

# Brookfield News

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## A Tale of the Unexpected

What a shock it must have been to be told that the first shall be last, the meek shall inherit the earth, it's more blessed to give than to receive, and adults should learn from children, not the other way round. No wonder these words of Jesus repelled some of His hearers and attracted others. They still do. The ultimate challenge was His formula for success: "Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it."

All this began to make sense to His group of disciples when they encountered Him unexpectedly, after He had been crucified. On Friday they had seen Him die the despicable death of a criminal. That was a huge disappointment, another lost cause. Then Sunday's massive con-

tradition: a corpse transformed into an indestructible body. Christ was alive with renewed vigour, breathing confidence into His disciples. It was the vindication of everything He had taught and done. They began to spread the emphatic message that God brings life out of death. This was an announcement, not an opinion; a declaration, not doctrine.

It divided the hearers. Some believed it and some didn't. St Paul acknowledged this in his usual uncompromising manner: "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God".

More contradictions were to follow. The early missionaries described their experiences as "hon-

our and dishonour, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything."

In 1945 the German Pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged for his part in a plot to assassinate Hitler. He was 39. His last words were "This is the end – for me, the beginning of life." Today, the 'Open Doors' charity reports that every month 322 Christians are killed for their faith. At the same time it's estimated that every day there are 33,000 new Christians in Africa alone.

Easter is God's pledge that evil is

***This Month.....Chocolate.....Page 7***

# Services

## Sundays

11.00am Sung Eucharist

"Sunday Supplement" the children's activity takes place every Sunday in the sacristy during the service

## Weekday Services

Said Eucharist

Wednesday 9.30am

Friday 7.30am

## Saints' & Holy Days

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in Holy Week  
7.30pm Mass with Sermon

Maundy Thursday 7.30pm Mass of the Last Supper and Vigil till Midnight

Good Friday 10.00am Stations of the Cross  
1.30pm The Liturgy of Good Friday

Holy Saturday 7.30pm The Easter Vigil and First Mass of Easter

Easter Day 11.00am Choral Mass for Easter Day and Egg hunt for the children.

Clergy Day off: Fr. Guy is off duty on Monday but don't hesitate to call him in emergencies.

The Vicar is usually available in the Vicarage, 85 Dartmouth Park Road, from 8:00pm until 9:00pm on Tuesdays for the purpose of interviews, arranging Baptisms, reading of Banns and Weddings etc. he is also available to hear confessions then or by appointment.

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impermanent. The final contradiction is asserted by the 16th Century poet John Donne in his sonnet, "Death be not Proud:

"One short sleep past, we wake eternally,  
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die".

## The taxi

The passenger tapped the cab driver on the shoulder to ask him something. The driver screamed, lost control of the car, nearly hit a bus, went up on the pavement, and stopped inches from a department store window. For a second everything went quiet in the cab, then the driver said, 'Look mate, don't ever do that again. You scared me half to death!'

The passenger apologized and said he hadn't realized that just a little tap could scare him so much. The driver replied, 'You're right. I'm sorry. Really, it's not your fault. Today is my first day as a cab driver. I've been driving a hearse for 25 years.'

# The King had another move

**O**f all the folktales that circulated in Europe in the centuries past none was more widespread or popular than that surrounding Dr Faustus.

Supposedly a brilliant German alchemist, living in the early 16th century, he began to delve into witchcraft and finally made a pact with the Devil. For 24 years he would have everything he wanted but at the end of that time the Devil would claim his soul. The story was popularised in England by Christopher Marlowe in 1604, in his *Dr Faustus*, and in Germany, two centuries later, in Johann Goethe's *Faust*.

The Devil kept his promise and for 24 years Faust enjoyed fame, knowledge and the satisfaction of every desire. But the years rolled quickly by and Faustus was gripped with terrible foreboding as the end drew near. On his last night he met a fearful death as the Devil claimed his soul for damnation. The drama attracted an artist who committed it to canvas. He depicted Faustus and the Devil playing chess and he

entitled it 'Checkmated.' The game is over and the Devil has won. He gloats across the chess table at the doomed Faust whose face is rigid with terror.

The picture hung in a French gallery and many people came to see it. One day a great master of the game came to view it. He gazed at it intently for hour after hour. Suddenly the silence was broken by his cry, 'It's a lie! The game is not over! The king has another move!' The chess master saw what everyone else had missed. In the picture Faustus still has his king. The king can yet bring victory out of seeming disaster.

On the first Easter, the enemies of Jesus were jubilant. The chief priests, the scribes and the Pharisees, had all conspired to put Him to death. How they hated Him! He had done mighty works. He had healed the sick; He had cast out demons from the tormented; He had calmed the storms and raised the dead. But they rejected Him, branded Him a blasphemer and brought about his arrest, trial and

execution.

The Romans, thinking Him just another rabble-rousing nationalist, were glad to see him dead. So the Jews and the Romans celebrated while the body of Jesus lay on the cold slab in Joseph's grave. They had triumphed! He was gone! He was dead! He was buried! He would not come back! His followers were scattered. He would soon be forgotten. The brief story of Jesus of Nazareth had ended in the tomb.

But they were all wrong! wrong!! wrong!!! The game was not over! The king had another move! The King of Heaven raised His Son Jesus from death, to live forever in the power of an endless life. And Christians have been celebrating that great event for two thousand years!

But there's more! In all our lives, in every difficulty, in every need, in every heartbreak, in all of life's darkest hours – our King is with us. And He always has another move!

## Archbishop urges Britain to 'seize and define the future'

**I**n the Presidential speech at the February General Synod, the Archbishop of Canterbury argued that the current political and social climate is an opportunity for re-imagining the nation's practices, values, aspirations and global role.

The Archbishop said "this could be a time of liberation, of seizing and defining the future, or it could be one in which the present problems seize our national future and define us."

The Archbishop went on to argue that the Church of England can be a part of the answer: "we have a voice and a contribution and a capacity and a reach and above all a Lord who is faithful when we fail and faithful when we flourish.

"How are we going to contribute to the national future? There is before the churches of this land, over the next many years, an extraordinary opportunity to be part of reimagining a new Britain, its practices, values, aspirations and global role.

To do so we must ourselves be cross shaped, Jesus following, confident in faith and humble in service, above all outward looking.

"We are called to be the people of the cross ... seeing and loving the world around as Christ does, so that in this time of a choice between national hope and opportunity or threat and fear we may play the part to which we are called in reimagining our country and seizing the best future that lies before us."

# The thief on the Cross

Luke 23: 32-43

**L**uke's account of the crucifixion emphasises the mocking of the crowd, 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself' (35,37,39). In their view a Messiah does not hang on a cross and suffer. In considering the man who was crucified with Jesus, we are also confronted with the issue of how Jesus secures salvation for us.

## One Criminal's Taunts

The words of one of those crucified with Jesus reflected the crowd's taunts: 'Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us.' He highlights the question of Jesus' identity: how can

He save others, when He cannot save Himself from death? And yet, unlike his companion, he failed to see that the cross itself is the means of salvation.

What kind of Messiah was Jesus?

## One Criminal's Faith

The other criminal's response in his last moments is a moving expression of faith. When challenging the other man, he spoke of the utter injustice of the crucifixion: 'this man has done nothing wrong.' He perceived the truth that Jesus' death was on behalf of all people. In a wonderful picture of grace, 'remember me', he confessed his

guilt and secured Jesus' forgiveness and mercy.

In what ways have we experienced God's grace?

## The Messiah's Promise

In reply, Jesus promised the man life from the moment of death; 'Today you will be with me in paradise.' Jesus used the picture of a walled garden to help the man understand His promise of protection and security in God's love and acceptance eternally.

If you were to die tonight, how confident would you be of being with Jesus?

'For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.' (1 Peter 3:18).

# St George and Hiccup and the dragon

**H**ave you seen the film *How to Train your Dragon*? It's set in a Viking village under attack from dragons, who steal livestock and burn down houses. Hiccup, the village Chief's son, invents a machine to capture dragons. However, when he catches one of the most dangerous dragons, he cannot kill it, when he sees that the dragon is just as frightened as he is. Through this friendship, the people and dragons eventually live in harmony.

This month we celebrate St. George, the patron saint of England. He is famous for slaying a dragon, a tradition which became popular in the Middle Ages. Whether he killed an actual dragon is open to question! However, we do know that the original George was a Roman soldier at the time of Emperor Diocletian. He refused to renounce his faith, as commanded by the Emperor, resulting in his death on 23 April 303 AD.

The contrast is clear: St. George slayed the evil dragon, while Hiccup refused to kill one. However, they also have something important in common. Both acted according to their conscience, defying the popular understanding of those around them and not worrying about the personal cost to themselves. St. George was martyred for standing up for his faith in Jesus before a pagan emperor, while Hiccup risked rejection by his father and village because of his compassion.

Today, we are still called to stand for Christ against wrongs and injustice in a daily life, whatever the personal cost. However, we also need to be ready to look our enemies in the eye and meet their hostility with love and compassion. This is why we also remember this month that Jesus died and rose again, so that we might have God's power to do this in our lives.

# Happiness is warm feet in bed

**I**f you have never discovered the cosy bliss of wearing socks in bed, you are in for a real treat. According to experts from the Global Council on Brain Health, wearing socks in bed helps ensure uninterrupted slumber.

In a recent report, the Global Council was stressing the importance of getting sound sleep in order to stay sharp in later life. And so it offers various tips to the over-50s. They include: keep pets out of your bedroom, avoid late-night rows with your family; allow 15 minutes of 'settle time' before you switch off the light; avoid food, alcohol and drink for three hours before bed; keep your smartphone and tablet in another room; have a warm bath; and swap white or blue lights for warmer, restful colours. Sleep well!

# “Dear Friends...”

## From the Vicars Desk

Many of you will have read or heard on TV the news that the General Synod of the Church declined to accept the Bishop’s report on Marriage and Same Sex Relationships after the Shared Conversations which were held over a two year period.

On controversial matters the General Synod votes by houses, the Bishops, the Clergy and the laity. This document was in fact accepted by the Bishops (as you would expect) and Laity, but turned down by the clergy. Just two days before the debate nineteen retired Bishops who were no longer felt bound by their collegiality condemned the report as unhelpful and pastorally inept.

In the letter the Archbishops say:

‘All of us, without exception, are loved and called in Christ. There are no ‘problems’, there are simply people called to redeemed humanity in Christ.

‘How we deal with the real and profound disagreement - put so passionately and so clearly by many at the debate - is the challenge we face as people who all belong to Christ.

‘We are therefore asking first for every Diocesan Bishop to meet with their General Synod members for an extended conversation in order to establish clearly the desires of every member of Synod for the way forward.

‘As Archbishops we will be establishing a Pastoral Oversight group led by the Bishop of Newcastle, with the task of supporting and advising Dioceses on pastoral actions with regard to our current pastoral approach to human sexuality. The group will be inclusive, and will seek to discern the development of pastoral practices, within current arrangements.

‘Secondly, we, with others, will be formulating proposals for the May House of Bishops for a large scale teaching document around the subject of human sexuality. In an episcopal church a principal responsibility of Bishops is the teaching ministry of the church, and the guarding of the deposit of faith that we have all inherited. The teaching document must thus ultimately come from the Bishops.’

While I have to agree with much of that it is clear that the Bishops in general are out of step with parochial clergy who are dealing with local pastoral situations. Any change in practice will be controversial but simply holding the present line in order to try to hold differing views together is just as divisive. There are very strong voices on both sides of the debate and little chance of agreement.

During the last month we heard from the Heritage Lottery Fund that they would not be giving us a grant towards the work on the brickwork of the church in this round of grants. This is very disappointing as we had hoped to carry

out the work during this summer and autumn. The reason given was that despite our application meeting every one of their criteria they were faced with other applications of a more urgent nature and not enough funds to be able to meet them all. However they have encouraged us to reapply in May for the next round of grants to be awarded in September. If we are successful then the work could be undertaken next year. The only real advantage to us is that it gives us more time to fund raise, but the down side is that building costs are currently inflating at the rate of 10% per annum! The PCC have set up a fundraising group that will be meeting just after Easter to set about the task set in our application of raising £10,000 towards the work. Any ideas that you have would be gratefully received, so please do think how you could help.

May I wish you all a very Happy and Holy Easter, and may the joy of the resurrection fill your hearts and minds with new hope and love.

Your Parish Priest

## Holy days

An atheist complained to a Christian friend, “Christians have their special holidays, such as Christmas and Easter; and Jews celebrate their holidays, such as Passover and Yom Kippur; Muslims have their holidays. EVERY religion has its holidays. But we atheists,” he said, “have no recognized holidays. It’s an unfair discrimination.”

‘Nonsense,’ said the friend, ‘there is always April first...’

# FRIDAY FOCUS

'Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.' (Colossians 4:2,3)

## **April 7 Praying for our children Mark 10:14-16**

In the UK last year, more than 200,000 children and young people visited a creative prayer space in their school, and many of them tried praying for the first time in their lives. 'It was fun,' wrote one 10-year-old in the feedback book just before she left, 'And I now see God everywhere I look. God has spoken to me.' Unless we become like little children...

Jesus, lay your hands of blessing on the children and young people that we know, on the children and young people in our local schools, on the children and young people in need around the world. May they see you everywhere they look. May they hear you speaking to them. May they know your deep love for them. Amen.

Phil Togwell, Prayerspaces in Schools

## **April 14 Good Friday Matthew 27:51**

As Jesus died on the cross, the thirty-foot curtain in the temple, which separated the ordinary people from the very presence of God, was torn in two. It's a beautiful picture of God the Father saying 'the way to Me is now open'. He is no longer residing in a stone temple but in our hearts if we invite Him in.

Oh God, today we thank you for

the cross. I pray that not just today but every day the cross will be before us and that others will be aware of your presence in us more and more. Please use me to share the glorious message of the cross to a world that needs it so much.

Andy Hawthorne, The Message Trust

## **April 21 Pray for five work colleagues**

### **Ephesians 6: 5-9, 19**

Our workplaces provide a unique opportunity to build relationships with non-believers. Daily, they see the difference our faith makes to how we work, the way we relate, our resilience under pressure, and our attitude to success or failure. We need God's wisdom and timing to 'Talk Jesus' to our colleagues. So, like Paul, let's ask for both words and courage.

Heavenly Father, thank you for our work and for those we meet through it. We pray for those in authority in our workplaces. Help us to witness to you through the way we work and relate to our colleagues. We ask for your guidance as to when to speak, what to say, and when to stay silent.

Bev Shepherd, LICC PrayerWorks

## **April 28 Blessing our communities**

### **Numbers 6:22-27**

God has given you and me the privilege and responsibility of blessing people, communities and land in the name of Jesus, not interceding (although we must do that as well) but speaking out directly. This is powerful when done as part of every day life. Where this biblical practice is being recovered salvation and community transforma-

tion are taking place.

'I/we bless you (name your community/street/town/village/city) in the name of Jesus that the revelation of the gospel, and the fruit of the Kingdom, might fall upon you. I/we bless you in Jesus' name that your eyes might be open to recognise the Father's passionate love for you, and that you might be free to respond.'

Roy Godwin, The Ffald y Brenin Trust Ltd

## **General Synod backs £2 maximum stake on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals**

**T**he General Synod has called on the Government to reduce the maximum stake on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs) to £2 in a debate where members heard of the "huge suffering" caused by the machines.

Members unanimously backed calls for the Government as a 'matter of urgency' to bring forward proposals to lower the maximum stake on FOBTs for a single game from £100 to £2, in an amended motion brought by London Diocesan Synod.

The motion spoke of 'widespread public concern' over the large amounts being wagered on FOBTs in high street betting shops and the 'destructive' impact of the machines on the lives of families and whole communities. There is evidence that the ability to lose £100 'a spin' ruins lives – and that the presence of FOBTs on the high street is contributing to a 'spiral' of poverty in some of the poorest areas of the country.

# Chocolate and the divine go back a long way...

One of the more earthly pleasures of celebrating Easter is the sheer amount of chocolate around. But chocolate was part of other religions long before Christianity.

According to ancient Mayan legend, some 3,000 years ago, cacao, or the cocoa tree, which grows in the tropical rainforests of South America, was a bridge between heaven and earth. The Mayan used the beans for a drink called xocolatl, which means 'bitter juice' which means it wasn't hot chocolate as we know it. Even so, by 400 BC they had exported the beans to Costa Rica.

The Aztecs in Central America agreed that cacao must have had a divine origin. They believed that their god Quetzalcoatl had come down from heaven on the beam of the morning star, bearing a cacao tree as a gift for human beings, and that whoever drank the hot foaming drink was given divine wisdom.

Aztec priests were given cacao beans at children's coming-of-age ceremonies. When Aztec couples married, they exchanged cacao beans instead of rings.

Christopher Columbus arrived in the New World in the 15th century, to find that a slave could be bought for 100 beans. But Columbus never really 'got it' about cacao beans, and when he returned to Portugal, he threw them away as useless.

Meanwhile, back in Central America, the Aztec emperor Montezuma drank chocolate from a cup of solid gold before retiring to his harem. Chocolate was thought to have aphrodisiac properties.

It was also considered good for various ailments. The Spanish explorer Hernan Cortes called it 'a drink that builds up resistance and fights fatigue'. A Spanish missionary in Peru in the late 15th century recommended it as 'good for the stomach'.

Finally, the Spanish began to pay attention. Spanish monks brewed up a drink from the beans that was far more acceptable to European taste, sweetening it with sugar, and adding cinnamon and nutmeg.

Spain and Europe began to fall in love with the cacao bean. In 1624 the Spanish monks were warned that chocolate was an 'inflamer of passions', and certainly the legendary lover Casanova praised it as very useful in his seductions. Congregations even began drinking it during church services. When the Bishop of Chiapas threatened to excommunicate his flock for doing so, the entire congregation simply moved down the road to another church, where the friars also liked chocolate.

Chocolate became a favoured drink at fashionable occasions in Britain. In 1630, the day after the coronation of Charles II, Samuel Pepys wrote in his diary that as he had celebrated the event with too much wine, so he had taken some chocolate the following morning, 'to settle my stomach'.

By the 18th century chocolate was so popular in Europe that the Swedish naturalist Linnaeus re-named the cocoa plant Theobroma – food of the gods.

Although chocolate was original-ly only for the wealthy, devout

Quakers such as Joseph Fry, Joseph Terry, Isaac Rowntree and John Cadbury had a dream that chocolate could replace gin as a drink for the working classes. Their determination to make this possible was driven by their Christian zeal, and they in part succeeded.

Then in the middle of the 19th century it was discovered that chocolate could be made into solid bars! With this discovery, Easter eggs were on the way. Both Fry's and Cadbury's launched them in the 1870s, and the rest is history.

These days, Fair Trade chocolate is the thing to look out for – it guarantees a fair price to the cocoa farmers who make it possible for us to go on enjoying this heavenly stuff.

## Butterfly or bunny biscuits

These are pretty biscuits for Easter. You will need:

Biscuit: 120g butter; 60g caster sugar; 180g plain flour; a little lemon zest

Icing: a few drops of vanilla essence, icing sugar, lemon juice, few drops of food colouring

Cutters or paper templates in the shape of a butterfly or bunny

Method: Mix together the biscuit ingredients, add water to bind them. Knead the dough, wrap it in cling-film and chill for two hours. The roll out to a thickness of 8mm and cut out the shapes using a butterfly cutter or a paper template. Bake in preheated oven at 180 degrees C (gas mark 4) for 20 minutes. To make the icing, mix the icing sugar with lemon juice and food colouring. Pipe the icing and leave it to set.

# Vincent Ferrer ± Dominican who opposed a Pope and brought grace to sinners

Leaving England to live in Spain was popular long before the TV show 'Location Location Location' became popular. Back in 1350 Vincent Ferrer's parents had left England to settle in Valencia, where their son Vincent was born and grew up. In 1367, when he was 17, Vincent felt called by God to become a monk, and joined the Dominican order. The reason for his 'call' was soon clear: Vincent had outstanding gifts as both a philosopher and as a preacher.

What is preaching? If you think of it as a way of bringing the reality of God and the love of Jesus Christ to people, then that is a good summary of what Vincent did for all who

heard him. In the great tradition of John the Baptist, he called them to come to God by way of repentance for their sins. In the tradition of St Peter, the apostle to the Jews, Vincent was also heard by many Jews in Valencia. A great number of these listened to his preaching and came to believe that Jesus was indeed their promised Messiah. (One of these Jewish converts went on to become bishop of Cartagena.)

Vincent's preaching met with extraordinary success in France, Spain and Italy. He seems to have been an evangelist at heart, for his topics were sin, the Last Judgment, and Eternity. In Spain such large numbers of both Gentiles and Jews wanted to hear him that

no church was big enough to contain the crowds: and so Vincent preached in the open air.

When in 1414 the Council of Constance attempted to end the Great Schism (there were two Popes fighting for the same job), Vincent persuaded Ferdinand, king of Aragon, to withdraw his allegiance to the doubtful contender, Pope Benedict. The end result was that Benedict's credibility collapsed, and the schism was ultimately healed. Vincent went back to preaching, and spent his last three years in Normandy and Brittany, where he died at Vannes in 1419, worn out by all his labours.

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# The real message of Easter

'When you die, that's it. Nothing. Out like a light.' That's what the man in the pub said, and his mates all nodded, though the one whose mother had died the week before wasn't really quite so certain.

Still, it seemed to make sense. After all, we know what 'dead' means: dead leaves, dead batteries, dead fish, dead pets . . . and dead people, to be honest. While we recognise that it's all too easy to go from alive to dead, we've got serious doubts about the possibility of any return journeys.

Which is why Christians have an uphill task at Easter. Jesus was a great man, and people want to remember how He died. Fair enough. But it starts getting complicated when Christians insist that Jesus died but didn't stay dead - in fact, that He's alive now. That 'return journey' has happened, they say.

That's the problem about Easter. Christians persisting in what sounds like a ridiculous belief. If

they just dropped the resurrection bit, and concentrated on the wonderful teaching of Jesus and His example of generosity, compassion and love then everybody would find Christianity much more believable. Wouldn't that make sense? And wouldn't that fill the churches again?

Well it might (or, more likely, it might not). But in any case, the trouble is that it wouldn't be Christianity at all. The faith of Christians actually depends on the resurrection of Jesus, and always has done, right from the earliest days. After the crucifixion the body of Jesus was taken down from the cross by some of His friends and put in a rock tomb with a heavy stone. But after His death, His followers claimed that they had met Him, seen Him, talked with Him.

So certain was their belief that nothing could make them recant it. Not ridicule, not torture, not even death itself. They couldn't do it because they were absolutely

convinced that it had happened. Plenty of clever and powerful people at the time had a vested interest in proving them wrong. It shouldn't have been difficult to prove that a dead man had stayed dead, especially when you have at your disposal the resources of the greatest empire in history. Yet they didn't do it, because it couldn't be done.

Still today millions of people all over the world believe that Jesus did in fact rise from the dead. They include brilliant scientists and philosophers as well as plenty of 'ordinary' men and women of all ages. They believe it because they respect the witness of those first Christians, and because in many cases their own lives have been transformed by a relationship with Jesus - a relationship that wouldn't make sense if He were dead!

Christians don't put their faith in a dead hero from the past, but in Someone who is alive and active in their own lives and in the world. That, in a nutshell, is the real message of Easter.

## THE WAY I SEE IT: The Easter Paradox

**T**his month - rather later than usual - we remember the events of Good Friday and celebrate the glory of Easter. The injustice and cruelty of the former and the hope and assurance of the latter may help us to make sense of the conflicting and often disturbing events taking place in our world.

On Good Friday the most honest, generous and open person who ever lived was cruelly executed. Around the cross stood His mother, and a few close friends and family. Beyond them, a crowd jeered. The soldiers went about their grim

task. Even the sky was dark.

Yet in the gloom there was hope. Jesus forgave those who were killing him: 'they don't know what they're doing'. He asked His best friend to look after his mother. A criminal who was being executed alongside Jesus had a change of heart and asked Him to 'remember me when you come into your kingdom' - and received the most wonderful promise of paradise today. Even the Roman centurion, who had stood watching the condemned man die, testified that 'surely this man was a son of God'.

In other words, at the darkest time there was light, a Light which blazed out on Easter morning. Isn't that paradox - the truth that even in the worst moment there are signs of hope - the deep message of Easter? We are made in God's image. We are precious to God. But we are fallen, flawed, lost. Those two truths are right there in the story of Good Friday and Easter. And which one wins? No prizes for guessing.

# God in the Arts ± When David met Goliath

**T**he meeting of David and Goliath is one of the most colourful and dynamic of the Old Testament stories. I like the joke about the teacher asking the children, 'What does the story of Goliath teach us?' and a little boy replies, 'To duck.'

But Goliath thinks he is invincible and has no need to duck. Why should he fear just a shepherd boy? J. John imagines David looking at Goliath, and thinking 'He is so big and I am so small.' Then looking again, and thinking, 'He is so big: how can I miss?' And so victory goes not to the strong, the proud, the self-confident, but to those who simply trust in the name of the Lord and their own wits. Right asserts itself over might as David conquers and Goliath falls to the ground.

That dramatic moment is caught vividly in this life-sized statue by Bernini sculpted for the garden of Cardinal Borghese in Rome in 1624. 1 Samuel 16 tells how Samuel anoints David, the youngest of Jesse's sons, who then goes to meet Goliath with only his shepherd's sling. We can see the pursed lips and the look of serious concentration on David's face. We sense the intensity of that moment and the latent energy as he prepares to throw the stone. We don't see Goliath, but he is there in our imagination, for we know that David will be victorious against the heavily armed Philistine.

Perhaps we can read there a message for the Church when it is tempted to rely on the protection



of buildings, power structures and dogmatic authority and forget to trust in God's guidance. Perhaps the message is to each of us as we journey and find ourselves battling against the forces of injustice and darkness that seem so powerful. Then, when we feel weak, we have to learn to trust in God and have faith that He will be with us.

## The other Mary by David Winter

**T**he Easter story in the Gospels is full of wonderful cameos. Among them, one stands out for me for sheer emotional power and deep insight. It's the story of Mary Magdalene.

Jesus had rescued her from a life of depravity ('seven devils' is the Bible's phrase). For this she repaid Him with the most powerful adoration and love. She stood beside His mother, the 'other' Mary, at the foot of the cross as Jesus was crucified. On Sunday morning she went with other women disciples to the tomb to anoint His body. When they arrived they found the tomb was empty. They were told, by someone they took to be an angel,

that Jesus of Nazareth wasn't there because He had 'risen'. The other women left, but a distraught Mary waited outside the tomb, weeping. A man appeared, whom she took to be the gardener. 'Why are you weeping?' He asked. 'What are you looking for?'

'They have taken away my Lord,' she replied, 'and I don't know where they have laid Him.'

The man then spoke one word, which changed her life for ever. 'Mary', He said, using the familiar form of her name. 'Teacher!' she cried, and made to embrace Him.

'Don't touch me,' He said. 'I have

not yet ascended to the Father. Go and tell the others.' She did, and became the first person after the resurrection to say, 'I have seen the Lord'. She would see Him again, of course, in the upper room with the other disciples, but then never again on earth, until she saw Him in His ascended glory, not as the carpenter's son but as the Son of God.

It really is some story!

### Letter to God

A Sunday School teacher invited her children to write a letter to God. They were to bring their letter back the following Sunday. One little boy wrote, "Dear God, We had a really good time at church today. Wish you could have been there."

# Hymns and Readings

## **2nd April Lent 5 Passion Sunday**

Readings Ezekiel 37: 1-14  
Psalm 130  
Romans 8: 6-11  
John 11: 1-45  
Hymns 95 When I survey  
94 We sing the praise  
84 It is a thing most wonderful  
662 There's a wideness in God's mercy  
Readers: Joe McKenzie, Jenny Kauntze  
Intercessions: Carol Kenning Saunders

## **9th April Palm Sunday**

Readings Isaiah 50: 4-9a  
Psalm 31  
Phillippians 2: 5-11  
Matthew 26: 14-27: end  
Hymns 509 All Glory laud and honour  
510 Ride on ride on in majesty  
79 The royal banners forward go  
86 My song is love unknown  
Lift high the cross  
Sidesperson: Bill Saunders  
Readers: Ian MacGregor, Carol Kenning  
Intercessions: Bill Saunders

## **16th April Easter Day**

Readings Acts 10: 34-43  
Psalm 118  
Colossians 3:1-4  
John 20: 1-18  
Hymns 124 Ye choirs of new Jerusalem  
117 The day of resurrection  
120 Thine be the glory  
110 Jesus Christ is risen today  
Sidesperson: Nick Bethune  
Readers: Denise Sealy, Ian MacGregor  
Intercessions: Nicky Pittam

## **23rd April Easter 2**

Readings Acts 2: 14a & 22-32  
Psalm 16  
1 Peter 1: 3-9  
John 20: 19-end  
Hymns 104 At the Lamb's high feast  
113 Christ the Lord is risen today  
106 Come ye faithful raise the strain  
119 The strife is o'er

Sidesperson: Rob Nesbitt  
Readers: Mark Williams, Nick Bethune  
Intercessions: Lucy Boyd

## **30th April Easter 3**

Readings Acts 2: 14a 7 36-41  
Psalm 116  
1 Peter 1: 17-23  
Luke 24: 13-35  
Hymns 112 Jesus lives  
Alleluia alleluia give thanks to the risen Lord  
103 Alleluia alleluia hearts to heaven and voices raise  
351 Come ye faithful raise the anthem  
Sidesperson: Elizabeth Oyedemi  
Readers: Lucy Boyd, Joe McKenzie  
Intercessions: Nicky Pittam

## **100 Club Winners**

### **Draw for February 2017**

1st prize: Berti the dog  
2nd prize: Pat c/o The Centurion  
3rd prize: Wendy Shale  
4th prize: Diana Brown

### **Draw for March 2017**

1st prize: Robin Barter  
2nd prize: Oliver Butt  
3rd prize: Clare Welsh  
4th prize: George Nesbitt  
Congratulations to you all and thanks for your support each month.

If you would like to purchase a number in this monthly draw please do make inquiries of the Mr Mark Williams.

## **Twitter**

A man walked into a church and approached the priest. "I need help. I think I'm addicted to Twitter." The priest looked at him and said gently, "I'm so sorry, I don't follow you."

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## For your prayers

### PRAYER CALENDAR FOR MONTH OF APRIL 2017

2nd Spencer Rise  
9th Twisden Road  
16th Wesleyan Place  
23rd Woodsome Road  
30th York Rise

14th Good Friday  
15th Holy Saturday  
16th Easter Day  
23rd Easter 2  
24th St George  
25th St Mark  
29th St Catherine of Siena  
30th Easter 3

### SAINTS & HOLY DAYS

2nd Passion Sunday  
9th Palm Sunday  
13th Maundy Thursday