



The Olive Branch

Association of Friends of the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf



Summer - 2020

AROUND THE DIOCESE

The Editorial Team hopes our readers are safe and well during this pandemic



Synod 2020 - Abu Dhabi



Food parcels in Nicosia



Archbishop & his Archdeacons



Retreating starts new beginnings



Reflections of Holy Week



Road to Emmaus

From the Chair Ian Calder:

Dear Friends,

I was privileged to go to Abu Dhabi in February to attend the Diocesan Synod and I have written my reflections below.

Needless to say, there is not a lot of news to report. As I am sure you know, we had to cancel our annual visit to Launde Abbey and also our Annual General Meeting (AGM) at All Hallows by the Tower. However, we are working towards holding the AGM via Zoom, and details will be emailed out prior to the beginning of August. Regarding our other gatherings for 2020, it is likely that the northern and south western events planned for October will also have to be cancelled. Details will be circulated nearer the time.

During Holy Week, it was particularly good to listen to Archbishop Michael's addresses as well as read Canon Theologian John's Easter reflection.

I hope this finds you all well and staying safe, although I believe the Christian message is also about taking risks for the gospel. I suspect that in the future we shall all have to try and manage these two aspects of who we are. What the new normal will be like is hard to imagine, answers on the back of a postcard please! However, I hope and pray it might be rather better than the old normal, and hopefully closer to the kingdom of God.

With all good wishes and blessings to all.

Ian Calder

Reflections on the Annual Synod Meeting held in Abu Dhabi - February 2020

Sunday 2nd February, saw Penny and I fly out to Abu Dhabi and half way through the flight realised we were sitting next to Michael Ross McCall, the treasurer of St.

Christopher's in Bahrain, so we had a good chat for the rest of the Journey. A taxi took us to the Crown Plaza Hotel on Yas Island where we were well looked after for the duration of the Synod.

The business of the Synod is well summed up in the "Scene at Synod", found by visiting <https://cypgulf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/SceneSynod2020.pdf> so I will not go through it all here. It was good to congratulate Bishop Michael on being elected as Archbishop of the Province and to hear about the wider Province as well as what's been going on round the diocese. Rightly and inevitably there was a theological context to all this and as usual Archbishop Michael gave a fascinating and riveting report.



Synod 2020 in Abu Dhabi

There were the usual discussion groups, all on the theme of "Discipleship in Context" which gave ample opportunity for discussion and reflection.

Penny and I didn't go to visit the Grand Mosque as we had been before, but those who went found the visit inspiring, it is certainly a quite remarkable building and well worth the visit if you ever in Abu Dhabi.



Local discussions

The Chrism Eucharist at St. Andrew's in Abu Dhabi was particularly significant for Penny and me, as we had been there twice, with me acting as a locum priest. It was lovely to meet up again with people we had met before as well as being part of that great diocesan celebration.



Synod Eucharist



Revd Dr Rima Certainly, one of the highlights were the presentations given by Dr. Rima Nasralla from the School of Theology in Beirut. A great speaker who mixed personal experience with deep theological reflection and who captivated us all. I thoroughly recommend reading them through in full or at least a synopsis from "Scene at Synod".

We even had time for a committee meeting in a corner of the Hotel which was made up to look a bit like a tent. Needless to say most of the arrangements made there have been

cancelled out by the world's reaction to Covid 19!



Friends Committee meeting

After a lovely final dinner and entertainment thanks to Revd Andy Thompson, who once again got us rolling in the aisles, we returned to Heathrow on the Friday, refreshed and inspired. It was one of the things which has kept us going through the lock down and thanks must go to all who did such a great job in organising and running an excellent Synod, particularly special for taking place in the Gulf.

Ian Calder

Pastoral Message from Archbishop Michael - We are the Body of Christ.



+Michael Lewis

The present moment feels unprecedented. Levels of anxiety and disorientation are high in many places and we who are Christians are finding that we are not exempt. For many of the congregations of our diocese, public worship has been discontinued for the time being and until further notice, because the civil authorities, whose guests most of us are, have decreed that it should be. Situations vary, but everywhere at the moment is

experiencing greater or lesser amounts of disruption and discontinuity.

The essentials of good health advice, some of them simple but vital, must of course be followed, and I know that all are taking care that that shall be so.

Prudence, but not panic, must be our watchword.

I pay warm tribute to the imaginative response of some of our clergy and lay people who have devised methods of offering communal prayer by way of different sorts of media. Staying in touch with one another by email, messaging, and telephone will be essential and I know that that is already happening. Pastoral care will be variously possible and variously expressed but now is the time for much energy to be put into it. We shall seek to serve and minister not only to our fellow worshippers but to the wider community too as much as we possibly can.

Community is a sometimes devalued word. Now is the time to give it full weight. The most irreducible community is the community of all humanity. That means that nothing that happens to any of our fellow human beings, anywhere in the world, is beyond our concern and compassion. As Christians we believe that the world is God's and that humanity is part of the divine Creation. We say that all of us are called to realise that we are sons and daughters of the universal heavenly Father. There should be no mental or physical pulling up of drawbridges or circling of the wagons.

Most specifically, we say that the Church is the Body of Christ. The words are regularly embedded in the heart of the eucharist. The image itself is embedded in Scripture. No single Christian exists in isolation. No single congregation stands alone.

Therefore there is existential pain when we cannot, or cannot fully, gather

physically together to say and know that we are the Body of Christ. Only when the authorities have explicitly requested and required us to suspend common worship have I gone along with them, and it feels painful.

A phrase in use in some places in these days is *social distancing*. *Isolation* too is much talked of. There are practical reasons why for medical purposes we must take note of what is being conveyed by competent experts, though opinions vary and change. But we need to be clear that the Christian faith and the Christian Church normatively stand for the very opposite of both isolation and social distance. A glory of Christian congregations in our diocese and in many other branches of the Church is that we are a polychrome mixture of East and West, rich and poor, successful and struggling, older and younger, apparently acceptable and apparently unacceptable in the eyes of the world but not of Christ.

With blessings.
In Christ.

+ Michael Cyprus & the Gulf

The Collect for St Barnabas

Bountiful God, giver of all gifts, who poured your Spirit upon your servant Barnabas and gave him grace to encourage others: help us, by his example, to be generous in our judgements and unselfish in our service; 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.

Anxiety

God our healer, who walked upon the chaotic waters and said to the storm: 'Be still', you know the frailty of our hearts, how easily anxiety can overwhelm us.

It lurks in the shadows of the mind, spreads its coils around us, throttles life within us, and shuts the door of our generous hearts.

God our Saviour, set us free we pray from the curse and burden of anxiety; and by the miracle of your grace how us how perfect love casts out fear.
For your love's sake.
Amen.

Patrick Woodhouse, from 'With you is the well of life'

Seasonal prayers that reflect on Christ's example, our need of grace, service and humility

Post-communion prayer for Ash Wednesday
Post-communion prayer for Lent 2
Collect for Lent 3
Post-communion prayer for Lent 5
Collect and post-communion prayer for Palm Sunday

I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about.

From a prayer by John Henry Newman

Lord, in these days of mercy, make us quiet and prayerful; in these days of challenge, make us stronger in you; in these days of emptiness, take possession of us; in these days of waiting, open our hearts to the mystery of your cross.

Angela Ashwin

From the Church of England website A Prayer For All Those Affected By Coronavirus

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy. Sustain and support the anxious, be with those who care for the sick, and lift up all who are brought low; that we may find comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Reflection on Holy Week 2020 with Archbishop Michael

PALM SUNDAY

I *should* be in Baghdad. That's where Julia and I have celebrated Palm Sunday for the past several years but for 2020 it's not to be. We *could* be anywhere, in this huge diocese, anywhere from Paphos to Muscat; but we shan't be, and it feels as though we – and I dare say you - are nowhere much, or rather that we're stuck, pinned down by the frightening virus and paralysed societies. Most of us, from one end of the diocese to the other, are not able to do what we normally do and be the community we always are and want to be again. This, we say, is a Palm Sunday and this will be a Holy Week like no other, and it either hurts or depresses.

But in the most fundamental sense this *will* be a Holy Week like all the others – all the others that have ever gone before it, in generation after generation in countless times and cultures. No act of Christian worship is a historical recreation or pageant, but a living expression of faith that is the gate of everlasting life. However full and free or constricted or confined we are, in this or that year, or place, or circumstance, even when our participation has to be electronic and seems remote and fragile, even when we're yearning to be physically present to one another again and asking "How long?", we put our trust in the truths that the great occasions and feasts of the

Church's year focus and instil in us. Over two thousand years Christians have kept these same days, in catacombs as well as cathedrals, in war as well as peace, in poverty as well as prosperity, and we've said: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

The full name of this day is Palm Sunday of the Passion. It's a day of apparently violent opposites. The procession of palms marks that ecstatic excitement of the crowds who tore branches off trees to soften the way of the one they believed was their new conquering king, who would make everything so much better; the best. As he rode on a donkey from Bethany through Bethphage to the top of the Mount of Olives and then down the steep valley towards the royal capital, Jerusalem, which now for years had been humiliated by foreign occupation, they shouted out their appeal and their devotion to him. But the reason that most of us on normal Palm Sundays carry palms made into crosses is that their devotion was misplaced and fickle. It soon, next Friday, turned to anger, anger that he wasn't leading a royal revolution, at least not the one they wanted. *Hosanna* was to turn in five days to *Crucify*. This is Palm Sunday of the Passion because the glory of the triumphant ride is interwoven with the passion, the suffering, he underwent so soon. Traditionally today, the full story of the whole of the week ahead of us is proclaimed. That proclamation is called the Passion, rather than the Gospel. We're to learn that the light of Good News does shine even out of, even in the midst of, the suffering.

For 2020 the account we're given to read and hear is the Passion according to St Matthew: **Matthew 26:14 to the end of 27**. Read it thoughtfully and deliberately. Immerse yourself in it. It runs all the way from when Judas began his plan to betray Jesus (because Jesus wasn't the way he wanted him to be). through the tense Last Supper and the astonishing and

perplexing things that happened during it, to the night walk to Gethsemane; it leads to Christ's agony in the garden, to the kiss and the arrest, to the high priest's house, to Peter's failure of nerve and shameful lie, to the arraignment before Pilate, to the way of the cross, to the nailing, to the ridicule, to the three-hours dying, to the death, to the burial, to the tomb, to the stone.

The colour of vestments for Palm Sunday is red, both for a king (and Jesus Christ *is* the King, his royalty and reverence redefined by the week ahead) and for the blood of the Passion. The next time we shall see that red is on Friday; and we call that Friday Good.

In the words of the last verse of one of the traditional Palm Sunday hymns:

*Ride on, ride on in majesty,
in lowly pomp ride on to die.
Bow thy meek head to mortal pain;
then take, O God, thy power – and
reign.*

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK

The walk or ride of Palm Sunday started from a warm place, a place where Christ was loved. He was staying in the village of Bethany, over the hill from Jerusalem, where three close friends of Jesus, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, two sisters and their brother, lived. The Gospel set for today is the Gospel of the dinner they gave for him. It's **John 12:1-11**. Today we're asked to meditate on and enter into a flashback.

Lazarus is the one who, having died and been sealed in his tomb, was stunningly recalled by Christ from death; who emerged from his rock tomb swathed with burial cloths; to whom Christ said, "Unbind him, let him go free."

Before that, before the brother fell ill, each sister had shown her different personality. Martha of Bethany was the

one to be lovingly busy around Jesus; Mary of Bethany was the one to be lovingly attentive to what he said. Jesus, while loving them both back, said that Mary's was the better part.

Now they're reprising their roles and personalities. Martha again serves. Mary honours Jesus by anointing his feet with the most expensive unguent, pure nard. Why wouldn't or shouldn't she? He'd restored their brother Lazarus to life again. Her grateful love welled up. She even used the tresses of her hair as she anointed him.

Others didn't see it that way. Judas Iscariot, who we find out is the disciples' treasurer - Judas who was already churned up inside because he'd begun to see that Jesus wasn't about the satisfaction of violent overthrow but something different and deep, something foreshadowed in his challenge to them back at Caesarea Philippi to take up their cross if they wanted still to follow him - Judas chose to put a cash value on Mary's generous outpouring of love, and to treat her with contempt.

Jesus told him to leave her alone. Then, sensing what the end of the week would bring, he told Judas that the rest of Mary's nard would find its second loving use on the day he was buried.

Judas's was a either a failure to listen to Christ on the journeys they'd all been walking together those three years, or an unwillingness to heed what he heard. The Gospel, this Monday in Holy Week, ends with an even greater hardness of heart, that of the religious authorities. Threatened for a long while now by Christ's teaching and most especially by his claim to have authority to release, reintegrate, forgive, restore, and give new life, they now fear that the wave of his popularity with the crowds is unstoppable. They plot to finish Lazarus off once and for all for being unwelcome living evidence of that God-given authority.

They're already certain they will kill Jesus too.

In the words of a hymn that has served for the whole of Lent and serves for every Christian disciple:

*Take up thy cross, the Saviour said,
if thou wouldst my disciple be.
Deny thyself, the world forsake,
and humbly follow after me.*

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

Jesus in his last week on earth was still attracting. As before, so now, it was perhaps most of all the accumulated stories of his healings of the hopeless, stories of his acceptance of the unacceptable, that intrigued many still; above all that implied authority that he had the right and power to do so.

The Gospel for Tuesday of Holy Week, **John 12:20-36**, records the approach of some "Greeks", non-Jews who were nevertheless converts to Judaic monotheism, followers of parts of the Law. They wanted to see him. There's no substitute for seeing. Seeing illuminates hearing.

Two good disciples, Philip and Andrew, broker a meeting with Jesus. Both have been brokers and introducers of potential disciples before: Andrew of his own brother Simon Peter, and Philip of Nathanael.

Jesus, I think, startles them all with words that are both foreboding and awesome. The Greeks and the disciples see and hear him say that all they have heard of him will soon be revealed in its true light. That true light is the glory of God and it will never be seen so truly as in what is soon to happen. Jesus says that his life is like a grain of wheat that must disappear into the ground before it rises out of it and bears fruit. So, he says to the startled enquirers and disciples, the paradox is that if we think life as we

define it is of surpassing value to the exclusion of all other possibility, we'll lose life as God defines it and as God offers it. Join me, he says, in walking in that other direction, that other way, the way of God and to God.

Then, again, he foreshadows what will happen on Thursday night in the Garden of Gethsemane. His soul is troubled. "Shall I ask to be kept from pain and passion and death? No," he says, to himself but watched and heard by the seekers and the disciples and now also by a crowd who have gathered: "God's glory won't be seen if we avoid but if we trustingly accept." There's a roll of thunder. Jesus hears it as God his Father's confirmation. He proclaims aloud that, precisely by facing and submitting to the world's cruelty, envy, and apparent triumph, those things will lose their power. He foresees that what most will pity as his humiliation when he is hoisted up on a cross of execution will truly be the showing of God to the world. Hoisted in shame, Christ will raise high the whole of humanity. The crowd is confused. The enquirers and the disciples aren't sure what he means. Jesus says, "Wait, listen, and watch. While you have the light, believe and walk in the light."

When our souls too are troubled, we can in our imagination stand with Philip and Andrew on that day and hear Christ our light invite us to believe in him and walk with him still.

I end with the first verse of the Easter hymn that looks back at Christ's image of the buried grain:

*Now the green blade riseth from the buried grain,
wheat that in dark earth many days has lain.*

Love lives again, that with the dead has been:

*Love is come again,
like wheat that springeth green.*

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

Earlier in this following of the last week of Christ's life on earth we had a flashback, to a dinner at Bethany a day or two before his Palm Sunday ride. Today, Wednesday, we flash forward by just one day, to that other dinner, the Last Supper. It's **John 13:21-32** that's given to us today.

At table Christ is troubled in spirit. Why? Because he knows one of his close band, one of the inner twelve, is going to hand him over to those who want to dispose of him. He knows who it will be. The rest don't. But Jesus had been reading Judas for a long time, even before that Bethany dinner when he self-righteously objected to Mary's gesture of unbounded love. Peter presses Jesus, through his friend and fellow disciple John, to tell him who it is. Jesus quietly indicates that he means Judas Iscariot by passing him a piece of bread. Judas, who is also troubled in spirit, abruptly gets up and leaves. "Do what you will do," says Jesus, not bitterly but with sadness and acceptance that Judas is set on his course.

Judas has steeled himself to go through with betrayal after the most intimate and highly charged meal Christ has ever shared. Tomorrow, Thursday, we'll hear the life- and faith-changing depth of it. Today, what Judas is going to do and did do feels like utter blasphemy. Yet when he'd left – most of the disciples assuming it was just to do treasurer's business but Peter knowing the worst – Christ turned to them all and said, "It's now that you'll see glory, God's glory – even in my betrayal, even in me, betrayed."

Since I was a child I've been moved by one of the simplest of old hymns. Here are three of its verses.

*It is a thing most wonderful,
almost too wonderful to be,
that God's own Son should come from heaven,*

*and die to save a child like me.
But, even could I see him die,
I could but see a little part
of that great love which, like a fire,
is always burning in his heart.*

*And yet I want to love thee, Lord;
O light the flame within my heart,
and I will love thee more and more
until I see thee as thou art.*

HOLY OR MAUNDY THURSDAY

Chapter 13 of John's Gospel knows we know about the Last Supper. It knows we know that on the Thursday at supper Jesus unprecedentedly took bread and broke it and blessed it and gave it and said, "Take, eat: this is my body"; and then took the cup, the chalice of wine and gave thanks and shared it and said, "This is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for many: drink from it." The writer of the Gospel knows we know that and knows we do that. His church community like our church community did those things, in remembrance of Jesus Christ. This year, almost unprecedentedly, vast numbers of Christians across the world may not be able physically to gather and physically to eat and drink, but they - we - know we do those things, enter into that meal, celebrate Eucharist; we know that doing those things forms us; and we know that we shall do again. We know we gladly must do those things, because Christ lovingly commanded us.

Another word for command is *mandate*, and that's why some traditions and countries know today as Maundy, Mandate, Thursday. But John's Gospel wants to drive home Christ's other mandate, and this is equally a mandate that we're urged to do: to love one another. Christ says, "I give you a new commandment: love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are to love one another."

John's Gospel insists that, if we know and fervently honour the command to eat and drink Christ's Body and Blood and

therefore always celebrate his Eucharist – which forms us and moulds us – we must equally know and fervently honour his command mutually and unfeignedly to love – so that *both* commands, gladly obeyed, will mould and form us to be the Church that is his Body here on earth.

When did Jesus give that new commandment? After he had doubly perplexed, moved, and shocked them. Even as they were perplexed and at the same time moved by his unprecedented actions and words with bread and wine, they were shocked by his unprecedented actions and words with a towel and a basin of water. He did what a domestic does, a servant, and washed their feet. It was beneath him, so Peter thought. He protested, but Jesus said, "I must and I will, if you're to remain part of me and I'm to remain part of you." And so he washed the feet of them all. Then, back at table, he said, "Do you realise what I've done to you?"

He meant, "I've called you to do the same." Never are disciples to think service is beneath them. Never are we to think service is beneath us. In many churches the washing of feet is symbolically acted out, to remind us.

And then he said, "This too is glory."

And finally he said, "Others will see what you do, how you see me, and how you see yourselves. If they see that you honour me and share with me by serving one another just as much as by eating and drinking in remembrance of me, and if they see that you call me servant just as much as you call me lord, then they will know what it is to be a disciple."

Could there be a more powerful evangelism, could there be a more powerful telling and doing of Good News for the world, could there be anything more formative and more converting, than when Christians and the Church gladly

obey the twin mandates, faithfully fulfil the twin commands?

Here are two verses from the twentieth-century hymn *Love is his word, love is his way*:

*Love is his mark, love is his sign,
bread for our strength, wine for our joy:
"This is my Body, this is my Blood,"
Love, only love, is his sign.*

*Love is his name, love is his law;
hear his command, all who are his:
"Love one another; I have loved you":
Love, only love, is his law.*

GOOD OR HOLY FRIDAY

The twin poles of Palm Sunday were Christ's glory and, though yet unseen by many, his suffering. The twin poles of Holy or Good Friday are Christ's suffering and, though yet unseen by all, his glory.

Just as last Sunday, today the Gospel proclamation is called the Passion. On Palm Sunday it was the narrative of the Passion of Jesus Christ according to Matthew; on Good Friday it is the Passion according to **John, the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters**. Just as on Sunday, by tradition the vestments of the clergy are red for a king and red for blood.

In my youth and for most of my ministry, two services have complemented each other during Holy Friday. One, later in the day, has been the three hours' meditation on Christ's seven last words. The other, earlier, has been the hour or hour and a half of the solemn Good Friday liturgy. In both, it's the cross that is at the centre.

From the cross, we learn in aggregate from the accounts of Matthew, Luke, and John, Jesus in the midst of the agonising pain of Roman judicial execution gasped out words that, like everything he had ever said, variously surprised and

disconcerted as well as including and blessing.

In the first word from the cross he sounded a definitive death-knell for the conventional morality of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth by praying, "Father, forgive them, for they know what they do": thus he forgave not just the soldier executioners but everyone, from Caiaphas the high priest through Pilate the governor to the fickle crowds and the disciples in hiding; even Judas who gave him away.

He trounced notions of who is deserving and who is undeserving by saying to one of the robbers crucified alongside him, "Today you will be with me in paradise": the man himself had said he was undeserving but then asked Jesus, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom"; Jesus effectively said, "It's your kingdom too: you have a place."

In the second word from the cross he redefined family when he looked out at his own mother who was with the disciple – we identify him as John – whom he particularly loved, and said to Mary, "There is your son", and to John, "She is your mother". Love, more than kinship, makes family. If the Church talks of family, she must do so with this word from the cross in her ears.

In the third word from the cross he sanctified humanity in its brokenness when he cried, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" No human being can stay immune from doubt, faltering, incomprehension, even protest against God; and Jesus' humanity was full. He expressed our cries in his and showed us they must be voiced. Yet what he cried was a line of Hebrew scripture, the first verse of Psalm 22. That psalm expresses with no detail spared the awfulness of suffering and the feeling of divine abandonment. But the psalmist goes on praying, even in his crying, and at last, after many verses

bordering on despair, he comes to a point of hard-won trust: trust that God is God, and his persecutors are not; trust that those who reach out to the Lord will end up praising the Lord: "God reigns, ... my soul will live for him, and people will proclaim the Lord to generations still to come" (Ps22:28ff).

In the fifth word from the cross he said, "I thirst". Here is the most basic human need: liquid. He feels it. In response, they – some of the soldiers? or those of his friends like John and the women who dared to be close? – dipped a stick or branch in sour wine, kept nearby either to revive crucified criminals a little or to dull their agony, and he drank it.

And then in the penultimate word from the cross he said, "It is finished". Some would hear it as his admission of defeat. But what if it's also translated "It is accomplished"? It is the completion of his prayer to God the Father in Gethsemane: "Not my will but yours be done."

The last word of all, according to Luke, is shouted out: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Again Christ is taking a line from one of the psalms he has known since his youth, this time Psalm 31. The psalmist trusts, and Christ now trusts, that all is in the hands of the Father.

I have sat with these Seven Last Words again and again over the years, either in the Good Friday congregation or at the front preaching them, and Christ speaking them from his cross moves me deeply.

The cross is the supreme focus of that other Good Friday service, the Solemn Liturgy, often kept in the morning if the Three Hours are preached in the afternoon. This corporate act of worship - in St George's in Baghdad it's attended by large numbers of the faithful with utmost devotion - begins in silence. The ministers, just a few, enter in red vestments and bow low or prostrate

themselves. The collect is said and readings start: Isaiah's Suffering Servant; the meditation in Hebrews on Christ as the curtain inside the Temple; and supremely that same Passion according to St John.

Then follows an ancient form of intercession interspersed with deeply considered prayers. At last a cross is brought into church. In Baghdad it is huge and rough. It is set up unadorned in full view of all, in the centre of the chancel. Slowly, all who wish come forward, first the clergy and servers and then many from the body of the church, and make their reverence in their chosen way. In Iraq the custom is that as they come to the chancel step they take a sip from a drink that reminds them of what was offered to Jesus when he cried, "I thirst."

In some traditions, even today communion is distributed and received from some of the bread consecrated the night before. That practice reminds us that Christ *is* risen, now and for ever, and that even on days of darkest remembrance we are in communion with the one who gives himself for us. In other traditions, the service ends soon after the veneration of the cross. In any case, the final blessing is followed by absolute silence as the clergy without ceremony walk out.

On this most holy day, we are called to remember: no cross, no crown. The glory of Christ is visible when we turn our eyes towards what we're tempted to turn them from.

*See, from his head, his hands, and feet
sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?*

HOLY SATURDAY

On Holy Saturday no Eucharist is celebrated during the hours of daylight.

This is the day of trauma, of aftershock; and of waiting.

After a death there is much immediately to do; often, it feels, too much. **Matthew 27:57-66** and **John 19:38-42** between them tell us how it was when Jesus died on Friday. It wasn't usual. Jesus had been executed as a criminal and the governor's permission was needed if anything special was going to be attempted. We read that a man of influence, Joseph of Arimathea, a secret follower of Jesus, got that permission, took the dead body aside, and prepared it to be buried in Joseph's own rock-tomb, the one he had ready for himself. Nicodemus, that other secret follower who had once come to Jesus by night to be taught by him, provided rich unguents and spices to honour his teacher. Then, with some of the women who were disciples, they wrapped the dead Christ in linen and laid him in the tomb. We don't know who else helped but the stone to close the burial was rolled into place, and the dead Lord lay in utter stillness.

Christmas carols imagine stillness and silence at his birth. "Silent night, holy night," "O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie." It's worth pondering the two stillnesses, at the beginning and end of Jesus' life on earth, though one feels like a stillness and silence of joy and the other like a stillness and silence of sorrow, even despair.

Who was there, at the stillness of the birth? Mary his mother and Joseph her husband. No words of theirs are recorded, but they were there. They waited. Who was there, thirty-three years or so later at the stillness of the tomb? Mary Magdalene, we're told, and another Mary, the mother of Joset as Mark (15:47) informs us. No words of theirs are recorded. They sat and waited.

What they thought, we can't know, but they were there. And anyone who has been close to a human death, anyone

who has ever been bereaved of someone they've loved, knows that words are less important than presence. They also know that there is a time and a season for not knowing; for waiting.

From a spiritual:

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble;

Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?

EASTER

In some traditions and churches, the very first celebration of Easter starts in the darkness of the night that begins on Saturday. In others, it's at the end of that night, very early and before dawn. In others still, it's in the fullness of Sunday's daylight. But the matter of the celebration is the same for all Churches, all Christians: that Christ, who died, rose; that Christ is risen; that the world, and our life, is transformed.

If you were to be at some churches in any normal year at this time and on this day, fire would be lit outside and a candle-flame carried in to proclaim that Christ is our light, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of all things; and an ancient song would be sung to celebrate the true identity of Jesus Christ, the morning star, the Son and the revelation of God. Readings from scripture, more than usual, would follow: typically they might include the Genesis account of the creation of heaven and earth; Noah, the flood, and the sign of the rainbow; the sparing of Isaac when Abraham learned of God's better way of sacrifice; Ezekiel's vision of dry bones reanimated; and always without fail the story of the Exodus, when the angel of God passed over and the people who had been in slavery crossed the deathly waters to

freedom in the promised land. Then Romans 6 would be read, in which Paul assures us that, if we have been united with Christ in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his: it's what baptism means and is. Finally, the Gospel will be either **Matthew 28** or **John 20**. Mary Magdalene, who of all the disciples, female and male, has loved Jesus so much, is there, once again watching and waiting; another Mary seems to be close too; and they see that inexplicably the stone is rolled away. Their emotions are contradictory: fear, but also the beginnings of joy. John's account tells us that Peter and John are summoned, and come, and marvel, and do not understand. As for Mary Magdalene, when they leave, now she weeps. She too doesn't understand. She fears the body has been removed – but by whom? She seems to see a vision of men or angels. She makes no sense of any of it. She misses Jesus, both living and dead, with pangs of anguish. It's his unbearable absence that excruciates her.

And then she sees someone, and supposes it is the cemetery gardener, who must have moved him. "Where is he?" she asks. He, who is Christ, just says her name: "Mary!" She knows him when he says her name. She knows she has seen the Lord, and goes, and tells.

No one saw the resurrection. It's a word Christians use in default of any other word to use for the profound mystery of God's transformation of life into eternal life in the person of Jesus of Nazareth the Christ, and for the transformative effect of that on us when we acknowledge it with awe and in faith. Mary Magdalene, and the two disciples at Emmaus, and eventually all of them, individuals and groups and finally all of them together, also felt and knew that they were in the real presence of Christ, speaking to them as one who knew them through and through. And they went, and they told, and they and those they told made other

disciples, and passed on from one age to another the revelation of the true nature of God in and through Jesus. Christ eternally meets *us*, greets *us*, scatters *our* fear and gloom. This Easter as every Easter, we say and sing:

*No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince
of Life;
life is naught without thee: aid us in our
strife;
make us more than conquerors through
thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to thy
home above.
Thine be the glory, risen, conquering
Son;
endless is the victory thou o'er death
hast won.*

+ Michael Cyprus & the Gulf
April 2020

Coronavirus, Church & Your Survey **The Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf**

The Covid-19 pandemic has obviously had a profound effect on churches. The lockdown has severely restricted ministry in areas such as pastoral care, fellowship groups, and serving the community. On the other hand, for those with online access, worship has taken on new and creative forms over the last few weeks.

Many clergy and ministry teams have risen to the challenge of operating in the virtual environment. The crisis may prove to be a tragedy but also an opportunity. As we pass the most severe period of lockdown, it seems a good time to assess how churchgoers have responded to the experience, and what they think the future might hold. How well have people coped with the pandemic? Has it strengthened or weakened their faith? How has it been for clergy and ministry teams trying to work in this new environment? How have those receiving ministry found this novel experience? Will virtual ministry become

part of the post-pandemic landscape, and will this be a good move for your church?

We have developed a survey over the last few weeks in discussion with church leaders and lay people which we hope will enable you to record your experience of the pandemic, the ministry you have given or received, and what you think will happen to churches in a post-pandemic world. We initially aimed the survey at the Church of England, but other denominations have begun using it, and we have tried to make the language and questions relevant to everyone.

This version is adapted for use by the Anglican Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf.

The pandemic has clearly affected different parts of the Church in different ways. We would like as wide a range of churchgoers (clergy and lay people) to take part so that we accurately assess what the different responses have been. This is an online survey, which we estimate it will take you about 20-30 minutes to complete. Most of the questions simply require you to tick boxes, though there are options to specify your particular circumstances, and an opportunity at the end for you to tell us your views in your own words.

Alongside questions about the pandemic and ministry there are sections which ask about you: these are important because they will allow us to see how the lockdown is affecting different sorts of people in different contexts.

The survey can be completed on mobile phones, though it is more quickly completed on devices with larger screens such as tablets or computers. You can access using the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/ycjmbhpm>

Please forward this link to any churches or churchgoers you feel might want to take part in the survey and support this research. We should have some initial

results within a few weeks and will make these available as widely as we can.

The Revd Professor Andrew Village, York St John University.

a.village@yorks.ac.uk

The Revd Canon Professor Leslie J. Francis, Visiting Professor York St John University.

Here follows further comment on the above survey by The Ven Dr John Holdsworth

As lock down measures are slowly easing, there's a chance to reflect on how all this has affected our view of church life, with a new customised survey. The authors are Professors Andrew Village from York and Leslie Francis from Warwick, both well known experts in the field of data collection and interpretation.

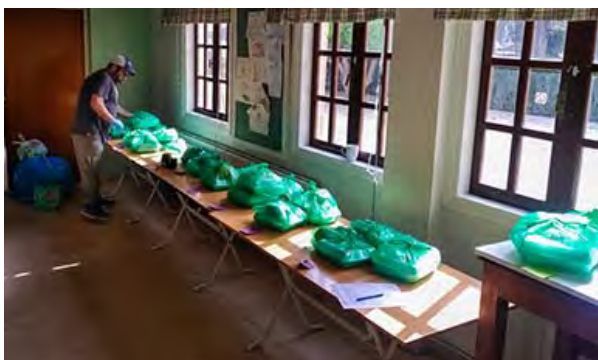
The survey is online and completely anonymous. The results will be processed by the two authors and the results made available to us in time for Synod next year.

A similar survey promoted by the Church Times newspaper in the UK has so far had around 3000 responses and the hope is that we shall show the same enthusiasm across the Diocese. The survey is meant for all associated with the Anglican congregations, both lay and ordained. A letter commending it, from Archbishop Michael and the Archdeacons is in course of preparation but you can go to the website now and make your mark without waiting for an invitation!

Most of the questions are of the simple multiple choice tick box variety, and it should take around twenty minutes to complete. Obviously, the more people who do that the more useful it will be. The website is: <https://tinyurl.com/ycjmbhpm>.

The hope is that this will give us a resource for Synod next year. Please pass this on to all your church friends,

See [Providing food to vulnerable and marginalised people in Cyprus](#) – by Joel Kelling, Anglican Alliance Facilitator for the Middle East.



Food packages in St. Paul's Cathedral, Nicosia

As these social concern initiatives continue, it is a particular joy that interfaith and secular partnerships are being forged and strengthened, so that, together, we can more effectively provide food for the hungry in our midst.

If you feel able to offer practical help – during the pandemic and beyond – please contact me. And please do continue to pray for all those in our communities who are most deeply affected by COVID-19 and its ramifications.

*Crucified and risen Lord,
you know the strangeness of these times,
and the isolation we share.
In these lock-downed days,
we open our hearts to you;
that, amidst the suffering of our world,
we may be carriers of hope,
transmitters of joy,
givers of life,
and people of Easter hope. Amen*

Revd Anne Futcher



Maggie Le-Roy, Retreats Facilitator, wrote this occasional letter on the 3rd June 2020.

Retreating starts a new Beginning

These letters started in Lent and lockdown 11 weeks ago. We've been on a long journey through the wilderness. There has been much waiting and watching, there have been many frustrations and joys, there has been much to learn and relearn, much to miss and value. Strangely (?) Pentecost has now coincided with more lifting of restrictions, with its commission and resourcing to move out, into a new way of being - a new beginning.

Jesus also had to move out of his wilderness. I wonder what was going through his mind when he knew his retreat time was coming to an end? Had he become strangely secure in that place, concerned about moving out? Did he wonder how he might adjust to being back out there with people again? Had he rehearsed words he might say to his family about his lockdown experience? Had he devised a plan for his new ministry?

People who go on longer retreats have similar concerns when they come to the end of their time away. It is important for them to review how their time has been, what they have learnt and felt, what they will put into practice as a result of their 'lock-down' and consider what they can happily share with others of their experience.



A new beginning

Easing into the 'normal' can then happen; slowly but surely into a new beginning.

Emmaus – A reflection from our Canon Theologian



The Emmaus sermons I have heard this year have each stressed the importance of the ordinary setting of the story. In fact, more of this could be made than I have heard. These two people going to Emmaus are not described as disciples. The Greek allows that these were possibly even a man and woman, man and wife perhaps since we learn later that they share a home to which they can invite the stranger. Their relation to the eleven is uncertain. They refer to 'women of ours' who had been to the tomb and had come back spouting what had been regarded as nonsense. They betray something of their relation to Jesus in that they were among those who had hoped he would be the one who would (literally) liberate Israel (though most versions prefer to translate the Greek as 'redeem'). These are human feelings, political aspirations, ordinary emotions.

This is still Easter Day. These two are part of the crowds returning from the great feast in Jerusalem. The person who meets with them is described as a *paroikos* in Greek. This is an interesting term in the New Testament, usually denoting a foreigner who may be just visiting or who may have an official immigrant status. No flocks of angels in this vision then. Just some foreigner choosing to walk with an ordinary couple on their way home, like fans returning

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from a football match in which their team has lost, and finding common cause with some amateur pundit. And they were surprised.

Because it is ordinary, we can identify with it. It uses themes which are part of our ordinary religious yearning. Perhaps we are among those who have our doubts about the empty tomb story or feel embarrassed by its apparent supernatural demands for faith. Perhaps we are among those who have been disillusioned by religion, perhaps, as the story seems to say, we have hoped for too little. Perhaps our hopes have been too specific, too local, too confined by human vision. Perhaps we have the feeling that we do not understand well enough what is going on.

Perhaps it is the journey theme with which we identify most. Being 'on a journey' is a familiar and accessible metaphor for our own development as human beings; our own journey through life, and one which poets and artists have recognized as an important medium of communication. T.S. Eliot's magi make a journey. They too are surprised by what they find. That too is very ordinary. They too realise that their vision has been too small. As they move on they no longer feel at ease in the old dispensation. The realization of the new is both exhilarating and disturbing.

The author draws our attention to the meal, to the breaking of the bread. This happens, remember, in the company of two people who were not at the last supper, but is reported to us who know what went on. We are invited to join dots while the two people involved simply recognize in that instant. We the readers might, in our own setting, think of the eucharist, of the gathered community of disciples today, of the explanation and 'breaking' of the word of the Law the Prophets and now the New Testament. Or we might think of ordinary times when

hospitality to a stranger has revealed something important to us.

Having recognized and having understood, we do not want the moment to pass. Abide with us, we ask, and that asking has pastoral strength as demonstrated in the hymn written by a terminally ill cleric reaching the end of his journey, Abide with Me. We pray for reassurance in turbulent times, we pray that in all the situations of loneliness we might imagine (and lock down has emphasized some of them) we should not feel alone.

Ordinariness is a great space in which to rehearse religious yearnings. The priest poet George Herbert spoke in one of his poems, called simply Prayer, of 'heaven in ordinarie.' He also had a poem about meeting God and recognizing what God is about in the context of a meal. It begins with an invitation to the reader and through him to us, strangers, to that meal: "love bade me welcome." The invitee comes up with self-deprecating reasons to refuse. He is not worthy, there are others more deserving, he will come but only if he can serve. Love will have none of it. Love has atoned for all that. It is a post-Easter poem to those on a journey of understanding; those who yearn to recognize God's presence and hold him; a poem to demolish scepticism and replace it with realistic imagination.

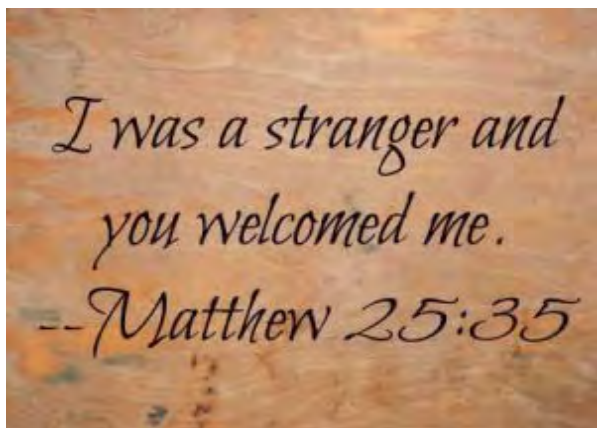
"You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:

So I did sit and eat."

The Ven Dr. John Holdsworth

Welcoming the Stranger and any in need in St. Paul's, Nicosia

The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God. Leviticus 19:34



Introduction

This article describes something of the experience of St. Paul's Cathedral community in welcoming the stranger and those in need in Nicosia. It outlines the current need and the response of the Cathedral and wider community, both before and during the COVID19 pandemic, highlighting particular challenges and joys, and future plans. In the light of its experience, some suggestions are also made that may be useful to other churches wishing to start a similar initiative. The article has been written following conversations with Dean Jeremy and Fr. Justin in Autumn 2019, and again with Fr. Justin in May 2020.

The need

In and around Nicosia, there are high levels of people who are, quite simply, hungry. They include significant numbers of asylum-seekers and other displaced people, who, together with local Cypriots, are struggling with high living costs. The impact of COVID-19 on the local and global economy has further exacerbated their plight.

The response

'We are here to serve' – Fr. Justin

A few years ago, in response to the perceived need, a monthly Monday evening meal for refugees and asylum-seekers began being served by St. Paul's Cathedral community. It has recently been 'rebranded' to broaden its appeal, making clear that any who are in need of a hot meal are welcome.

The Cathedral community participates in this initiative in two key ways: by cooking and preparing the food (either in their homes or on site); and by serving the meal and tidying up. From 6.00 until 7.30pm, guests would gather and queue 'canteen-style' to collect their meal and return to a table to eat with others. The evening is designed to encourage guests to chat and to share with one another. When the servers have quiet moments, they, too, circulate and talk with guests and over time, relationships are built.

There are other opportunities for fellowship, and for information sharing too. During the evening, guests have played the piano, table tennis is available, and the younger ones have also enjoyed the outside play equipment. Representatives from First Step (a programme providing vocational training for integration into the labour market) have also come to offer information to individuals. On occasion, the Thrift Shop opens, with additional helpers, for guests to select clothing.

In addition to the Monday meal, food has been served to those in need twice weekly from the hall at St. Paul's, by the Mercy Centre. A hot homemade meal and a breakfast is served on Wednesday evenings and Friday mornings respectively. On Wednesdays, following Grace, a team of volunteers serves the guests at table and later clears away their plates. This model of hospitality is best described as one in which 'everyone sits down and receives'. The style for Friday breakfasts is more relaxed, with food parcels also being distributed. Throughout the week, too, there is a small *ad hoc* food bank for those in need, that operates out of the Deanery. These different acts of Christian hospitality share a common feature: they all offer a welcoming and safe environment in which relationship, dignity and respect can flourish.

The onset of COVID-19 in Spring 2020 has meant that firstly, the need for gifts of food within the community is greater; and secondly that finding a way to respond effectively within the necessary government restrictions is particularly challenging. Clearly, meals needed to be brought, ready packaged, to the homes of those in need.

Early in the lockdown period, the Cathedral put out a call for volunteers through social and other media. The response was heartening: a volunteer from the Women's Fellowship Guild offered to cook 100 meals on a weekly basis; and another individual offered to cook an additional 40 meals per week. There were further offers of help too: to collect and deliver food gifts; and to support the logistics and administration of a new system for providing food gifts.

And so it was that by Monday 13th April, in excess of 100 cooked, ready to eat meals were being packaged and delivered to individual addresses around Nicosia on Mondays. Following a request for an additional 80 meals from the Cameroon Church in Nicosia, the Dean and Fr. Justin also began making bulk deliveries to them and to some other single addresses on Wednesdays. By early May, there were some 200 meals (half meat, half vegetarian) being delivered each week. If the number of people needing a meal on one day seemed low, the administration team would call previous recipients to check whether they might also need a meal, always capping the deliveries each day at 100 due to the resources available. Additional food parcels were also being added to the delivery runs, for distribution as needed.

The Cathedral office has served as the initiative's administrative hub. Here volunteers and staff receive food requests and donations, both through the Cathedral's landline, and via SMS and WhatsApp messaging on a dedicated mobile phone. Requests for food are also

received from Caritas for people whom they know are specifically in need. The day's most efficient collection and delivery routes are planned and forwarded to individual drivers. Arrangements are made, too, regarding patterns of deliveries. Individual talents of volunteers were identified and used effectively, so that efficient logistical planning began to evolve and the workload was distributed more effectively.

Challenges...

Knowing whether meals are reaching those most in need is always a key challenge, and during lockdown, this has especially been the case. Initially it proved particularly difficult to obtain accurate details of residential addresses. As deliveries continued, this became clearer, as did the number of individuals within each household who needed a meal.

Communication with those receiving food can be challenging due to language barriers. During lockdown, it has proved additionally so. Volunteers want to be able to respond to a person in need, with sensitivity and care. Under normal circumstances, they are able to communicate their compassion through appropriate non-verbal means. During the COVID-19 crisis, however, such options are necessarily restricted. Ensuring the security and safety of volunteers during lockdown has been challenging too. The needs of individuals have been so considerable that, on occasion, a number have gathered in the hope of receiving food intended for just a few households. It has been hard for volunteers to send people away empty-handed. And they have, at all times, needed to be especially mindful of their own health and safety, and of that of others.

Data protection is another key challenge: lists of home addresses of individuals require treating sensitively, as does access to volunteers' personal mobile phone numbers.

...And joys

The opportunity to link with other NGOs, both faith-based and secular, across the city to serve those in need is a particular joy. The help received from Caritas has been noted above. Additionally, volunteers from Refugee Europe have assisted with deliveries both for the Cathedral and for Caritas. Donations of money, food, take-away containers etc. have been made by different groups and individuals, including some from outside Cyprus.

Fr. Justin identified other joys, too: those of discovering individuals' latent talents (e.g. in logistics or catering etc.); of facilitating an important opportunity during lockdown for members of the Cathedral community to come together to serve others and to enjoy fellowship outside the home (while maintaining physical distancing requirements); and of establishing rhythms of working effectively together. And perhaps above all, the community of helpers has felt blessed by the simple expressions they've received of grateful thanks, surprise and joy.

And what of the future?

Following a relaxation of lockdown restrictions on 21st May, the Cathedral community will offer a take-away collection service from St. Paul's in lieu of the monthly June seated meal, perhaps with a few tables outside, in line with physical distancing requirements. This monthly take-away service will continue for the time being.

Conclusion

Giving hospitality is central to the St. Paul's mission, and the offering of a regular hot meal to the stranger and to those in need has become an important part of this. For the opportunity to be able to continue to serve in this way during the current pandemic, the Cathedral community gives thanks.

Recommendations

Reflecting on the Cathedral's experience of offering a meal to those in need, both before and during the COVID-19 epidemic, Fr. Justin offers the following pointers to churches that may wish to begin doing something similar:

1. Be clear about expectations and resources – what it is that you can, and are, prepared to do.
2. Be ready to say 'No' and '*if we can't help now, we'll try to help later*'. Advise volunteers to be clear about this where necessary, and to communicate that they will, for example, put a person's name down on the next food delivery list.
3. If volunteers are delivering food to home addresses, it is helpful to work in pairs, one as a driver, one as a caller, ideally calling ahead to the intended recipient in advance.
4. Consider how you might be able to partner those doing similar work from other denominations and faiths, and from the local community.
5. Take time to identify and appreciate the gifts of others and explore with them how they might best be used.
6. Consider how volunteers might be able to support one another, both through their expertise and fellowship; and whether they might welcome additional support and training in their support of the stranger and those in need.
7. Think through the logistics required for the smooth running of food packaging and delivery routes. Systems don't need to be complicated – simple colour coding can be very helpful.
8. Be aware of cultural issues, such as foods that particular ethnic or faith groups cannot, or prefer not to eat. The meal is not given only for physical sustenance. It is offered in the Christian tradition of hospitality, in the hope that it will also be savoured.

Revd Anne Fletcher

Not diminishing God: A reflection for the Trinity season



Christ Church Cathedral Dublin

I have just heard, on the radio, the Mayor of Bristol, Marvin Rees, tell me that “events happen all the time.” Indeed they do and as humans we find that very difficult to cope with. Events make us insecure. We want there to be a system, a way of organizing events to make them manageable and understandable, to collate them to make them useful, and essentially to give us a kind of mastery over them. We refuse to be overwhelmed by events and so we combat them by reducing them to something we can get our heads around. The history of religion is littered with such attempts. In the Old Testament book of Lamentations for example, we simply hear the random cries of people, not unlike those in any modern war zone, or at some modern demonstration. If it were a TV documentary. It would be called something like “Witness.” On the one hand there are voices simply describing how awful it all is. Others complain to God for what they perceive him to have allowed, some for what they perceive him to have done. Others want to hang on to the hope that he might still intervene. We just watch, and listen to this hopeless cacophony.

What we are actually seeing is the end of a system. A system that gave everyone security said that good people do well and bad people do not. What we might now call a binary system. This experience in a war zone shatters that idea. But still, people are desperate for a system. The book of Job, in the mouths of the so-called comforters, offer their views of Job’s plight. It turns out to be a fight between Job, who wants witnesses to his faithful incomprehension, and the friends who are desperate to hang on to a system. They know how God works. They want Job to acknowledge that and submit to it, even when his experience warns against it. He says that their views amount to “bringing their God in their hands” (Job 12:6 – a notoriously difficult verse to translate). In other words, organizing God diminishes God. Claiming to understand God’s work through systemizing it, diminishes God. Reducing God to manageable proportions diminishes God.

There is a danger of seeing the Trinity in that way. The weeks between Easter and Pentecost give us, liturgically, a confusing series of snapshots: first responses to the unimaginable fact that God was crucified. To people who had formerly believed that God was very distant, though still interested and involved; to have to regard Jesus not just as his messenger but actually as God, and then to try to make sense of what it means to have with us a Comforter who will be with us always, is almost too much to take. And so the Trinity doctrine can be our way of managing and systemizing it. To some extent that is inevitable, but what we must make sure that what we do not do, is diminish God in the process. The Trinity is not a divinely sanctioned means of reducing God to the manageable, even when it is one human aid to making our idea of God more organised. It was conceived, and given the place it has in our theology, to filter out even more naive and simplistic views of a one-dimensional God.

There are churches which appear to approach their mission in an almost industrial way. You feed in people at one end and through a series of processes you get your Christian out at the other. That is the ultimate expression of having God under our control; and belongs to an age of mechanisation and systems. Our church retains the sense of God's holiness, ineffability, and mystery. It also accepts that the Church of God is a diverse Church, perhaps the most important message of Pentecost. We are many as God is many. Yet we are one as God is one. That is the mystery.

In times of uncertainty such as those in which we live, systems offer security of a kind, until they break and show their limits. Faithful incomprehension is a more sustainable way of discipleship. In the midst of competing claims for truth, we are witnesses; seeing, noticing, paying attention; and showing that we have noticed, in our prayers. It is God who redeems these fragments in ways we cannot imagine when our systems fail. And indeed, that is quite a task because as we know, events happen all the time.

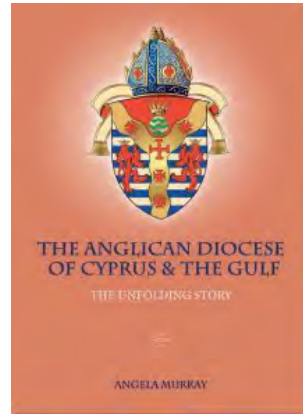
The Ven Dr. John Holdsworth

scene@cypgulf June 2020



Click this link for [scene@cypgulf](#) June 2020 to view the latest edition of the publication from the Diocesan Communications Team.

The Unfolding Story - A History of the Diocese



The long-awaited book describing the history of our diocese was launched in February 2020. It is a fascinating and detailed presentation of the background and events which formed the diocese as well as a wonderful description of the work of the diocese since its formation. It is more than 450 pages, including an index to make referencing easy, and many illustrations and chronicles of clergy in the different chaplaincies as well as canons, ordinations, and of course bishops!

The book signing by the author event took place on 14th February 2020 at All Hallows by the Tower, London.

Members of the Friends of the Diocese attended the signing, and some pictures of the event follow:



Attendees collecting their copies



Mrs Angela Murray - The Author



Author and Publisher



Our Chairman with Olive Branch in hand, ignore the empty wine glass



Friends Secretary & Committee Member

This Eastertide of 2020: A Reflection

There are times when the liturgical calendar matches the public mood. There are times when it does not, and this is one of them, at least as far as I am concerned. This is still a Lenten time, a time of solitude and denial of many of the things that make us most truly human. It is a time of not knowing if this will end well. It is a Jeremiah kind of time when we fear that we might echo his words: "Harvest is past, summer is over and we are not saved" (8:20). It is a time when, hovering between life and death, important people spend three days in an incubator. It is a time when self-justifying Governors and governments act impulsively to mask their confusion and maintain the illusion of power. It is a heyday for populists whose noisy internet clamour seeks to stifle truth. That did not change magically on the first Easter Day.

True, as Christians, we hope and pray and believe that Easter will indeed come. HM the Queen had it about right when she spoke of our faith as giving us hope. An awful lot is invested in that hope of Resurrection in the Bible. In itself, it is not a hope of survival after death, as many suppose. It is a hope that those who have experienced injustice and for whom existence has been cruel and unremitting in this life will find comfort in another one. It is a hope that those who have been forced to cynicism and disillusion by injustice and the power of institutional evil will once again rejoice in a new dispensation. It is a hope that there is a point in doing good and that as vindication is clearly not going to come in this life, then there must be another where it will. With cruel irony, Resurrection has become a hope of continuity; of a brief break and then life as normal, reunited with the people and all the hopes we have lost. In such a world, in such a second life, a continuing second life from where we left off, all the injustices of this one would be renewed. And so, those who have done well hope

for a resurrection to continue in pleasure while those who have done badly hope for a better time of it. If continuity is the theme, good luck with that.

But be careful what you hope for. Easter is nothing if it does not contain God's surprise. There will come a time when our waiting will be over, a time when two can make a journey (like that from Jerusalem to Emmaus for example) without social distancing, and without fear when joined by a stranger. But the fact that that stranger may hold the key to the whole thing is often where the surprise is to be found. On this Easter day, the Church has understandably forced our attention to the Gospel of John for its Gospel proclamation. Quite wise that. If we were to read Luke we would find that, when the women reported back, "the story appeared to (the disciples) nonsense and they would not believe them." (24:11). Later that day those disciples were not filled with Easter elation but rather, "their faces were full of sadness" (24:18).

In recent days the public attention has turned to the future: not just to when the present crisis will end but what will follow it. The Easter story invites us to be both joyfully optimistic and fearful. As Tertullian said of the prayer, "thy kingdom come," "We daily fear that for which we daily pray." Life will not be the same. Institutions will change and outlooks will change. Culture will change. Priorities will change, the shape of world organization itself might change. There might even be a new world. The last might even be nearer the first.

This is a Lukan Easter time of waiting and of desperately trying to make sense. Faith is about believing that in the end all will be well despite our fears and despite the evidence. It is about a readiness and openness to a new way of life and not just optimism that 'normality' will be resumed. It is a Habakkuk moment:

The fig tree has no buds, the vines bear no harvest, the olive crop fails. The orchards yield no food, the fold is bereft of its flock, and there are no cattle in the stalls. Even so I shall exult in the Lord and rejoice in the God who saves me” (Hab 3:17,18).

The Ven Dr John Holdsworth

Pastoral Changes in the Province

A Canon - Just In Time



Archbishop Michael visited Bahrain in early March and was finally able to install Fr Harrison Chinnakumar as a canon of the cathedral.

Fr Harrison

A dedication service for the newly completed multi-purpose building took place on the same day.

Then the lockdown struck. A programme for visiting the ruler and some other dignitaries was cancelled at the last minute and the visit had to be cut short so Archbishop Michael - and, on an even later flight, Julia - could get back to Cyprus before flights were shut down completely.

The Right Reverend Hosam Naoum: A new bishop consecrated in Jerusalem



Rt Revd Hosam

On Sunday 14 June in St George’s Cathedral, Jerusalem, Archbishop Michael as Primate of the Province joined Archbishop Suheil Dawani and Bishop Peter Eaton of

Southeast Florida in making a new Coadjutor (Assistant) Bishop for the

Diocese of Jerusalem. Hosam Naoum, previously cathedral dean there, will in due course succeed as Jerusalem’s Anglican diocesan bishop. He is a previous guest speaker at Cyprus and the Gulf’s diocesan synod.



Consecration of Rt Revd Hosam Naoum

The Diocese of Jerusalem serves Palestine / Israel, Jordan, the Lebanon, and Syria. Prayers are asked for Bishop Hosam, his wife Rafa, and their family.

Welcome back, Geoff



Revd Geoff

The Revd Geoff Graham began a return to ministry at St Helena’s, Larnaca, in February following an operation.

Archbishop Michael visited just before the restrictions began and received a Russian Orthodox member of the congregation into the Anglican Communion.

Obituary



Bishop Camillo

Our brother in Christ **Bishop Camillo Ballin MCCJ** died in Rome on 12th April 2020, (Western)

Easter Day, and we give thanks for his life.

Bishop Camillo was in charge of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Vicariate (meaning missionary diocese) of Northern Arabia, based in Bahrain. He had been a bishop since 2005.

A native of the Padua region of northern Italy, he was 75 and had been a Comboni Missionary for many years, serving in Cairo, the Lebanon, Rome and Kuwait. Latterly he had been granted Bahraini citizenship by His Majesty the King. Bishop Camillo was a firm ecumenical friend, collaborating with Christians of other traditions for the common good of all in northern Gulf countries. May his soul and the souls of all the departed rest in peace and, risen, know God's glory.

+ Michael

Watch this space!

The Foundation is to embark on a major fundraising exercise

Thirty years ago the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf Foundation was set up to provide a fund to support the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf. The amount that the Foundation hoped to raise did not materialise. However, over the past thirty years the Foundation has made a number of small and large donations for specific needs in the diocese, responding to requests from the diocesan bishop and diocesan standing and finance committee, most recently supporting ministry training. Also as a UK based charity it has been able to receive donations from UK taxpayers on behalf of the diocese or the chaplaincies and claim the tax relief on them.

As Friends will know, the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf serves the people of around ten political jurisdictions in the Arabian Peninsula and Iraq and the island of Cyprus. The majority of the

chaplaincies serve expatriate congregations, some of whom are working, without their families, many thousands of miles from the country they call home.

In the last couple of years, some contributions from chaplaincies to diocesan funds have been delayed by changes in regulations for sending money between countries and the Foundation had to step in and liquidate nearly half its assets to fill the gap. Luckily it was all resolved and the amount involved returned to the Foundation within a matter of months. This raised in the minds of the trustees (before the COVID-19 emergency) the need to consider again serious fund-raising. A professional adviser is being employed to advise us on how best to approach trusts that may be prepared to support Christian ministry in our amazingly diverse Diocese.

We are aware that trust donors are encouraged to make substantial donations when there is a good grass roots donor base, so the Foundation will be approaching Friends of the Diocese, along with others, to consider how best they can contribute to secure the future of the Diocese (including introducing the fundraising team to trusts or individuals who may be prepared to make substantial donations).

In the meantime, if you wish to support the Diocese by leaving a legacy to the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf Foundation, or maybe, giving a one off gift when you leave the Diocese, or making a regular continuing donation, see the Diocesan website <http://cypgulf.org/donate/> or email: foundation.treasurer@cypgulf.org. If you are a UK tax payer the Foundation may be able to claim Gift Aid on your donations.

Susan Cooper
