

Fr Hoyal Writes

Are We Too Cosy?

After forty years of major liturgical revision, many Church of England worshippers would no doubt find Book of Common Prayer services difficult to return to.

Lip-service is sometimes paid to various Prayer Book features. Older church members often profess affection, for example, for 1662 Evensong (an affection very seldom translated into attendance, it has to be said).

On the whole, however, most people seem thoroughly at home with our comfortable and adaptable modern-language services, and have little desire to return to the more demanding style and content of the old forms.

In the meantime, a whole generation has grown towards middle age without the slightest knowledge of Prayer Book language and worship.

My duties at Christ Church, Broad Street, in the Old City have brought me back into regular contact with Prayer Book worship done uncompromisingly and unapologetically. I am grateful for this reconnection with the forms that were standard until my twenties.

I have to say that with the BCP I sometimes miss the variety and flexibility on offer with modern services. And, much as one admires the language of the Authorized Version, there is no denying that it makes some Bible passages (in St Paul's epistles, for instance) frustratingly obscure for the modern reader. On the other hand, there are verbal felicities galore in the BCP and the AV that are more than compensation.

I am grateful for other significant gains. The old language does not reduce God's gracious friendship with man to easy mateyness. He is no undemanding chum. *I and thou* is very different in feel from *me and you*.

Compared with the Prayer Book, our modern services are remarkably light on the sheer majesty and power of God, the grim tragedy of human sinfulness, and our utter need for great mercy from God if we are to be saved.

One instance: *'The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable.'* That is how we describe our *'manifold sins and wickednesses'* in the form of confession used the Prayer Book service of Holy Communion. This may not wholly reflect how we personally feel about our sins. But perhaps the fault is not in any inappropriateness in the language of the prayer; it lies, rather, in our woefully diminished awareness of sin. These days many of us see our failings as muddles and mistakes to be sorted out, rather than sins needing to be thoroughly repented of if we are to receive forgiveness and stay on course for salvation.

The modern services can surreptitiously leave you feeling that you may need to be improved a little, but that you're not so bad, really. The BCP services leave you in no doubt that you are a wretched sinner who needs to be saved, and not by any pieties from our side, but through absolute reliance upon Christ's saving sacrifice as evidenced in thorough-going repentance.

And that is another area where the BCP is strong. It repeatedly emphasizes, not just our sinfulness, but also the centrality of the Lord's death and passion as the fountain-head of salvation and forgiveness.

I am always quoting St Cyprian's *'The Lord's passion is the sacrifice we offer'* – not that we in any way repeat that total once-for-all self-offering, of course. But, as St Paul puts it, in the

Eucharist we *'show forth the Lord's death until he comes'*, we plead the merits and death of our crucified Saviour as we seek to approach his holy table in penitence and faith.

In this area the Prayer Book is sublime. It never allows you to wander off into supposing that God is a soft touch, heaven moreorless a foregone conclusion and salvation little more than a matter of therapy to make us feel good about ourselves.

All this I have found immensely refreshing, and I commend to you re-evaluation of these soundly Biblical insights.

Perhaps the modern liturgy has become a little too comfortable – like floppy indoor slippers when what we really need are tough walking boots in which we can venture forth into the real spiritual world.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light background. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read "Richard Hoyle".

FR PETER COBB – A WORD FROM WALSINGHAM

Fr Peter Cobb was well known to pilgrims at Walsingham, particularly as a Guardian since 1986, and as Master of the Guardians between 1996 and 2006. Thereafter he remained a Guardian Emeritus.

As well as being a much-loved parish priest he was a church historian and had a wide sweep of research interests. Few will know, however, how much the Walsingham archives owe to him, both for the recent gift of all his Walsingham books and papers, and for his work on what had become a somewhat neglected archive collection in past decades.

When Fr Peter became a Guardian nearly twenty-five years ago, before

the onset of universal genealogy, there was little public awareness of archives and their potential. But he was an archivist's historian: he knew the value of archives in his own historical research, he knew how to use them and he knew what was needed for Walsingham.

He invited Elizabeth Ralph, the then City Archivist of Bristol (also a Bristol church history colleague and a parishioner) to Walsingham several times to do preliminary sorting and to compile an outline catalogue. After that he kept a watching brief on the collection, adding and annotating. Later he was instrumental in arranging for me to take on the archive work, in an honorary capacity, but never gave up his own interest in and contributions to the collection.

Whilst I had agreed to concentrate first on the most important task of recapturing records of Fr Patten's time and of some of the archivally-lean years thereafter, he was keen that we should also set up schemes to preserve the current ephemera of the Shrine - the circulars, pamphlets and publicity literature that people forget to save. He was pleased that with the co-operation of many of the Shrine staff and volunteers this is safely underway.

In his own research over many years he had collected every reference he found to medieval Walsingham and to the earliest days of the restored Shrine. Many of these notes are thriftily written in half-used old exercise books, some notebooks dating as far back as his schooldays in Matlock - in the very building that is now the Derbyshire county record office - and to his Oxford days. Then there are the backs of old letters and envelopes, parish papers, scraps of all shapes and sizes, and even scribbles inside his own copies of Shrine services, when he must have seen or heard of some new Walsingham fact.

He wrote and spoke widely about the history of the Shrine: particularly important was his contribution to the National Shrine's Centenary Conference in 1998. In 1990 he had edited *Walsingham*, a compilation of articles and photographs taken from *Our Lady's Mirror* and the *Walsingham Review*: this was the first published look at the development of the Shrine through its own archives.

In his library was a fine personal collection of books on Walsingham and of memorabilia collected over the years. Contrary to approved practice, which didn't bother him, his own copies of books and pamphlets were heavily annotated, and how valuable these glosses are. During his last illness he had passed his collection over to the Shrine, and the pages of this website will gradually reflect this.

Within a record office former colleagues live on in their handwritten cards and notes which are still an important part of its memory bank, despite the advent of computers. In Walsingham our collection will for ever have the stamp of Fr Peter Cobb, whom we will recall with affection, respect and gratitude.

Isabel Syed (Walsingham Archivist) 25.6.10

Do your bit and knit!

It is estimated that there are 1.4 million orphaned children in South Africa. These children are AIDS orphans or have been abandoned. Many live in great poverty in shack settlements. Some head up families of their siblings together with other children and some live alone, without shelter, in hills and dumps around the cities.

In 2008, after visiting Johannesburg, the McDonald family from Australia decided to do their bit to help these children and started the Knit a Square project. The aim of this project is to provide blankets, hats and jumpers for as many vulnerable children as possible. Africa may be hot during the day but the average night time temperature in Johannesburg in July is just 4 degrees and has been as low as minus 7.

What we can do to help:

Step 1. Knit or crochet 20cm/8" squares.

Step 2. Bring your squares to church.

Step 3. We will send the squares to South Africa.

As our squares arrive in South Africa, they are collected, sorted and bundled into blanket packs by the ladies of the Soweto Comfort Club who then organise sewing and distribution days.

You can use different types of wool or wool blend yarns, acrylic yarns and bamboo, soy and cotton fibres, different knitting stitches, or perhaps double up lighter yarn weight like 4 ply. But whatever you choose, make sure your squares are warm and cosy and as close to 20cm/8" as you can.

Don't know how to knit? Don't worry. We have some great knitters who would love to show you the ropes, just let me know who you are.

If you have any wool, needles or crochet hooks that you don't need please bring them to church and we'll make sure they're used.

For more information speak to me (Charlotte Hopkins), visit www.knit-a-square.com or see the display in the atrium.

Sermon preached by Fr Roger Durbin, Trinity 7

When I lived in Bath some thirty-five years ago, I lived at the top of a Georgian house. It was that bit of the house where the children lived in Georgian & Victorian times.

In the flat on the floor below me was a lovely old lady and we often had

long talks over coffee. She once told me that one of her life's ambitions was to spend Christmas day in bed with a cheese sandwich.

She explained that for forty-odd years she had got up at the crack of dawn on Christmas Day, wrestled with a huge turkey; laboured over the preparation and cooking of vegetables, and kept her eye on the Christmas pud. Then her children came. Hardly had they arrived than they set off for the pub. She said, 'I wanted to go to the pub too, but I had to stay and work in the kitchen.'

When the cooking was over, she then worried about how to keep everything warm without overcooking and spoiling things until her children were ready to leave the pub and come home.

She was a lovely lady and an excellent hostess. Dinners were always more about long conversations at table than mere food - although that was always wonderful including half a dozen different puddings.

Today's gospel reading tells us about Martha and Mary; Martha is a woman, rushing around her house as fast as she can, trying to get things ready for her honoured guest, but feeling too that she was being left to do it all while everyone else enjoyed themselves.

She is cross that her sister is leaving everything for her to do and gets into such a state that she asks Jesus to tell her sister to help out.

In his reply Jesus does not deny the value of what Martha is doing. He does not say to her that everything is all right and that there is nothing to do or to worry about. He says to her, in essence, that she has her priorities wrong.

He recognizes that Mary knows that she has something to learn from Jesus. He would like Martha to know that as well. He seems to be saying to Martha: "don't be anxious, sit here, at least for a moment, listen to me." He seems to want to slow her down, to let her mind and soul catch up with her body.

It is not that Martha's work is unimportant, and it is not that Jesus does

not appreciate her work. But Jesus is about priorities; first things first.

And he is unambiguous about what comes first here. He said it once before, when he warned people about being anxious regarding what they would eat and wear. Remember, he concluded that remarkably practical address with the words “Therefore, do not be anxious ... But seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.”

What was so important about sitting at Jesus’ feet?

It seems doubtful that it was Mary’s regular custom to entertain visitors by sitting at their feet while her sister did all the work.

In fact, Martha’s comments suggest that Mary’s behaviour was not her typical behaviour.

It is quite possible that this was an unexpected visit. And quite possibly perhaps, somehow, Mary sensed that this was not an ordinary visit. The Lord was passing by, and after he had left, things would never be the same again. Perhaps Mary sensed that the time he had with them was precious and to be savoured.

We learn an important lesson from this story in the example of Mary and Martha.

The mark of hospitality is the capacity to give. Martha was doubtless very good at that, and she was busy about that very work, giving Jesus a pleasant time, providing for his needs and comforts, organizing his stay under her roof. It is hard work and should be rewarded, as it usually is, with appreciation and gratitude.

There is another wonderful thing that happens and we often miss.

Just as Jesus interrupts the routine of the household in Bethany, he also interrupts the role of each. For he becomes, not “guest,” he is now “host.” He is the Lord, and it is he who gives and others who are now invited to receive.

An ancient custom of hospitality in England holds that when a sovereign comes to your house, while in your home, it is no longer yours but his or hers. A sovereign becomes the host under any citizen’s

roof.

The Martha's of the world are so busy doing good and necessary things that sometimes they don't have time to realize how deeply they themselves stand in need.

When Jesus comes, he reminds us that we need the grace and peace he offers. Rather than be distracted by providing service, or being anxious and troubled about many things, we would do well to slow down what we are doing, to stop, look, and listen.

This, then, is a parable about giving and receiving: about doing and being: and about the presence of Jesus in the midst of the ordinary that becomes extraordinary.

It is a parable about priorities, first things first.

It is also a parable of our worship, for it reminds us that what happens in our churches – our prayer, our praise, our instruction, and our fellowship – is not what we do for Jesus, entertaining him and busying ourselves in all sorts of ways. But rather, we come to “sit at Jesus’ feet,” and we come to receive from him the means of grace and hope of glory.

I am grateful to Ken Smith for mentioning to me hymn 279.

Come, risen Lord, and deign to be our guest;
Nay, let us be thy guests; the feast is thine;
Thyself at thine own board make manifest,
In thine own sacrament of bread and wine.

In the end, no matter how much work we put in on our preparation of music, our serving, our readings, intercessions etc., it is Christ who is our host and bids us to come and sit at his feet to listen to him and be fed by him.

Many of us have been seduced by what has been called the heresy of good works. We neglect Jesus' company.

Our prayer life grinds to a screeching halt and goes off the boards. We disregard His invitation to come apart and rest awhile. We forget the sage who advises that if Christians do not come apart and rest awhile,

they may just come apart. As the man says, if we are too busy to pray, we are too busy. After all, he goes on, God speaks only to those who take time to listen.

Today let's take seriously that we need to be both Martha and Mary

Bristol Catholic Societies Assumptiontide Festival 21 August 2010.

The faithful at All Saints and All Hallows should not need reminding that this year's Festival is on Saturday 21st August, the Saturday after the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We shall celebrate Our Lady, Queen of Heaven, the former title of the octave day of the Assumption.

Solemn Concelebrated Mass at noon in Bristol Cathedral will start with a Procession of the image of Our Lady of Glastonbury; the President and Preacher will be Bishop David Thomas, formerly Provincial Bishop in the Church in Wales, and a colleague of Fr Peter Cobb on the staff of St Stephen's House, Oxford. Music will include settings by Byrd,

Victoria, Lécot and Kenneth Smith. All Saints and All Hallows will be strongly represented among the clergy and servers.

The Cathedral Refectory will be open, and those wishing to picnic can choose between the quiet, secluded Cathedral garden or the more boisterous atmosphere of College Green.

In the afternoon we move to the 13th century Lord Mayor's Chapel on the other side of College Green, where the Blessed Sacrament will be Exposed for private prayer and adoration from 3.00pm, prior to Solemn Benediction at 3.30pm, at which the Officiant will be Fr Brendan Clover, supported by members of the Guild of Servants of the Sanctuary. Traditional plainsong will be supplemented by music by Mozart and J.S.Bach.

Ever since the Festival was founded in a small way in the 1970s at Iron Acton it has been open to all; everyone is encouraged to take part. This year, it provides a rare opportunity to celebrate, in traditional Catholic worship, the Queenship of Our Blessed Lady, and is one not to be missed.

Chris Verity