

Voice from the Vicarage September 2nd 2021

Dear All,

Earlier this week I was involved in a zoom gathering with the chaplains from our Anglican schools and as is usually the case, I was invited to give a homily at the start of the meeting. What a difficult medium I find it for commanding the attention of a congregation!

In a very different context, years ago, when I was a choirboy and fairly hidden in the choir stalls of St Mark's, Camberwell, I learnt how possible it was not to listen to what was being said from the pulpit, and the art of not being noticed in the not listening! Surreptitious games of Os and Xs seem fairly harmless by today's standards of distraction, though the delights of Hangman's Noose might be regarded as somewhat unseemly in those hallowed precincts.

The subliminal influence for good of long sermons....

Of course I'm a great believer in the subliminal influence for good of not listened to, or half an ear listened to, long sermons! On the other hand, last Saturday, when after a few glitches with the recording equipment and under a bit of pressure I had to record my sermon late in the afternoon, it was, even for an old pro like me, somewhat disconcerting to ask our beloved film crew and editing team (Jesse—yes, he is currently *both* crew and team!) was the sermon all right, to receive his rather candid answer that he couldn't really say, though there were a couple of bits he sort of remembered...He was clearly tired and overwrought!

Anyway, back to my zooming chaplains! I don't blame them if they found it difficult to concentrate after a day of online teaching, and maybe there was some unfinished stuff that needed doing under the sightline. Like me in my choirstalls, they have perhaps learned the art of looking attentive!

Anyway, I wanted to tell you about the word on which I based my reflections. It's a word always worth remembering, but certainly in difficult and stretching days. It's a Hebrew word, though the idea of it literally comes to life in the New Testament. The word is **CHESED**. It appears 248 times in the Hebrew Bible, often translated as 'loving kindness' but it also has about it a sense of strength and perseverance. It's the 'loyal love' of God, his eager, ardent and steadfastness love toward Israel, to be trusted even when at times the evidence seems ambiguous. Sometimes it is only a thread of people, a few prophets, a few hidden saints who perceive and hold on to it.

The Old Testament word is not too far off the Greek word CHARIS we find in the New Testament. Grace. In classical Greek it's often used in a 'secular' sort of way to talk about the loveliness and gracefulness of a dancer...Jesus was full of it, even before he could speak (John 1:14) Very beautifully Luke tells us that folk were surprised because Jesus spoke in ways that made religion, the life of faith lovely rather than dour and rule bound. '*Such grace fell from his lips*'. Now that's a good question to ask myself in times of self examination: What has fallen from my lips today?

Hold on to the promise....

Anyway, I wanted to say to the school chaplains and I want to say to you. **Hold on to the promise of the 'loyal love' of the Lord.**

On Sunday, the communion song that Eleanor will sing speaks beautifully of this promise, '*He gives us more grace as our burdens grow greater...*'

Could this be a bundle of love?



I reckon it is! A mammoth effort by Donna Davis, our Op Shop co-ordinator and the team who have spent many hours packing up the shop in preparation for its journey to Melton where it will find a new home in the their parish Op Shop. This suggestion came from our Archbishop. Melton is a parish in need of support and its shop is crucial to keeping their show on the road. Most of what you can see here will make the journey north this weekend. I'm particularly delighted. The parish priest, Fr Neil Taylor was in my preaching class when I did some teaching at Trinity College a few years back. It's great to renew the connection.

Parish Council meets...

Your parish council met last night—on zoom—of course, and churchwarden John Vincent ran through the challenges of sorting and clearing out of the Bardin Centre in readiness for the 'transfer of power' to the Education Department on October 1st. Some things will just go, and some will go into storage waiting for space to be created at the back of the 'new' Parish House. The office, located next to the kitchen will relocate to the vicarage on 1/10.

And talking of relocation, a few of the Thursday lunch team spent some time after 'feeding the 45' today looking at 'The Lamb'. In a few weeks time the serving of that grace-filled meal will move there.

The Council had a comprehensive report from our excellent treasurer Robyn White. Much has been achieved in the past year, and it is really pleasing, not only that we have been able to maintain the giving levels, (thank you!) but through grants and donations, and good management we have been able to undertake the vast improvement of 264 Sydney Road, now 'The Lamb'.

And in addition, over the past year we have had the blessing of two new deacons! And talking of that, **Deacon Jack** will preach here for the first time this coming Sunday, though he will of course be speaking to you through a camera. Pray for him as he prepares!



And finally, one of the lovely things about the vicarage at the moment is the large jasmine bush and some treasures that have popped up out of nowhere. The smell of both a-filling the kitchen!

Much love, + Lindsay

I won't be joining the flower rota any time soon...