

Voice from the Vicarage 24th August 2023

Dear All,

So today is the feast of St Bartholomew. Cara is preaching at the 6.30 pm mass tonight and as we reflected on it yesterday she remarked that she couldn't quite work out what to say about him. Understandable, since nothing is said about him in the New Testament, except to include him in the list of the twelve in three of the four Gospels. But maybe that's enough to know, and a good enough epitaph for anyone. **'He was a friend of the Lord.'** Not just that he *claimed* to be, but was indeed and *in deed* a friend of the Lord.

Actually, many reckon that Bartholomew and Nathaniel, mentioned in John's gospel are one in the same. If so, then among other things we *do* know that Jesus thought he was a man 'without guile'. Now there's a compliment! Guile isn't a word that gets used so much in common speech, but that doesn't mean there isn't a bit of it about. Calculating, cunning, deceitful, manipulating, truth stretching, using flattery for gain, playing others off against each other....Oh need I say more of these things which I know more about than I ought!

What a good personality trait is straightforwardness. I love people who seem without pretence, who have open faces! I fancy Nathaniel or Bartholomew if they are one in the same had an open face that attracted Our Lord to him as he stood under that fig tree!

Anyway, enough of all that at least until St Bartholomew's day next year... when someone else can write about him!

The great story...

What a very good sermon we had about the encounter between the Canaanite woman and Jesus last Sunday from Father Russell. He made a telling connection between the visit of the gentile Magi and Jesus at his birth recorded in Matthew's Gospel and the gentile woman of Sunday's Gospel who claimed the crumbs that come from the table, to illustrate that the whole story that Matthew is telling can be summed up as **'the great story of how the Jewish Messiah becomes Saviour of the word'**. Thank you Fr Russell, and indeed to all our preachers for the care they lavish on their sermon preparation. In a pulpit in Sussex there is carved on the lectern on which a preacher might place his or her sermon notes, "Sir, we would see Jesus" - the request some Greeks put to the disciples. (John 12:21) It sums up the aim of all faithful preaching...

Talking of the Bible and the good things and challenges that flow from keeping it by your side, and opening it, over the last couple of weeks at our Sunday 6pm 'Bible and Beer' (the clue is in the name!) we have been exploring great characters from the Old Testament. Their stories form part of the great narrative that has Covenant as its consistent thread, and include the unfolding of who our God is, finding its fullness in Christ Jesus. For we Christians, even as we look at Moses or Joshua, do so by the light of Jesus. After an intro that includes a bit of Q & A, in twos and threes we explored various texts to see what they add to our understanding of faithfulness.

Just a few weeks ago you might remember a photo of the candle-light prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in our café.

These twin gifts of Word and Sacrament through which we draw as close as we can to Our Lord, are gifts not simply for the Church, but the world. That's one of the reasons why I reckon it's important to offer experiences of them outside of the church building itself.



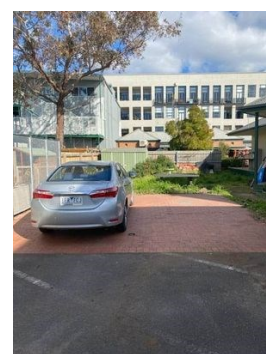
Different gifts..

Our café has its regulars, one of whom is a daughter of the manse—her father was a Methodist minister. She describes the Lamb as like her second home. We have a little pile of children's books, and she added to them this week. So if you want to learn about pigeons and puppies come in and have a free read!



Spot the difference!

A little site report



Before.....

After.....

So the vicarage carport disappeared this week to make way for more car spaces with sufficient space for turning and for some bike racks... and **I am assured** that next week the 'big hole' will be filled with new water tanks. And the ramp up to what will be the main entrance to the 'parish house' will be completed tomorrow! Praise God.

THIS SUNDAY @ 6 Gideon

And finally, I hope to see you Sunday! +Lindsay