

Voice from the Vicarage 17th February 2022

Dear All,

I suppose once you are in your sixties (I still haven't come to terms with this fact of my existence) and the added public commitment to a religious community (OGS), it's possibly unsurprising that Valentine's Day passed me by...

Be my Valentine...

Actually St Valentine is himself somewhat more interesting than the hearts and flowers stuff in my view. He was, by some accounts, a 3rd century catholic priest and doctor who used to secretly marry Roman soldiers in Christian ceremonies. This infuriated Claudius the emperor, who (it must be said) was by all accounts easy to rile. He had decided marriage was too much of a distraction for his soldiers and had banned them from entering that 'holy estate', as the Prayer Book calls it. Anyway, Valentine was martyred for his efforts. A story got round that he sent a message signed 'from your Valentine' to his gaoler's daughter whom he had healed from blindness, and the phrase caught on. Mmm. Some of this may be more fiction than fact, but whatever the case, all those who make a bit of money out of Valentines might be a bit grateful!



..reminiscent of an old fashioned market barrow, Michael offers his wares, but for free

Meanwhile the 'sent' offerings from our Jesuit brothers and sisters that I reported about next week look to becoming more than a once in a year message of love. I happened to be in 'The Lamb' this morning when Michael from the Ecology Justice Hub of Jesuit Social Services arrived with the first of two barrowful of goodies as 'take homes' for our Thursday lunch guests.

Lent is on its way!

But not before **Shrove Tuesday** (March 1st). That's a day that in our own times is most associated with pancakes. But while it's true that the using up of flour, eggs and sugar before the fast of Lent — which led to the making of pancakes — is a good, medieval tradition, there is another aspect of the day that has fallen by the wayside. Shrove Tuesday got its name because it was a day the church bell rang, calling the faithful to be 'shriven' - that is to be forgiven their sins after confession. Gone are the days when the Church could ring the bell and summon folk to such things!

But as a preparation for Lent which begins the following day on Ash Wednesday (2nd March) we will produce a little 'examination of conscience' that you might like to use in your own time and privately as you prepare for these 40 days of 'Springtime'. (The word Lent comes from the old English meaning 'spring season'). I will send it out with next Thursday's 'Voice', and there will be copies in the back of the church and it will be on the parish website.

Anyone who would like to make an individual confession would be very welcome. Let me know.

And in the pancake tradition, come to 'The Lamb' for a pancake or two on Shrove Tuesday between 7 and 8.30 pm (and if you want to help make them, let me know)

The next day, March 2nd is **ASH WEDNESDAY** there will be masses at **7 am, 10 am and 6.30 pm** (with hymns) to give as many of you as possible the opportunity to worship and receive the traditional ashes.



Still got last year's Palm Cross?

By the way, if you have a palm cross from last year bring it with you to Church this or next Sunday. They will be burned and used to make the ash for the Ash Wednesday celebration.

Reading during Lent.

And if you're looking for a book to read during Lent, why not try 'The Story of Christianity' by David Bentley Hart. Bentley Hart is one of the most trenchant and amusing critics of the so called 'New Atheists'. This book is more a romp (350 pages) through our 2000 year history by a one who writes really well. (It can be gotten from Book Depository online).

Or why not try 'Jesus A Pilgrimage' by James Martin SJ. It's a good read and insightful. Martin moves through the gospels as he moves through a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Also from Book Depository.

Of course the **most important thing to do in Lent** is to pray, to fast, and to give alms. More of that as we journey through the Season together.

And finally... I received this today and can't resist sharing it. (with permission) I saw the 'bump' a Sunday or two ago. This 27 week old little person has not yet seen the light of day. Pray for Liviane and Lukas as they wait and as the Lord 'knits' this child...(psalm 139)



Much love, +*Lindsay*