Jesus is a refuge against the storms of life, defender of the vulnerable, forgiver of sins and gateway to a new life on earth and in heaven. Charles Wesley was converted in 1738 and wrote this hymn soon after. It was published under the title "In Temptation" in 1740 by the Wesley brothers in Hymns and Sacred Poems. John Wesley did not publish it in his later hymnals, for whatever reason, but fortunately it has survived and remains well-known.

This hymn originally had five verses, but one ("Wilt Thou not regard my call?") is rarely used. The title and first line of the hymn, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," is a phrase that is probably not original to Wesley, but may have come from an apocryphal wisdom book, the Wisdom of Solomon, or a Christian classic, Thomas à Kempis's Imitation of Christ. The tune Aberystwyth was composed by Joseph Parry in 1876 and is named after the Welsh town he was living in at the time. He published it in *Ail Llyfr Tonau ac Emytau* (The Second Book of Tunes and Hymns) in 1879.

The life story of Parry is a real “rags to riches one (although, apparently he was never very rich, his rise from humble beginnings to global fame is outstanding). Parry was born in Merthyr Tydfil, into a large family. He left school to work in the local coal mines when he was nine years of age. He then went to work at the Cyfarthfa Ironworks, where his father was also employed. In 1854 the family emigrated to the United States, settling at Danville, Pennsylvania, where Parry again found employment at an iron works.

Though Parry had a great interest in music, he had no opportunity to study it until there was a temporary closure of the *Rough and Ready Iron Works*. Some of his colleagues were also musicians, and they offered music lessons while the iron works was closed. Parry joined a music sight-reading class taught by one of the men. He continued to study harmony with another colleague and learned how to read and write while he was learning about harmony.

Parry soon began submitting compositions to eisteddfodau in Wales and the United States and won several awards. During a return visit to Wales for the National Eisteddfod at Llandudno, Parry was offered two music scholarships, but was unable to accept due to family obligations. A fund was established for the support of Parry and his family while he studied music.

Parry went on to receive a Doctorate in Music from the University of Cambridge; he was the first Welshman to receive Bachelor's and Doctor's degrees in music from the University. He returned to Wales in 1874 to become the first Professor of Music at Aberystwyth University, later accepting a position at Cardiff University. He is also credited with being the first Welshman to compose an opera, *Blodwen*, which was also the first opera in the Welsh language.

1. Jesus, lover of my soul,
let me to thy bosom fly,
while the nearer waters roll,
while the tempest still is high.
hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
till the storm of life is past;
safe into the haven guide'
O receive my soul at last.
2. Other refuge have I none,
hangs my helpless soul on thee;
leave, ah, leave me not alone,
still support and comfort me.
All my trust on thee is stayed,
all my help from thee I bring;
cover my defenceless head
with the shadow of thy wing.
3. Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
more than all in thee I find;
raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
heal the sick, and lead the blind.
just and holy is thy name,
I am all unrighteousness;
false and full of sin I am,
thou art full of truth and grace.

4. Plenteous grace with thee is found,
grace to cover all my sin;
let the healing streams abound,
make and keep me pure within.
Thou of life the fountain art:
freely let me take of thee,
spring thou up within my heart,
rise to all eternity.

Jesu, lover of my soul AM128

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vONmOmn7gNs>

The second hymn is "Forty days and forty nights" AM 121 with words by G. H. Smyttan (1822 – 1870) set to the tune Aus Der Tiefe (Heinlein). This well-known hymn describes the nature of the temptations that Jesus resists and a plea that he will support us in our own in our own battles against sin. The final verse provides the hope that with Jesus' help we too will find new heavenly life.

"Forty days and forty nights" was first published in the *Penny Post*, March, 1856 in 9 verses of 4 lines, headed "Poetry for Lent; As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing," and signed "G. H. S." In 1861, Rev. F. Pott's in his publication *Hymns, &c* provided a version with 6 verses some of which had minor alterations. Subsequently, this version was repeated in the 1861-75 edition of *Hymns Ancient & Modern*, Mrs. Brock's *Children's Hymn Book*, 1881 and others. The text received further slight alterations in the *Sarum Hymnal*, 1868, the Society for Promoting Christian *Knowledge Church Hymns*, 1871, and others.

The author George Hunt Smyttan was the son of Dr. Smyttan, of the Bombay Medical Board. He was educated at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, receiving his B.A. 1845 and took holy orders in 1848. In 1850 became Rector of Hawksworth, Nottinghamshire. He resigned the living in 1859 and died suddenly in Frankfurt am Main Germany in 1870, where he was buried in an unmarked grave. He published *Thoughts in Verse for the Afflicted*, 1849; *Mission Songs and Ballads*, 1860; and *Florum Sacra*, n.d.

The tune Aus Der Tiefe (also called Heinlein) was published in the *Nürnbergisches Gesang-Buch* (1676-77) as a setting for Christoph Schwamlein's text based on Psalm 130 "Aus der Tiefe rufe ich" ("Out of the Depths I Cry"). In that songbook the tune was attributed to "M. H.," initials that are generally accepted to refer to Martin Herbst. Herbst was educated in theology and philosophy at the universities of Altdorf and Jena. In 1680 he became rector of the gymnasium (high school) and pastor of St. Andrew Church in Eisleben. The following year he died of the plague.

1. Forty days and forty nights
thou wast fasting in the wild;
forty days and forty nights
tempted, and yet undefiled.
2. Sunbeams scorching all the day;
chilly dew-drops nightly shed;
prowling beasts about thy way;
stones thy pillow, earth thy bed.
3. Should not we thy sorrow share,
and from worldly joys abstain,
fasting with unceasing prayer,
glad with thee to suffer pain?

4. And if Satan, vexing sore,
Flesh or spirit should assail,
Thou, his vanquisher before,
grant we may not faint nor fail.

5. So shall we have peace divine;
holier gladness ours shall be;
round us too shall angels shine,
such as ministered to thee.

6. Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear,
ever constant by thy side;
that with thee we may appear
at the eternal Eastertide.

Forty days and forty nights AM 121 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nWEYJHxkNfc>

The use of the “*Aus der tiefe*” melody reminds me that Mendelssohn uses it in his third Organ Sonata in A major (Opus 65 No. 3). This organ Sonata is unusual because it consists of only two movements, (one would normally expect 3 or more movements in such a work) the first has a grand opening section after which there is a fugue where the *Aus der Tiefe* melody is played in the pedal part, (it starts at 2:57 in the recording shown below). Then a contrapuntal section which gets faster and louder leads back to the opening section re-stated in an even more grand and triumphant way. The second movement of this work is a gentle movement which is a complete contrast to the conclusion of the first movement and leaves one with a feeling of inner serenity.

This structure reflects the words of Psalm 130, the opening section is a call to attention, but the fugue changes the mood to one that is more sombre and uncertain. However, the building of the climax in the second half of the piece reflects the hope expressed in the final two verses of the Psalm.

Organ Sonata No 3 Mendelssohn <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8AARo-mrsw>

COLLECT

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness, and was tempted as we are, yet without sin: give us grace to discipline ourselves in obedience to your Spirit; and, as you know our weakness, so may we know your power to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit one God, now and for ever. Amen

EPISTLE 1 Peter 3: 18 – 22

A reading from the first letter of Peter.

Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you – not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

GOSPEL Mark 1: 9 — 15

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.' And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

SERMON Fr Jeremy

Then there came a voice, out of the heavens: 'You are my wonderful son; you make me very glad.'

The quote I use to begin this sermon are the words of God to his son Jesus and translated for us in Tom Wright's 'Mark for Everyone'. Wright desires that everyone comes to know Jesus and as a result know that they are loved by God. Jesus at his baptism came to know that as God spoke those words to him. It did not however stop Jesus from entering forty days in the wilderness and the trials of temptation. It did not keep Jesus from Calvary and the suffering of the Cross, but the words point to the hope that God the father continued to watch over his Son, continuing to love him in his suffering before acting through him and the Holy Spirit. Jesus as Wright says heard the words of Love and the words of life. The question is as we begin our journey through Lent towards the death and Resurrection and hope of New Life is can we hear those same words?

Wright tells the story of a famous movie-maker who ended up having a huge legal wrangle with his long term mentor and friend. At the heart of this sad story was a young man who couldn't accept criticism due to the fact that the young movie-maker had an ungenerous father. The son looking for affirmation and love and seemingly despite his success was struggling to find that peace of mind. I suspect that the young movie writer is not alone. I know myself that I struggle to accept that I am loved and accepted and talking to other clergy I know that I am not alone. The desire to feel affirmation is a strong one although as people of faith and as baptised members of Jesus' church we should indeed know that we are loved. God loves his son and loves us too as his adopted brothers and sisters so why do many of us struggle with knowing this love?

Perhaps a good place to begin is the world we live in. As some of you know I have been reading a book called 'The Tyranny of Merit – What becomes of the Common Good?' By Michael J Sandel. Sandel who teaches political philosophy at Harvard University worries that these are dangerous times for democracy. I believe Joe Biden shares his concerns. Sandel believes that we live in an age of winners and losers where the idea 'You can make it if you try' doesn't ring true for an increasing number of people. As a consequence of the Pandemic the gap between people finding affirmation in life and those who feel humiliated may well grow. At the heart of Sandel's argument is Meritocracy and the idea we get out of life by what effort we put in. Sandel isn't saying that hard work and effort or seeking success is wrong.

The question is more can we notice our fortune in gaining success, and find a sense of humility and solidarity in supporting those less fortunate?

The problem of 'you can make it if you try' forgets that many of us have had advantages to begin with. Those things like being loved by our families, nurtured by good teachers and friends, born into an advantageous country or area and of course the list could go on, give us better hopes. Christian belief has not always

helped people to feel accepted either. If we look at Martin Luther's fight against the 'Sale of Indulgences' by the Roman Catholic Church, we see the anger for people being encouraged to win favour with God by paying a monetary payment to be absolved of sin. However, the Protestant Reformation did lead to a certain 'Work Ethic' which led to people thinking that their financial or worldly wellbeing was down to them living good Christian lives.

Matthew Firth's excellent art course has demonstrated some of this thought. Last week he offered us the 'Beaune Altarpiece' often called 'The Last Judgement'. The painting highlights the saints in heaven and the fallen running unloved to hell. In the middle of the painting, you have a weighing scales. How will did I do in leading a good life? The idea of meritocracy is alive and kicking in 15th century art. The bible too, at times, points to winners and losers. Job lives a good life yet experiences terrible suffering. His friends are well verses in meritocracy it would seem. You must have done things wrong they tell him.

This leads me to think what type of God do I or indeed you believe in? Is it the watchmaker who designs and sets the world in motion and then leaves it? This leaves the self-sufficient world pre perhaps this latest lockdown thinking I achieve for myself and there is little or no outside influence. Or maybe the Puppeteer God who bounces us around on a string based on our works and actions good or bad.

This Lent I am inviting you to join me in discovering God as the loving father of adult children. This means starting by knowing that we are loved by God despite our struggles and failures and yes lack of love. We need to know like Jesus that God watched over him through the trials of the wilderness, through the pain and suffering of the cross and led him to win new and transformed life. Can we this Lent through our desire to form a personal rule of life, find a way where we acknowledge God's presence with us and in the world we inhabit. The prayer would be for each one of us to know like Jesus that we are loved and in so doing we may love our fellow human beings and the world God bestows upon us.

Let us this Lent know one thing. God's grace and love in Jesus means that we too can hear the words 'You are my wonderful sons and daughters, you make me glad.'

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen

WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE FLOOR BEFORE IT IS RESTORED, AND COMPLETELY EMPTY?

The restoration of the floor is on track to begin operations on Monday 1 March. From then on you will see in the quadrangle skips and other equipment ranged along the side nearest the church, leaving the other three sides of the quadrangle free. This coming Friday a group of us are moving every item of furniture, altars, candlesticks and other items from the nave so that it is clear for Cliveden Construction to start work.

This will provide a unique opportunity for you. We are opening the church especially from 10.00am to 12noon on the morning of Thursday 25 February for you to see the floor absolutely clear of pews and everything else. Entry will be via the South door (the one in the quadrangle) and exit via the vestry door. No booking is required but you will of course need to sign in, sanitise your hands and wear masks – and keep two metres apart. Bring your camera, but be aware that the heating will not be on.

You can also take advantage of your visit to admire the tunnel through to the vestry which Monika has painted, and the Birinus room will be open for you to admire the complete painting job carried out by Fr Jeremy, Chris and Guillaume. Please be particularly careful about keeping your distance if you do.

If you have any questions on this, or any aspect of the restoration, please let me know.

And as Rod wrote recently, further donations and pledges to close the £30,000 gap on the fund-raising will be very welcome. Please contact Rod or Sue.

Ken Smith

Let's Hope

How deeply our lives have been effected
emotions bottled, sorrows neglected
Birthdays, funerals, gatherings missed
Silently faded in an abyss

Captain Tom's determined drive
Raising money, keeping spirits alive

Zoom and Teams were good for the soul
But now, after time, they're taking their toll
Relationships tested and loneliness rife
In a bubble for each and every life

Boris and Co are doing their best
Vaccines are 'hopeful', as are the tests

Individuality taken, percentages given
What's there now to keep us driven
'There's always hope' or so it's said
Or whatever drivel on the latest twitter thread

Effected deeply, individuality blown
Life WILL resume and humanity grown

... Let's hope.

Jayne Chapman

CLIMBING

This week our one year old granddaughter discovered our stairs for the first time. Living in a flat and now just crawling, she had never encountered any before.

She headed for them immediately and started to climb the first step – we have no idea how she knew what to do. With hearts in our mouths we followed very close behind. She struggled with each one and at one point gave a little cry and seemed about to give up, but she was determined to carry on up those stairs, which are quite steep and dark and which have a curve in them making it impossible to see the top. As she attempted the curve where the steps narrow and she would have fallen Jeremy did hold her and guide her to the wider, safer side. When she made the turn she saw the light at the top and with a delighted gurgle she sped up the last steps and sat there with a huge smile on her face.

I couldn't help thinking how like our journey through life that was. Often uphill, dark and unknown, difficult and frightening. But God is right there with us all the time, ready to hold us and guide us where danger threatens and to catch us if we fall. And when we see the light at the end of our climb and make the last step imagine what joy there will be.

Sue Nordberg

FOODSHARE NEWS

Lockdown means an increasing need for Foodshare. Please see www.foodshare.today for places you can donate and what's most needed each week. The needs are also in the Maidenhead Advertiser each week.

REFLECTION by Greg Hurst

Modern temperance movements have become fashionable. Many of our contemporaries have for some years given up alcohol for Dry January. And, to my surprise, a growing number of acquaintances asked me to sponsor them for observing Go Sober for October.

I have found this unsettling. Lent is the time of year that Christians associate with abstinence, not January or October. And I have never yet met a churchgoer who would seek sponsors to validate their self-denial. It rather misses the point.

Despite my wariness, this year – for the first time - I embraced Dry January. It coincided, more or less, with the introduction of the third lockdown. I reasoned that it could be a useful discipline. With socialising banned, it could be a spur to focus on self-discipline and personal fitness, I thought. How hard could it be?

So it proved. I admit I hadn't appreciated that January spanned five weekends, not four, which drew out the ordeal. But it was manageable. I even extended my teetotalism for a couple of weekdays in February. And yet my doubts about fashionable temperance remained. Lent is an altogether different journey, longer and clearer in its purpose, rooted in Christian observance and integral to our country's history.

Therefore I have resolved to give up alcohol again, for Lent: for 40 days this time rather than 31. With any luck, the end of my vow should coincide with a relaxation of some coronavirus restrictions around Easter, after which I may be able to enjoy a glass of wine with family and friends.

Cheers!