

FR HOYAL WRITES

I am not a “twitcher” but I think I can imagine something of the excitement an ornithologist feels when a bird is spotted for the first time.

Despite city lights, walking Belle at dusk or later I keep an eye out for stars and planets. On the Downs you get a pretty good horizon, in fact.

I am often disappointed. Visibility may be poor. There may be cloud the very evening something interesting is predicted - a meteor shower, perhaps, a lunar eclipse, or a chance to see a faint comet or a “difficult” planet like Mercury. That is frustrating.

But sometimes something wonderful happens – the splendid and rare visual alignment of Mercury, Venus, Mars, Saturn and Jupiter in the western sky during April and May 2002, or the transit of Venus across the Sun’s disc in 2004. The latter took place on a glorious June morning. It was something I had waited nearly 50 years to see, having known about it since schooldays. Such fulfilments are special moments indeed.

More recently Venus has been a brilliant object in the early evening sky for some months. It has been a joy to look out for it as the sun sets, and its extraordinary brightness has remained a thrill on clear nights. On cloudy nights, there has been the keen disappointment of knowing it is there but being deprived of a sighting.

Clearly, my modest interest in astronomy is aesthetic as well as scientific, which I suppose is much the same for birdwatchers. Those stars and planets are strange, wonderful friends in the sky. A good many I know by name.

There are parallels to be drawn with the life of faith: the joys of those times when spiritual realities shine bright and clear, the excitement when they are experienced for the first time or after a long interval, the disappointment of those periods when little or nothing is visible.

Our faith is a treasury, a pantheon, a heaven, of spiritual jewels, all the exciting and gracious work of God. A few catch our eye from time to time – perhaps the brilliant facet of a parable not glimpsed by us before, the beauty of a prayer that really touches us, the amazing achievements of a saint, or the sudden revelation of how true and real and personal an article of faith actually is for us. Many of the jewels, though, we have never seen or even known about. Some we have looked for but failed to see.

Some of us keep looking. Others have to be spurred into making an effort even for the brightest and most stunning objects. Most of us are rather fitful about such things, I suppose.

Classically, truth and beauty and goodness have very much been grouped together. I would certainly want to say our faith is about what is true and what is good. But I want to add that there is great beauty in the faith we have. I don't mean any kind of shallow prettiness, but a deep awe-inspiring wonder that requires something akin to an aesthetic appreciation in order to grasp it, no doubt connected to what we call the beauty of holiness.

So please look up, as it were, and keep looking. There is a beauty about God and the things of God which we miss to our great loss.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Richard Hooker". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

And another 40 years on

As many of you know, March saw for me a significant birthday and then in April a significant anniversary of Baptism. Such was the fuss that the priest in charge was keen kindly to remind me that there is life after forty, and so far he has proved yet again to be right. As I write, preparations are in hand to mark the 40th anniversary of the consecration which sadly I shall be preaching in Valetta in Malta. Sharing a birth-year with the building has prompted me to read with interest in our magazine the memoirs of those who have known and loved the place for longer than some of us have been alive. Times have certainly changed in the last 40 years. The battle for the re-building of the Church was fought -- hard -- and won. Congregations have ebbed and flowed. The choir school which made such an impression on so many lives closed. The vicarage full of clergy houses now only one, and then only on two floors. And it's made me wonder where we will be in 40 years' time.

Of course the answer is, who knows? Perhaps a clue though is to look at where we are now. Each January in the parish magazine Fr Richard recalls some of the events of the preceding year. And what fascinating reading it makes. It gives us some idea of the huge contribution that is made to the life and the work and the mission of All Saints Parish Church. There are wonderful signs of growth and commitment.

A few Sundays ago, we had our first all-female serving team. Not many years ago it would have been unthinkable: now it is

reality, and it's wonderful too that they, and our male servers too (so many of them still at school), all want to give up their time to serve, not just at the main parish mass, but also at our new 9.30 service, and other services during the week. And they serve with such skill and enthusiasm, helping to make our liturgy what it is.

We no longer have a choir-school to provide us with trebles, but we do have a dedicated band of singers, and a growing band too, providing us with wonderful music, both ancient and modern.

The 9.30 service is taking a while to establish itself, but that's only to be expected. But numbers of little ones are increasing. At the last meeting of the PCC it was suggested that we have a need to reopen our crèche. They may make a little bit of noise, but they are comfortable with us. It would take a hard heart not to be moved by them waving at the procession on the way out, or making the sign of the cross on their foreheads in holy water as they come into Church, or knowing when to rush forward at communion for a blessing for them, and some beloved soft toy.

And what about links with the Diocese? At Pentecost, Bishop Mike joined us to preach at the 9.30 and at the 11. Thanks to the work of many, we are now more a part of the diocese than we have been for years, and it showed. How good it was to have our Diocesan with us, laughing and loving and encouraging. It is especially good in uncertain and difficult times, and that is another thing for which we should rejoice. We are a diverse congregation. Many travel some distance to

be with us. We come from differing backgrounds, with differing skills, and differing views, and yet we are an inclusive congregation, rejoicing in diversity, being tested by it too, but seeking to find God in one another, and to find the truth revealed in the teaching of the Church.

And there is more. The number of baptisms may be holding steady, but the number of marriages is increasing. It's not uncommon to have 4 or 5 sets of banns read at any one time, and the number of marriages at All Saints is rising.

We are struggling with our finances. Much has been written about that in recent months, and this is not the time for another *crie de coeur*. We are trying to respond, taking our commitment to the diocese seriously; taking our commitment to mission seriously; so seriously in fact that there is a rota for the cleaning of lavatories to save the cost of hiring a cleaner. If you didn't know about it, if you feel you would like to join them, to "take up your marigolds and clean", then contact one of the wardens (sometimes to be found with their heads down the pan).

And there is so much more. I have not mentioned lent groups or concerts, mothers' union meetings or those who serve coffee. If I have not mentioned what you do, please do not feel offended, because the purpose of this article is not to thank everyone. It's not to a type of "State of the Union" address. It's to reflect on where we are 40 years on from where we were.

and as it transpired unaware of this drama. And I was rooted to the spot, clutching a wand ... but we coped. Truly the Holy Spirit has a sense of humour.

Talking of wands, it was not ever thus. I found a reference in the PCC minutes to our badges of office:

‘PCC 1954 Jun 11: Gifts to Church

... Also on view were the Churchwardens’ Staves presented in memory of Mr E Mortimore Harley.’

Does anyone know when they changed from staves to wands?

Frankly, I do not know why we hold PCC meetings and take minutes. Nothing changes. How about these two?

‘PCC 1954 Mar 22: Church heating

Mr Turner reported the action he had taken to overcome the obnoxious fumes from the boiler reaching the Church.’

‘PCC 1964 Oct 13: Mr Bird also stated that the existing heating system was ‘on its last legs’ and it was acknowledged we would have to go on as best we can for probably the next two winters.’

(They got a new Church instead, but even I regard this as extreme!)

Roger and I were interested in this bit, though:

‘PCC 1967 Jan 11: Church Bell

The Council agreed to the suggestion made by Fr Luetchford that the small bell from the Old All Saints’ be given to a new church at Chippenham if it were found to be suitable. This bell is to be replaced by a bell dating 1739 had from St Augustine’s City & will be rung automatically.’

(Where ‘automatically’ = ‘by a sidesperson’, I suppose. Unless they mean mechanically?)

But this last bit is the real killer. Wow!

‘Extraordinary mtg of PCC 1950 Jun 12: Seats for Men

Some views were aired on the subject of the reservation of certain seats in church for men only at the 11 00 am and 6 30 pm services, which

point had been previously raised at the Annual PCC. In view of the fact that no recent complaints had been received it was decided to let this matter rest until, in the words of one member, a militant suffragette movement in the congregation made some alternative course seem desirable.’

Well, all I can say is, Noli me tangere! My pew is sacrosanct.

I wonder what tomorrow holds

Well, rain and more rain; otherwise, as the Psalmist says ‘I lie down and sleep and rise again.’ Lucky chap. His sleep obviously wasn’t troubled by the heating, the lighting (is it me or is everything getting dimmer?) and the appalling interference every time the Celebrant disturbs his Chasuble.

Trinity Sunday: In fact no one noticed that I forgot to turn the sound system on until ten minutes into the service; probably you all regarded it as a blessed relief. But it was on in time for the sermon. As I said to our Student, Richard, he got off lightly; the Pratchett sermons are a lot less complex than the Harry Potter sermons. But this sermon certainly moved me to consult the text: I went straight round to W H Smith and bought the *Hogfather* video. I am studying it intently.

I know I go on about the lighting etc, but that is because the heating and lighting and I live a life of almost symbiotic proximity. I cannot get away from it. There I was at work, cataloguing some nice faculties, and what do I find?

‘Leigh Church, parish of Ashton Keynes.

I am writing to ask for your advice regarding the installation of electric light in the above church. The church is a nice little stone building of good architecture seating about 150. It is lighted quite artistically by oil lamps set in brackets suspended from the roof over the centre aisle. [*Did they smell? Did they drip? Could you follow the 1662 by the light they shed?*]

Electricity has just reached the village [*like Genghis Khan reaching the city walls*] and the PCC has decided to have the Church lighted. [*Fools!*] Williams and Ford, Cirencester have contracted to carry out the work for £81 [*stay me with flagons! does this fine old firm still exist?*] using the old wrought iron brackets in the nave and new fittings in the chancel. The cables will pass over [*where have I heard that expression before? of the angel of death!*] the roof beams [*we have no roof beams, but at that price I could arrange some*], and there will be little or no interference with the fabric. [*Interference and fabric chime hideously with defunct and decrepit bodypacks and chasubles; Leigh simply has NO idea.*]

Do we need a faculty for this work?

Yes they did. They also needed their collective heads examined. This was written in December 1953. None the less, I felt like writing back, 'Stop, stop, stay with your torches, your cressets, your oil lamps. [A Mars bar for anyone who can give me the contexts here!] This is but the first step on the road to five yearly electrical certificates, time clocks and a life in thrall to SWEB.'

10/6/7 8 am: I was grossly insulted this morning. My new shirt was admired. I explained proudly that it was specially made to look wrinkly and needed no ironing ... a speculative look from my professorial interlocutor, and 'Wrinkly for wrinklies,' she said.

9 30 am: Téa made a determined lunge for the collection plate; splendid child, doomed, sorry, destined to become a typical All Saints yoof.

11 am We need some much longer hymns; the altar was censed within an inch of its life, then everything that moved was censed in a routine that resembled a spider diagram. I may erect a notice at the communion rail, 'Trespassers will be persecuted.' And in answer to your question, Janus would know the answer.

11/6/7 Very early. Arrive to find potential congregation breaking its fast on the steps and in the porch. I am accustomed to finding magpies in the Church, but I was mildly surprised at the large brown loaf which had been halved and conveniently placed that they might gnaw the entrails of the two hunks, or chunks. After a brief but pointed lecture on fasting regulations, I removed the bread. Discouraged, they abandoned the

consolations of religion and flew away. Later, much later, I myself consumed two bananas and half a buttered scone. Didn't fancy the loaf, somehow.

16/6/7 After Morning Prayer,** with some trepidation I braved the Somerset levels and the Glastonbury Pilgrimage. Despite its dedication to WaterAid, it was considerably drier than Bristle, and I did not need my boots. It was a good occasion, though there was a low Biretta count (and only one zucchetto!) However, instead of being put in charge of letting people out for communion, I was detailed to stop the crowds surging forward and trampling the Bishops. For this I abandoned my neat suit and courteous demeanour; I folded my arms threateningly and assumed my Bomberos Voluntarios baseball cap. I think people misunderstood bomberos. Anyway, I had no trouble; the masses faded away to left and right of me; just like when Norman nicks my back rows. Then it was time for lunch, and one of those rare occasions when one feels that she is appreciated, revered and prized. I was nibbling daintily on a crab roll, when a voice behind me said, 'What's *your* name? You're beautiful!' One of those heart stopping moments? *You* know. I turned, and realised these sizzling words were intended not for me but for the long haired corgi inhabiting my ankles, second cousin to Dougal on a good day, drooling like the Hound of the Baskervilles over my roll and so securely attached to my left wrist that whenever I sipped my wine I had a shower. Pshaw. What is there left for me but a convent.

17/6/7 BUT SOMEBODY APPRECIATES ME!!! I have received a present! A huge box of really up market Cook's Matches. Yes!! No more burnt fingers.

Otherwise, it was one of those days when one wonders just how many clergy infest, er, inhabit All Saints, and whether they have more than one conversation. Overheard at Glastonbury, in the Sacristy, in the Atrium, at lunch... sartorial snippets of clerical chatter. The ubiquitous Father Bandana and Father Fuchsia are comparing notes on Fiocchi and Funghette. The inescapable conclusion? Next year's parish pilgrimage will be to Gamarelli's. (Fear not, two streets away is the best ice cream parlour ever.)*

18/6/7 am. The new matches are performing well. Admittedly Fr Flammifer got to the votive lights first, but I found plenty of other prey. And pm. These are the best ever! One match lit six funerary candles and I wasn't even singed. Well chosen, and thank you! Slightly boggled at Evening Prayer by reference to The Baals. Bit like the Simpsons, or the Joneses. But I thought there was just the one Baal.

19/6/7 Only the prospect of a cancelled PCC***** got me out of the house, past the waterfall that used to be my guttering and up the river bed known as Parry's Lane. Over the Water Meadows, aka The Downs, and Lo! the sun came out. But Pembroke Road was still inches deep, with ASC standing like the Ark, and many were the post missal tales of 'How I Braved the Storm and Heard Mass'.

24/6/7 I was SO tempted to extinguish the microphones, but I thought I would just emphasise the problem to you all. Not long now. In ten days time DV WP we shall be replete with new body packs and I shall be in the Fleet. Half a crown each should release me. Gift Aided, that is. Roger only managed to pinch my very backmost row. Well done my side.

*This month's quiz. Is/are fiocchi: tassels, pasta or purple shorts? Please supply evidence, as I haven't a clue. And if I haven't spelled it correctly it's because I left my specs in my pew. Again. Well, if I haven't got them, I cannot see them.

** From the psalm, 'my heart grew parched as stubble in summer draught'*** I mean to say, how wrong can you be?

***Bit confused here... wrong day, wrong psalm numbering, wrong translation; heigh ho.

**** Why, I hear you say, should your paltry absence cause the PCC to give up. Because I was Elijah again; no Fr Boss, no fellow Warden ... I reminded myself of Buster Keaton in *The Playhouse*. Of course, it is more likely that as I chaired myself doing all the talking, the PCC were reminded of Buster Keaton as the monkey in the cage.

Treasure these words; you will hear no more from me until September.

The Answer to Everything?

Sermon preached by Fr Hoyal at Clifton College on Easter 3. The Reading was John 21.1-14 – the Risen Lord breakfasting with seven of the disciples after the miraculous catch of 153 fish.

“The only real number is one, the rest are mere repetition.”

That’s the clever remark of a 20th century American writer, and I would quite like to have said it first. But it’s not true. *One* isn’t quite as one-off as you might think it ought to be.

Numbers are fascinating, and different numbers have their own special properties, their own individual characters and uses. Some are extraordinary. There’s really no time to go into it, but there are for example amazing prime numbers, there are so-called triangular numbers, golden numbers, perfect numbers, Fibonacci numbers, and so on.

Some numbers are memorable because of the associations we give them. Four gospels, seven deadly sins, ten commandments [How many do *you* know?], twelve apostles – they’re obvious religious examples. But why four gospels, why twelve apostles? Why is it that 76 trombones led the big parade, with 110 cornets close at hand? Why 101 Dalmatians? Why the 39 Steps? Why the Nine Muses of classical literature? Why Heinz 57? And in Douglas Adams’s ever popular Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy, why is it that the answer to The Ultimate Question Of Life, the Universe and Everything is 42? Nerds and geeks and anoraks the world over were forever producing their ingenious theories, and they probably still are. But really Adams long since pulled the carpet from under their feet. Why 42? “The answer to this is very simple,” wrote Adams. “It was a joke. It had to be a number, an ordinary,

smallish number, and I chose that one. Binary representations, base thirteen, Tibetan monks are all complete nonsense. I sat at my desk, stared into the garden and thought '42 will do.' I typed it out. End of story.”

But what about the 153 fish that Peter and his friends caught early that morning on Lake Tiberias? A whole night’s fishing that had brought them nothing? Someone on the shore they didn’t recognize tells them to have another go. And against every expectation they make that huge haul -153 big fish.

It’s after Easter now. It’s at least fortnight since Mary Magdalene discovered to her horror that the tomb was open, the great stone rolled to one side. Peter and his companion came and, yes, uncannily the grave clothes were in still place but the body was gone. Mary is distraught. She turns round. But the gardener she sees isn’t the gardener. It’s the Master, and he speaks to her! How on earth... what does it mean? That evening, ten of the apostles are together, talking things over, trying to make sense of it all. Suddenly, he’s there with them, the Master. And it happens again the following week. This time Thomas is with them, and his famous doubts very soon evaporate. “My Lord and my God,” he exclaims.

But it’s still taking time to sink in. Is this real? Has it happened? Is it him? Perhaps that’s why some of them need to get out of the city and do some quiet fishing. Perhaps it’s why they need to see him in a different setting.

Well, they do, as we hear to-day. “Come and have breakfast,” he says. None of them dare ask “Who are you?” They know who it is. And as so often in the past, he shares food with them.

You have to make up your own mind. Think about it carefully. Read the Book, and the books. Talk to people who know what they’re talking about. But it’s pretty amazing that twenty centuries

on we're even thinking about all this, that we have St John's Gospel at all, that it's still read and read and discussed and analysed. It's amazing we're doing it now, and here in this most impressive chapel, built with great skill and at huge cost because the highly intelligent founders of this college shared a conviction that just won't go away, however fashionable or unfashionable Christianity and Church happen to be at any particular time in any particular place.

And you might just think about those 153 fish. I can tell you, endless time and study have been spent throughout the whole of the Christian era trying to find some special symbolism in this figure. Some very interesting ideas have been put forward, as well all sorts of hugely elaborate but pretty dotty ones. In the end, I'm afraid you just have to live with the number you've got. And for my money, you've got it because it was an extraordinary day for the fishermen who got lucky when they listened to the advice of the Master they didn't at first recognize. They could never forget that, that day, their huge catch was 153 big fish. If we know about all this, it's because it happened. It's because *he* happened. It's because Easter happened. it's because Easter and its effects are still happening. Do think about it, and never forget that 153.

IN THIS MONTH ... AUGUST 1879

A new debt of £800! What is to be done?

A story with a meaning.

From the top of the stairs in a very high garret a sharp angry voice was heard crying out, "Sarah Ann! Where are you? Come in out of the street directly! Come in, do you hear me? Sarah Ann, come in." And a little thin, pertinacious, creaky voice was heard answering out of the

court below; “I hears you, Mother! But the more you calls the more I shan’t come! And the mother said “It is of no use talking to that girl. She will have her own way, and so she will have to sleep in the street.” And so the door was slammed fast and Sarah Ann found herself shut out, much to her surprise, when she made sure of getting into the House as usual.

Can our Readers interpret our parable? The Editor of the Magazine has been crying out ever so long from his garret, “Do make the Sunday Collections larger. If you do not take care, All Saints’ Church will have to be shut up for want of money.” Who is like Sarah Ann? How would the All Saints people like to see their church shut up? So the Editor does not mean to cry out any more. Sarah Ann must choose for herself. Under these circumstances the Editor has much pleasure in publishing the following address:

TERRA INCOGNITA, July 1879

Dear Mr Editor,

This is a most delightful place. There are no Churches here open now. They have all been shut up. You cannot think how we are enjoying ourselves. We have just hit upon a plan for shutting up All Saints in the same way. Only think what an interesting Ruin it would make, and how touching it would be to tell the History of the old days when its Services used to be carried on years ago, and how still, and how quiet, it has all become now, just like the beautiful moss grown walls near us now! Nothing can be easier than to manage this. There are so many people that love All Saints, and delight in its Services, and would do anything that they can for it. They are always saying so. Now do persuade them to give as little as ever they can in the Offertory, and to keep the collections down as low as possible. Perhaps you could persuade them to give nothing at all: but, if they would not go as far as this, ask them to agree together to keep the Collections down as low as £10 a Sunday, and then I think we shall have a fair chance of shutting up the Church. Have 800 or 900 numbers of your Magazine printed, and see what you can do

before we come back. Your words go a great way. We have the honour to remain,

Your obedient Servants,

The Vicar and Churchwardens of All Saints.

The Editor will not add a word of his own. It is very flattering to him to hear what his friends say of the influence of the Magazine, but he thinks that the eloquence of this Letter is more meaning than his own. He has tried hard to get people to make the collections larger, quite in vain. He feels sure that the letter of the Vicar and Churchwardens will soon make the Collections quite as much as they could wish.

IN THIS MONTH ... JULY 1881

Our Annual Tea

[The Vicar referred to is the first Vicar of All Saints', Richard Randall, later Dean of Chichester]

Certainly the weather does not usually favour our special events. Thursday, the 16th June, the day fixed on for celebrating the 8th which this year fell on an Ember Day, was wet and dreary. Still, by the look of the large Victoria-Room, not many that remembered the pleasant evening of 1880 were prevented from coming by the showers, and so, we numbered not far short of 400. Every one seemed to do justice to a good cup of tea with its addenda served by Messrs. Hatton. The tables were then cleared and whilst some prepared to use their voices in singing and speaking, the rest prepared to use their ears in listening.

The Vicar took the chair. The National Anthem, which it seems now the fashion to sing in the wrong place (and we, of course, were not to be behind the fashion), was given first. Then came the Vicar's speech.

After expressing his difficulties about the way to commence addressing the congregation of All Saints, he said he did not think he would be far wrong if he called them all his dear and good friends. He had found out, since he came a lonely and unknown man amongst them, that Clifton was a place, where one discovered what friends people could be. The Vicar then unfolded some profound and valuable secrets, which it would not be fair to report as they were to be kept quiet. But we do not think we shall be breaking confidence if we say that he feels how very much the congregation of All Saints has done already, since the time when he came and discovered the foundations of the church becoming like Tintern Abbey for their venerable and mossy appearance. They had built their church and made it second to none in the kingdom.

(Applause.) They had done much more; they had filled the church and had helped other churches by their offerings. But there was still much to be done. The Tower and Parish Room must now engage their attention. The former would cost £2000, but they had commenced a fund, and had a nucleus of 5/- (Laughter.) For the latter they had a rather larger nest egg, £39 towards the £800 required. He urged the great necessity of having such a room and trusted very soon to commence building it. (Applause.) But there was something much more to be done. He wanted a greater observance of the Prayer Book directions in regard to the Festivals and Fasts of the Church of England. When this was achieved then they would know what the Church of England really was.

The other speech was delivered by the Rev. R. J. Ives, Vicar of Holy Nativity, Knowle. He gave a most interesting account of Church Work in the Eastern States of America, where he has lately been staying. After pointing out the close connection between the American church and the Mother Church of England, he showed by some very amusing anecdotes how little Englishmen knew about the great events of the New World's History, and much less about the Church the other side of the Atlantic. Mr Ives told how everywhere he had noticed the proofs of real earnest work going on, and how great was the attachment existing for the Church at home. How our devotional books adapted to the special wants were largely used and what a hearty welcome was given to English Priests who went over to America. He called upon the All Saints

congregation to set an example in striving to know more about the American Church, and to take greater interest in its welfare. (Applause.)

The evening's enjoyment was also greatly due to a good musical programme. Mrs Burnett chose a very pretty song by Mr Bucknall, our worthy Organist, "Cecile". About 10 o'clock a delightful evening came to a close. And if everyone was not perfectly satisfied, it was their own fault.

3-06-07 Trinity Sunday. All Saints, Clifton

This is the third year running that Fr Richard has put me down to preach on Trinity Sunday. Maybe he thinks if I keep trying long enough, I'll get it right. This year I want to approach the great Mystery from the angle of belief or faith. Just before Christmas, Sky television produced a film adaptation of Terry Pratchett's novel "Hogfather". We don't have Sky, so I have only just got round to watching it on DVD. Pratchett himself says he wrote the novel to explore the subject of belief.

I will not go into the plot of "Hogfather" itself- it revolves around the attempted assassination of the Discworld equivalent of Father Christmas- but I want to look at a conversation, late in the book, between two of the characters about why belief in Father Christmas (or his equivalent) is not a trivial matter.

"You are saying that humans need... fantasies to make life bearable."

"Really? As if it was some kind of pink pill? No. Humans need fantasy to be human. To be the place where the falling angel meets the rising ape."

"Tooth fairies? Hogfathers? Little-"

"Yes. As practice. You have to start out learning to believe the *little* lies."

"So we can believe the big ones?"

“Yes. Justice. Mercy. Duty. That sort of thing.”

“They’re not the same at all!”

“You think so? Then take the universe and grind it down to the finest powder and sieve it through the finest sieve and then show me one atom of justice, one molecule of mercy. And yet... you act as if there is some ideal order in the world, as if there is some... some *rightness* in the universe by which it may be judged.”

“Yes, but people have *got* to believe that, or what’s the *point*-?”

“My point exactly.”

What Pratchett seems to be saying, in his paradoxical way, is that in order to be truly human, human beings must believe in things they cannot see or prove. Richard Dawkins writes about what he calls “The God Delusion”, but he fails to see that the arguments he uses to debunk God equally debunk justice, mercy, duty and all that sort of thing too. Human beings may indeed be rising apes, but they are also falling angels. We cannot be satisfied, morally, aesthetically or religiously, with scientific materialism. Our humanity itself demands that we go beyond humanity, that we seek what is transcendent. Nothing within the world fully satisfies our need for explanation and meaning, yet we cannot do without the assurance that our lives do have meaning, that they are not pointless.

I have heard that a French President, when approaching death, sent for a famous philosopher and asked him what comes after this life. “The Beyond,” was the reply. “But what is it like?” “We do not know. That is why we call it The Beyond.” Or, as another philosopher has said, “Whereof we cannot speak, thereof we must be silent.”

Or must we? It is true that our human language and thought, based as it must be in our limited human experience, must be forever inadequate to realities that are intrinsically beyond that experience. But if we learn to stretch and bend and twist our language, we may be able to at least point ourselves in the right direction as regards the Beyond. Allegory, metaphor, story-telling- these are all ways in which we adapt language to this necessity, to say what cannot be said. To be too literal is to miss the

point. To say, as Doctor Who said last week, “That is only a story,” is to imprison ourselves in a dark dungeon where there is not only no God, but no justice, mercy, duty, love or anything else that makes us human.

So what does this have to do with the Holy Trinity? God IS “the Beyond”, the Reality beyond all other reality, which eye cannot see, or ear hear, and of which no tongue can adequately speak. Without this bedrock, justice and mercy and duty and love and so on *are* illusions. God is the only possible guarantee that the universe is meaningful, that our lives are worthwhile. Yes, this or that individual may find some meaning and purpose in some this-worldly object- but what of humanity as a whole? There are millions, and always have been, with no earthly hope: famine-stricken, diseased, persecuted. We may want to help them, we *should* want to help them: but we will actually help very few. Have the rest no hope at all? Is the best we can do *all* that some can reasonably hope for? If humanity as a whole is to have hope, it cannot be an earthly one.

Our hope consists in this. We believe, as Christians, that what ultimately rules the universe is both wise and good. Unless this belief is true, there is nothing but a blind and uncaring power- whether entirely random or entirely determined hardly matters. What does the word “God” mean? Surely a god is something or someone that is worshipped. In that sense, mankind has many gods, all the powers and realities that people make central to their lives. But “God” with a big G is more than that: God is that which *ought* to be worshipped, *ought* to be central. And nothing ought to be worshipped which is just naked power, which is not at the same time wise and good. To worship anything less than absolute truth, justice and so on is to demean ourselves, to set up an idol.

“Blessed and holy Three, glorious Trinity: Wisdom, Love, Might.” Not Might alone, but Wisdom and Love. Power is not Wisdom, nor is Wisdom Love, nor is Love Power. The Church tries to do justice to the vision she has received in her teaching on the Trinity. There is but One God, yet that God has unfathomable depths. Technical words like “Person” and “Nature” are tools used by theologians to explore those

depths- but they only take us a little way. Homely words like “Father”, “Son” and “Breath” are offered to us in the Scriptures to express those depths in another way. But words are only tokens. By putting them together in a creative and prayerful way, we produce a portrait that we hope is not totally unlike, or unworthy of, the reality.

More than half a century ago, when I was at school, our English teacher introduced us to Robert Browning’s poem, “My last duchess”. The Duke of Ferrara is looking for a young bride, and he is showing the agent of another nobleman, who has a marriageable daughter, round his palace. Passing a portrait, he says, “That’s my last duchess, painted on the wall.” Those opening words of the poem have stuck with me: “That’s my last duchess, painted on the wall.” Because, of course, it isn’t actually the *duchess* painted on the wall, it’s only her portrait. Word chopping? Perhaps. But I too am, alas, a philosopher. But the point I make is that our doctrine of the Trinity is also just a portrait, an attempt to convey in a human medium something that has a reality independent of our minds and our vocabulary.

“I believe in one God: the Father Almighty, the only-begotten Son, the Holy Spirit.” I know that the words are inadequate: but all the same, I do believe.

From Father Robin Thomas

[Fr Robin was Hon Asst Curate at All Saints’ from 1989 till 1994, when he left to be Priest-in-charge of S Materiana, Tintagel, in Cornwall. He now lives in Truro, where he will celebrate his 80th birthday this month on the Feast of S Anne and S Joachim].

It is always so good to receive the All Saints’ Magazine, so faithfully sent to me every month by Christine Malet. Through it I keep in touch with the church where I spent so many years as a member of the

Congregation, and for the first five years of my ordination. The Vicar's letter, the reports of events, reminiscences from Father John, and last month the splendid reflections of Mr Tim Stanley; thanks for these and much else. Sadly there is sometimes news that good friends have departed. Recently Mrs Dee Cridland, who was always a kind and dear friend to me and many others. Great personalities of the Congregation: Stella Shute, Ann Burrough - and Molly Michael, who supported my application to begin training for ministry, and others present and others who will surely follow in this special church.

I write this on June 14th, the day of the Requiem Mass at the Roman Catholic Cathedral for Canon Gordon Pavey. For us, always Father Gordon. A Father in every meaning: priestly Father, dear friend, wise counsellor, always there. It is so hard to believe he is gone from us. When I was ordained Deacon and later Assistant Priest Curate to All Saints', Father Gordon did so much to instruct me in the Liturgy of the Altar and above all to help me in the way of priestly ministry. With so many others I owe him very much. His leaving to join the Roman Catholic Church was for him an act of great courage and some personal pain, for us a sadness, but in his decision there was a kind of bridge between the Church of England and the Church of Rome. We did not really lose him; Father Gordon was still with us, down the Pembroke Road, praying with us and for us. Father Gordon died on the feast day of S Columba of Iona, who was said to be loving to everyone, happy-faced and rejoicing in his heart with the joy of the Holy Spirit. Devoted to prayer and with love for his Brothers right to his final end. There is now another priest who had all these qualities: Father Gordon, who now rests in peace. Thanks be to God for him and for all who have gone from All Saints'. Their devotion to their Faith, their influence on us and their friendship will be special for always.

GORDON SYDNEY ALFRED PAVEY

1919 - 2007

WHEREVER Fr Gordon's influence came, it came to stay; even a short encounter with him left its mark, whether by word or embrace or anecdote, or just being made welcome. Such diverse people have cause to remember him! It might be a rugby XV in Taunton ("Who is that mad parson who swears at us from the touchline?"); it might be a former schoolboy from Wakefield, such as a David Hope or an Andrew Louth; much later it could be grateful postgraduates in Bristol whom he went on and on helping, age notwithstanding. Up in Huddersfield there will be West Indians still who remember that if they kept him waiting for their weddings at S Thomas's they would find him back at the vicarage. And many were the groups of music-makers -- my 'Clifton Singers' among them -- glad of his dependable bass voice. Few, though, had my fun accompanying for him on his clarinet.

Family life was for him and Marion irreplaceable, and that meant not only their beloved children and grandchildren but now an astonishing 12 great-grandchildren.

He had been ordained during the war by Geoffrey Fisher in the crypt of S Paul's, and never doubted that he was "a priest in the Church of God." Any subsequent rite, he told me, not without tears, was for the necessary reassurance of others. Like Newman, he was formed by an Anglican ethos that never left him. The only sermon I heard him preach among our good friends down the road was permeated by phrases from the Book of Common Prayer and Professor Bright's hymn "And now O Father," with that favourite line of his, "Only look on us as found in him."

The anecdotes that his richly varied life afforded him were beyond count. Newly arrived in Huddersfield he called at what was probably the only grand house left within his parish boundary. A maid answered the door. "Who is it?", called a voice from within. "It's the vicar, ma'am."

The imperious voice called back. “The vicar? But the vicar’s dead!” Once, a few of us broached the (admittedly trivial) topic of whether we liked a sermon-text announced before we sat down or after. Nothing loth, Gordon recalled an occasion in London when a visiting preacher was mounting the pulpit. In those days ‘proper’ churches included nothing so chatty as “We welcome to our pulpit today Father So-and-so”, and the younger sort were nudging each other, mouthing “Who on earth’s this?” Fr de Lara Wilson (for was it not he?) leaned forward, draping his stole over the pulpit edge, and in his confident breathy Edwardian drawl announced his text [*Luke i 19*] as if to satisfy their curiosity. “I am Gabriel.”

I met Gordon first as a colleague, and soon as a friend, at the College of S Matthias in the 60s In this College of Education I was Head of one Department and he had come as Head of another. His links with All Saints were already forming, but he sang in one of my choirs, and sometimes celebrated or preached at the 9 am College Eucharist. Even in those early days I tumbled to his well-known habit of getting names wrong. He told me he couldn’t stand the tune ‘Hyfrydol;.’ I was surprised – until I found he meant ‘Blaenwern.’ Oh, he could be absent-minded too. It fell to all the staff to commute between Fishponds and rural Barrow Court. On one occasion he stopped mid-sentence during a lecture and said, “I shouldn’t be here! I should be at Barrow!”. Much hurried telephoning ensued. It was only afterwards he said, “I thought their faces didn’t seem familiar, somehow.”

A teenage student there, whom I later married, went up to him one Sunday after Chapel Breakfast and took his arm, saying, “You are the only medieval priest still alive today.” He was so chuffed he went around telling people. “You see, my dears, that shows she *understands*.”

Large heart, large girth, large laugh. He loved the concert hall and the theatre, enjoyed any kind of dressing up and entertaining, especially songs from G & S; he relished the opportunity to paint too, especially in his beloved France. With all this, a priest to his fingertips and a sought-

after confessor; a life-affirming Christian who, like the Lord himself, [Matthew xi 19] “came eating and drinking” ; one who appreciated the little girl’s prayer, “Dear God, please make all the bad people good, and all the good people nice.”

Gordon always said it was better to wear out than rust out. Reminded of this after preaching at my Michaelmas retirement, he said to Jessica, “The trouble is, dearie, it’s the rust that’s wearing me out now.”

Summing up such a personality, I thought, would be daunting. But no. An e-mail from a History Professor – away from England just now – spares me the task. “He was,” Diarmaid MacCulloch has written, “a great man.”

Proficiscere, anima Christiana.

Ken Smith
with love

5 YEARS ON

After reading Tim Stanley’s article last month I have been prompted to recall my past 5 years as churchwarden. Undoubtedly one of the most significant periods was the interregnum, which lasted 16 months. During this time we were confronted with the loss of a full time priest and the challenge of why we should have a priest at all. Some very difficult and painful decisions had to be made. Some of the comments made at that time were ‘All Saints would never be the same, how could we change? We do not need to change, This could not happen at All Saints. We are doing very well thank you . Why was it necessary?’ Others said ‘ Why do we need All Saints? – after all, there is Christ Church Clifton and Cotham!’

So how have we done?

First and most importantly we should acknowledge that at the very heart of All Saints lies it's spiritual life of prayer and witness. The daily celebration of Mass, Morning and Evening prayer, a place where all are welcomed, where the community shows love and concern for one another, a community looking for opportunities and growth.

Of course we give thanks for all that has been handed on to us over the past years, for those who built All Saints and maintained and celebrated the Catholic Faith. Now, 40 years after the consecration of the new church and in a world where the Church 40 years on has made some radical changes, we have to ask ourselves how are we going to continue? Letting go of some of our more comfortable and familiar ways of doing things and daring to take risks?

At the start of the interregnum the PCC compiled, at the request of the diocese, a statement outlining the aims, objectives and future development of All Saints. Much discussion took place and many topics were covered, but maintaining and developing the spiritual and sacramental life of All Saints with a full time parish priest was undoubtedly our priority. Other essentials included keeping the church open each day, our outreach to the community and beyond ,demonstrating our Christian love to all.

Welcoming and encouraging families, young people and students.

You may also remember that in April 2005 All Saints held a day conference to discuss aspects of church life and how we might move forward. Many ideas and suggestions were put forward and some were implemented.

So have we achieved or started to achieve what we set out to do?

Do our aims and objectives set out in 2002 and 2005 remain our priorities 5 years on?

Norman Drewett

THE EDINGTON MUSIC FESTIVAL 2007

SUNDAY AUGUST 19th - SUNDAY AUGUST 26th

For one week in August every year since 1956, Edington, a small village on the edge of Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, has hosted a festival of music and liturgy in its magnificent 14th century Priory Church. Singers from many Cathedral and Collegiate churches gather to take part in the daily services throughout the week.

The Solemn Eucharist and Solemn Evensong are the principal daily services together with the offices of Matins and Compline sung to plainsong.

The theme of this year's festival draws on the Parables of Jesus and will give the opportunity to examine themes of Watchfulness, Forgiveness, Foundations, Faith, Judgement and the Water of Life.

This is a wonderful opportunity to experience fine music in a liturgical setting and discover the beauty of the Wiltshire countryside.

Further details can be found at www.edingtonfestival.org.

As usual, a small group will be going to the 11.30 am Solemn Eucharist on Saturday August 25th, which will be followed by a shared picnic lunch on the ancient site of the Westbury White Horse. If you would like join us or require further details please contact me.

Norman Drewett

A tribute to Dianne Willkins, preached at her Requiem Mass by Canon Jeremy Winston

A few weeks ago we went to the Cinema to see a film entitled, Notes on a Scandal. It stars Judi Dench in, what has been described as her most outstanding role yet, Barbara Covett, a cynical and acerbic history teacher working in a London inner city school. There is a marvellous moment (among many) in the film when Judi Dench is teaching a classroom of typically raucous youngsters. The bell rings to signal the end of the lesson and everyone stands up and begins to gather their belongings together to leave the room. Dench, says nothing, she just looks, and the youngsters all go quiet and sit down again. After a deathly hushed moment, she simply nods, and then, and only then, do her herd of disparate children meekly leave the room. I nudged Dianne and said ‘She reminds me of you!’ It was an epic moment.

Dianne, Tich, Miss Willkins – names by which many of us here will have known her, was no shrinking violet. As a teacher she, too, engaged with young people at the sharp end. She would often speak of situations pertaining to the lives and conditions of children and families which were chilling and hopeless to so many of us. But she was never intimidated or overawed by the challenge and found fulfillment in her professional life over and over again. There are, in her home, literally thousands and thousands of photographs which record the activities, the accomplishments, the visits and occasions where, in one way or another, she touched the lives of such young people indelibly. But that was Tich.

As a friend, she affected the lives of so many of us, and the fact that we are here from such a variety of backgrounds and situations is itself testimony to her ability to mix, to engage, and to share. For this we all have cause to be thankful.

But there was a sorrowful side too. Why was that? After all, very few can have had the confidence to embrace so much gorgeous extravagance.... She touched the hearts of many a Maitre D’Hôte, on both sides of the Atlantic, and her passing will see a dent in the company

value of Veuve Clicquot Champagne. And no matter how many of us have been on the receiving side of her warmth and largesse, we were aware of moments of gravity and disillusionment.

Some analysts would ascribe all this to her earliest days. There is no record of the first nine months of her life, but it may well be that the uncertainties, the absence of those intimacies from which most of us will have benefited in our infancy, affected her irrevocably. By the time she was one, she had found happiness in the Willkins family, there on Somerton Road, in Lliswerry. And, as such, she was treasured and loved so dearly. But even that security was relatively short-lived. Her mother had died by the time she was seven, and she and her father adapted to the complexities as best they could. Aunty, Jennie Healey, established a domestic routine for them, and Dianne became very much the surrogate daughter. She lost her father in her teens, and the loss was profound and distressing.

But significantly she always found strength and inspiration in that other family which was never absent – the Church. In those days St Andrew's, Lliswerry was a thriving Church in a working class community, that very much provided the heart and engine for all things social. The Vicar, a red faced Rugby fanatic, Morgan Clement, was immensely kind. His wife Phyllis was an unpaid social worker, and Dianne became best friends with their daughter Linda. Even when Morgan and Phyllis left for another parish, Dianne would often spend weekends with them at their lovely Vicarage in South View Road, Blackwood. From the earliest of days she enjoyed not just the things young people enjoyed in terms of choir and youth club. Rather, she enjoyed the worship – or to put it more accurately, she found the worship something else. That otherness was really extraordinary, and it is little wonder that throughout her life she always found a spiritual home somewhere up the candle. At Wanstead she wallowed in the Catholic Tradition, and was very much at home amongst truly wonderful friends where feet rarely touched the ground, what with the whirl of activities, lunches, dinners and celebrations. I shall never forget my own

arrival at Margaret and Graham Taylor's home and a weekend which consisted of one long meal punctuated by short breaks!

But the move to Chepstow, or more accurately, Tidenham Chase, was a huge step. Leaving Wanstead cannot have been easy. But Dianne's concern for her aging aunt, Jennie, who she always called Day, required this particular re-location. Yew Tree Brake was an interesting house, or cottage, set in plenty of grounds, with wonderful views over the estuary, and with woods and forests for walks with the dogs. Once again, there are so many photographs, happy, really lovely reminders of truly halcyon days. I well recall my first visit – she and Linda had arrived in Church and I was keen to follow them up. After striving hard over several hours to find them on a dark and miserable autumn evening, I eventually fell upon their remote house. The welcome was wonderful – I was literally sucked into a whirl of welcome and charm – and it never went away. Eventually, and in rather interesting circumstances, that cottage was transformed into an imposing house, albeit that this necessitated them coming to stay with me for a couple of nights whilst the building work was underway – a couple of nights which lasted for eight months. The four dogs, didn't come, and were kennelled for all that time. But life at the Vicarage was never ever to be the same when they left. No more happy hours at the end of the school day, and no more week long celebrations when any one of us celebrated a birthday.

But that chapter, too, was to close, and Dianne crossed once again over the border, back to England, and life in Bristol. Her home in Coombe Dingle has been a place of contrasts, and there have been happy and sad times. She has been blessed with lovely neighbours, whose kindness and warmth has been overwhelming. She made lovely friends, and enjoyed parties, restaurant nights, theatre visits, walks and film nights. In these past few years you have all been such a support. Here, in this great church, she found a spiritual home amongst dear, dear people. She was content more latterly to come to masses in the week, but found the tradition and the stability set over and against the shifting sands of so much in life to be both a comfort and reassurance,

especially in these years since her aunt died – a death, although at 98 years, which broke the final link with the sense of family and childhood. I don't think we will ever understand the depth of that loss in Tich's life.

Her determination and tenacity had been sources of great strength to her, professionally and spiritually, no doubt. But there is no getting away from the stubbornness which was an all too apparent characteristic. One wonders how different things might have been had she not been so head strong, in her relationships, in her opinions, and in her attitude towards doctors and hospitals. Certainly, her reluctance to go into hospital cannot have helped. But that was the way she was. Strong and direct – often to the point of alarm. But also passionate in her love of her animals, in her feeding of most of the wild life of western Bristol, birds, foxes and badgers, and who knows what else....She was highly focused and organized in so many regards, professionally, but in others chaotic and even tragic. We can but wonder....

Now we have come to the end of the story. No more for her the Carribean seas, the lovely Barbadian holidays, the Retail therapy in New York, the Waldorf Astoria, the Savoy, where she was especially at home, nor any of those wonderful country house hotels in which she delighted. No more the Harrods Card or the John Lewis enterprise, these things are all memories which, with the passing of each day, fade and fade away. But some things never fade – and each and everyone of us will have permanent and abiding recollections which have made our lives the richer.

It is fitting that our commemoration, our celebration and farewell should take place in this way. She would have loved the surroundings, the meetings, the sharings, and the amusement. She would have wallowed in the diversity and eccentricity of it all. Above all, she would have simply loved us. Most of all she would have found the worship something else. A few of us here have seen that – those of us who with so great a privilege have ministered sacramentally. For it was that awareness of the greatness, the majesty, the wonder and the love of God, in the Eucharist, which really meant so much to her. She often wept at Communion,

quietly, intimately, and warmly – remembering, perhaps, those she had lost, in one way or another, and yet moved in that moment to see beyond the miseries of life, beyond the isolation, the dejection, the pitfalls....beyond the disappointments and regrets, to the sheer beauty, wonder and order of a heaven where all things are well.

May God, in his infinite love, have mercy on her soul; may he re-unite her with those she had loved, and lost awhile. May whatever the glamour and gorgeousness of what she has known and seen in this life, be as nothing to the joy of a heavenly home.

Thank you, Tich, from all of us. Bon voyage, dear heart.

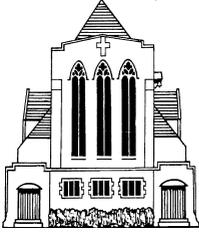
CALLING ALL CHURCHCRAWLERS

A date for your Diaries – Saturday September 22nd 2007

Details later, but we hope to visit one Arts & Crafts church near Stroud, as well a couple of others in that area. Watch this Space!

Liz Badman

Friday 20 July 7.30 pm All Hallows Road, Easton



ALL HALLOWS CHURCH CONCERT FOR A SUMMER'S EVENING

Spandau String Orchestra

(Spandauer Stadtstreicher - accomplished German ensemble making a popular return to Bristol)

Bach

**Brandenburg Concerto No. 4 in G major:
Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in A minor**

Boccherini

Cello Concerto No. 9 in B flat major

Mozart

Divertimento in B flat major

(2nd Salzburg' Symphony)

In Aid of All Hallows Restoration Appeal

Tickets £5 (£4 concessions) from Richard Hoyal 0117 9706776

ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY



Wednesday 15th August

9.30 am Mass *(said)*

7.30 pm SOLEMN MASS

Sermon Canon Brendan Clover SSC

All most welcome - Refreshments afterwards

