

Easter 2014 thoughts, from Father Charles:

Stop Press: The Easter Vigil moves - from Sunday morning to Saturday evening!

A Moveable Feast

I have no doubt that, like me, there was a 'home jest' concerning 'movable feasts, in my house as I grew up it' was common home conversational currency. Occasionally applied to changeable weather (would we eat in or go for a picnic?), potential visits of friends or relatives (special dinner this Saturday or next Saturday?), or the promise of being included in family events whilst away at school (we'll celebrate when you come home from school – it's a moveable feast).

The phrase 'moveable feast' comes from the Christian tradition where some festivals in the Christian year are not fixed, like Christmas, but have a different date each year, like Easter. You may remember that a few Sundays ago when we did the 'Maths Test' at the Family Service (around the topic of 40 – for the start of Lent) the equation I deliberately omitted was that used for the calculation of Easter in a particular year. It's a complex astronomical calculation based on the date of the Spring Equinox full moon – with a few built-in assumptions.

Broadly speaking, we know from scripture that Jesus died at the time of the Jewish festival of Passover and he was raised to new life on the first day of the week, Sunday, but we don't know the date. Passover is also a moveable feast based on the cycle of the moon. By the 4th century there were four different methods of calculating the date of Easter so the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD agreed that the date of Easter should be calculated as the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox.

But even today Christians of different traditions celebrate Easter at different times. This is mainly because in the 16th century the new and more accurate Gregorian calendar was devised but Eastern Orthodox Christians still use the old Julian calendar to calculate the date of Easter.

A Constant Message

The big question is does the date of Easter really matter? Probably not!

What does matter is the awesome truth we celebrate every Sunday - that suffering and death and evil in any form don't have the last word; Jesus is alive, risen from the dead and in him we have the promise of eternal life, whenever we celebrate it. Easter Day is, however, the Great Festival, the culmination of the Triduum, the end of Lent and the start of the 50 days of Eastertide leading to Pentecost. It is the day on which we joyfully celebrate the full meaning of the empty tomb.

I know that in our world we rather like order and structure. In a very real way shifting events and changing plans becomes an inconvenience, a problem within our programming of the world in which we live. Yet I like the fact that Easter is a 'Movable Feast'. In one small but significant way it serves to remind us that the demands of faith are often inconvenient.

So, although the date of our Easter celebration drifts around March and April, with all the various impacts this has on plans, holidays and organizing our lives there is one factor that does not change. This is that our Christian faith is anchored in the real, historical and unshakeable Jesus of the Easter Event.

Stop Press: The Easter Vigil moves - from Sunday morning to Saturday evening! Please note that the time of the Easter Vigil has this year moved, in our movable feast.

With every blessing this Easter



Holy Week and Easter Triduum

April 14th-20th 2014

Monday in Holy Week

Mass 7.00pm

Tuesday in Holy Week

Mass 7.00 pm

Wednesday in Holy Week

Mass 7.00 pm

Maundy Thursday

Mass 9.00 am

Diocesan Chrism Mass, Bristol Cathedral, 10.30 am
7.30 pm Mass with Foot Washing and Stripping of the Altars
(watch before the Altar of Repose until Midnight)

Good Friday

Family Service 10.00 am
(hot cross buns served afterwards)
12 noon Devotions
1.30-3.00 pm Liturgy

Holy Saturday/Easter Eve

11.00 am Constructing the Easter Garden
(children please bring flowers, moss etc.)
12 noon Blessing of the Easter Garden
8.00 pm Easter Vigil

Easter Day

8.00 am Mass
9.30 am Family Mass
11.00 am Solemn Mass

NOLI ME TANGERE

Adapted from a homily preached on Lent 4 2008 at Evensong in the series 'Paintings that speak'

Titian: Christ appearing to the Magdalen (Noli me Tangere)

'I sought him whom my soul loves;

I sought him, but found him not;

I called him, but he gave no answer.....

....I will seek him whom my soul loves....

....When I found him whom my soul loves

I held him, and would not let him go.'¹

Words from the Song of Songs that we hear on the feast day of Mary Magdalene. Many of you here know that Mary Magdalene is perhaps my very favourite saint, this may be because I feel I share some of her passion for life and love, but also, most importantly, I made my Oblation as an Oblate with the Community of St Mary the Virgin in Wantage 1994, on the eve of MM's feast day.

In the classical icons of this subject we see the stark landscape of parts of the Middle East and we see a tree growing out of the cleft in the rocks. In the rocks behind Mary is the tomb with the grave clothes. But all the colour and activity are happening in the front between Jesus and Mary.

But look at Titian's painting here.

Here it is all colour and movement, and in the place of the rocks there is a town. The landscape is alive and lush – for Titian landscape was not an afterthought to the subject, it was an integral point of the painting. In this painting Christ and MM are meeting in the middle of a landscape which seems to be one with them. In the place of the tomb there is a lush looking bush and the whole open countryside is bathed in early morning light.

¹ Song of Songs 3:1,2b,4a



There is a rhythm and flow in the natural landscape that complements the rhythm and the flow between Christ and Mary. Look closely and you will see that the picture suggests two different worlds. The scene on Mary's side of the picture shows the curve of the hillside and a very earthly village and the curve of the hillside with the village echoes the curve of Mary's body as she is thrown forward on to the ground.

Sadly we do not have colour for the Parish magazine, but assure you that the colours are wonderfully brown and earthy. Christ's side of the picture opens out into distances, the blues of infinity. This suggests the two worlds human and divine linked to each other by the meeting of these two figures.

Christ's body continues the curve of the inhabited hillside, while Mary's raised body continues the curve of the tree. This balances the right hand side of the landscape and so directs our minds to the idea of a new and different life. The whole picture emphasizes the dialogue taking place between Christ and Mary in the foreground.

Titian has left out most of the usual references which identify this as a picture of the resurrection: there is no tomb, no angel, no halo and no standard marked with the cross in the hand of the risen Christ.

Mary first mistook Him for the gardener, and to remind of us of that he has put a hoe in Christ's hand. Mary's left hand covers the jar of ointment for anointing the body, this jar is now not needed.

Titian shows the resurrection by the nakedness of Christ's body barely covered by the almost transparent shroud which he was buried in. The draping of this shroud complements the flow of Mary's red garment.

This painting depicts the moment that Mary has recognized Jesus by his voice when he called out 'Mary'.

There is overwhelming love, passion and deep emotion as she throws herself on the ground reaching out to him. His body draws back as he tells her 'do not touch me because I have not yet ascended to my Father, but go and tell my brothers'

Here we see confusion in her body, her eyes are drawn to his and so to heavenly love, but the earthly passion is still present – see where their right hands are.

Titian accentuates the tension in Mary's movement and the closeness of these two whose right hands might touch were it not for Christ pulling back in a subtle movement of refusal, softened by the affectionate inclination of his body leaning over Mary.

The whole atmosphere is pulsing with the deepest Love, it is the dialogue between the Lover and the Beloved. It is the dialogue between us and Christ when we let go and allow ourselves to be absorbed by Him and we love him unconditionally as he loves us.

In this painting Christ is just passing by, he is moving on in the heavenly dance of Love, he is moving towards us and inviting us to recognize him and to join Mary in announcing the joy of his resurrection.

He is such a fast God,

Always before us

And leaving as we arrive.

Says the poet R S Thomas.

But he is there, he is here, he loves us and he is longing for us as we long for him, let us be Mary Magdalenes, let us be apostles and go and tell.

I leave you with words from Richard Rolle, a 13thC English mystic:

Jesus receive my heart, and bring me to Thy love:

All my desire thou art, and thy coming I covet

Thou art He whom I have sought, when shall I see Thy face?

Liz Badman Reader (Lay Minister)

PASSOVER AND PASSION

The 5th Sunday in Lent, the one before Palm Sunday, is traditionally called Passion Sunday. In the secular world we associate the word passion with the expression of desire, strong emotion or sexual love, great enthusiasm or even anger. To be passionate about someone or something is taken to mean being consumed by a person or an interest. The true meaning of the word, however, comes from the Latin word *passio*, which means 'suffering'. On Passion Sunday we draw closer to the suffering and death of Jesus. The crucifixes around the church are covered – veiled – so that we may inwardly set our minds and hearts and imagination on what happened to Jesus during the days before he died.

St John's gospel, which is different from the other three gospels in several ways, makes a very strong link between the suffering and death of Jesus and the Jewish Passover. John tells us Jesus went to Jerusalem for the Passover three times during his public ministry, the third and last time being for his last days, his passion. It's a good idea to remind ourselves what the Passover is and why it is celebrated by the Jews every year as such an important festival, more or less at the same time as we celebrate Easter.

To find out about the first Passover we need to go back to the time of Moses, about 1300 years before the time of Jesus. In the time of Moses the Israelites, or Jews, had lived for over 200 years as slaves in Egypt. God had promised them that they would be freed from slavery, but not without a struggle against the Egyptian Pharaoh who ruled over them. The Book of Exodus, the second book of the Old Testament, tells the story of this struggle, how God visited plagues over Egypt, the last of which was a plague on the firstborn of the Egyptians. An avenging angel was sent from house to house to perform this. So that the angel would know which were the Israelite homes, they were to follow close instructions.

Each household was to take a young male lamb and slaughter it. The blood from the slaughtered lamb was then to be brushed on the door frames. As the angel went from house to house he would therefore *pass over* the Jewish homes and their firstborns would be safe. Afterwards they were to roast and eat the lamb according to particular instructions.

When this was accomplished, Pharaoh summoned Moses, the leader of the Israelites, in a great panic to instruct him to gather all his people together and leave Egypt. This Moses did and they all departed in such a rush that they took their raw bread dough with them which hadn't had yeast added to it – unleavened bread - which is also part of the Passover meal. The Passover is a signally important event in Jewish history because it was the time when they were released from slavery and led by Moses, under God's guidance, to the Promised Land, where they could be free to live as God's chosen people. The Jews have commemorated this time with a Passover meal every year since then.

That's a brief recap to set the scene and help explain why Jesus and his disciples were in Jerusalem at that time, in the capital city where Jews from several countries gathered to celebrate the great feast. But it wasn't simply to keep the feast, as all good Jews should – there was more to it than that. John's gospel draws particular attention to linking what was happening at the Jewish festival to what was happening to Jesus. Going back a bit to the first chapter of John, the Baptist sees Jesus coming towards him and says 'Look, there is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.' (John 1:29). John the Baptist is setting the scene that Jesus is the Lamb that will be sacrificed for our Passover. He will deliver God's people, not from slavery in a foreign country as Moses did, but from the slavery of sin and death. Jesus wanted the Jews to understand this and John recorded it so that we, too, would make the connections to understand Jesus's sacrifice.

The entire succession of events, from the Last Supper to the Crucifixion, reflects the various themes of the Passover. The Last Supper was the Jewish Passover meal, which Jesus ate with the twelve disciples, but it was to lead them to a new understanding of what this meant in the new age of Jesus. We know well the words that Jesus spoke when he broke the bread and gave it to them and the cup he passed to them, because they are the words the priest uses at Mass. Jesus was saying 'I am being sacrificed for you. I am the Lamb of the Passover. I am dying to deliver you from the sin of the world.'

There are several more connections. When Jesus stood before Pilate, John says 'it was about the sixth hour on the day of preparation before the Passover'. This was the exact time on the Friday, therefore, that the priest would be slaughtering the lambs for the Passover meal. The garment Jesus was wearing when the soldiers stripped him before they crucified him was a seamless linen tunic, as worn by the High Priest when sacrificing, pointing to Jesus as our High Priest as well as the sacrificial lamb. On the cross when Jesus said 'I thirst' he was given some sour wine on a hyssop branch – the same branch that was used

for sprinkling the blood of the Passover lambs. Those are just three of similarly intricate and profound connections.

For us Christians, the whole of the Old Testament points towards the New Testament, towards the coming of Jesus the Messiah, towards his death, resurrection, ascension and coming in glory at the end of time. As one writer put it succinctly “the Old Testament is pregnant with the New Testament”. The link between the Passover in Exodus and the events of Jesus’s passion - his suffering - is possibly the most important one to grasp. All Jesus’s earthly ministry was leading up to this once for all sacrifice for us on the cross. He died and rose again so that we might die to sin and live the glorious life God intends for us, and for that we can never be thankful enough.

The word *Eucharist*, another word for the Mass or Holy Communion, comes from the Greek word for thanksgiving. We have our Passover thanksgiving every week - more than that if we’re able to get to Mass during the week. On Palm Sunday, we don’t have a sermon, we simply hear the Passion story and have it ‘written on our hearts’ (Jeremiah 31:33). When Jesus broke the bread and gave the cup at Passover time he said to the disciples, as he still says to us today and at every Eucharist: “This is my body” and “This is my blood”. We are, in a very special way, bringing the past into the present.

Jessica Smith, Parish Lay Minister.

Church and silver cleaning, Saturday 5th April

It is time to clean the church and liturgical hardware in preparation for Easter. Fluff from our winter coats is drifting across the floor like tumbleweed and the silver is getting dingy. Come along between 9.30 and 12 noon on Saturday 5th April and do your bit. It’s deeply satisfying to see the dust collecting in the Dyson. There are jobs suitable for all ages, both genders and all domestic abilities. It’s never as bad as cleaning your own house. Mid morning refreshments will be available.

Easter lilies

Please sign the list in the porch if you wish to contribute towards lilies for Easter. £3 each

LOW SUNDAY

Not low at all, and packed with interest

IT'S natural enough, I suppose, that people should think of the Sunday after Easter as "low" because it seems a bit tame after the rejoicings of a week ago. But we don't really buy that one, do we? The Latin name is *Clausum Paschae*, the close, the completion of the Easter Octave. In French it's the same with the words reversed, *Pâques Closes*. But if that's all, why the loss in our English of the letter C? Odd, that! Well, an alternative reference is that in the old rites of Salisbury, Hereford and elsewhere the 'Sequence' sung before the Gospel on this day began *Laudes Salvatori*. So, Laudes Sunday. Maybe; at least it disposes of that letter C. But let's leave that aside for a moment and see if a German name can suggest anything. Ah! White! *Weisser Sonntag*. Now I can already hear two or three readers saying "Hang on! I've got a Missal that calls this day *Dominica in Albis*, Sunday in white robes. That sounds fine, but there's a snag. This is an apocopated expression. It's short for*in albis depositis*, the Sunday when white robes have been, or will be, laid aside. This goes back to very early days when the newly baptized wore their white robes during Easter Week, which were then taken off on the Saturday or during the liturgy on Sunday.

Now, an infant's familiar white christening robe is called a Chrisom, and we shall meet this word again shortly. Meanwhile Fr Charles has reminded us that the earliest Christians were baptized naked. Emerging from the waters they would surely be in need of some covering! So when S Paul writes [Galatians 3: 27] "Baptized ... you have all put on Christ as a garment" (NEB) he may be using imagery suggested by this. Over the centuries, though, the Chrisom was reduced to something you could just tie on – a scarf/headband/ribbon/fillet.

Now we here living on the northern border of Somerset can readily call up a baptismal event that still has national reverberations. Ever wondered why so many place-names in the Midlands and North end in -by, a Scandinavian name meaning settlement or locality? Recall then an event that Somerset historians never fail to mention. It's Easter in 878, and Alfred, king of Wessex, and Guthrum, king of the Danes are hammering out a treaty which (to oversimplify) was to assign northern England (hereafter the Danelaw) to the Norsemen, while keeping the South under Alfred. But for that battle-hardened Viking there was a catch. Guthrum had to be baptized. Alfred insisted on it as part of the deal. It took place at Aller, a village between Somerton and Langport. A week later, on Low Sunday or its Eve, Guthrum's Chrisom-*Loosing* took place at Wedmore, which gives its name to the Treaty. Tentatively, and feeling presumptuous, I fall to wondering whether

“loose/loosen”, a word hardly changed since Saxon times in English or German, might be at the root of ‘Low Sunday’ – [Chrisom-] Loosing Day? A conjecture, no more.

Last but not least, gentle reader, reflections of this sort — etymology, exegesis, local history, can remain at the level of Quite Interesting, or they can do more. They can speak at this season of our enduring oneness with those newly drenched and reborn people standing there in white, sealed soon with anointing and laying-on of hands, looking forward after a week of preparation to the paschal feast they can now share. Does it not still resonate?

The Lamb’s high banquet we await
in snow-white robes of royal state.
And now, the Red Sea’s channel past,
to Christ, our Prince, we sing at last.

Kenneth D. Smith

ALL SAINTS SOCIETY (‘The Bar’) AGM

The All Saints Society provided the means whereby we can (legally) serve and enjoy drinks Sunday by Sunday, at major festivals and other events. As a ‘members’ club’ the profits are used as the membership decides at the AGM.

This year’s AGM is at 12.45pm on Sunday 27th April 2014 (the Sunday after Easter) in the Parish Room.

All members are encourage to attend in order to approve the accounts, elect officers, decide disbursements and other matters.

The ‘Bar’ makes an important contribution to the social life of All Saints and this year funded the long overdue refurbishment of the Parish Room kitchen, with the benefit of a very generous personal donation from a member to enable us to upgrade to stainless steel worktops.

New members are always very welcome. Why not pop up on any Sunday after coffee?

Roger Hopkins

Secretary

Bishop's Message for April 2014

This month Bishop Lee shares more of his journey and invites us to step out in faith.

First of all I want to thank you for the incredible support you have given over these past 6 months. Liz and I have been overwhelmed by the number of cards, letters and emails we have received and so many have told us that they are praying regularly for us. It has made a huge difference and as I come out the other side of chemo and radiotherapy I simply want to express our gratitude.

At the time of writing I have been back to a normal working pattern for three weeks and been growing stronger each week. The excellent news is that the treatment has banished the lymphoma and I am technically 'in remission'. I will have 3 monthly check ups over the coming year but the physicians are confident that I am cured even if they cannot say so at this point.

One of the most significant points in my journey with lymphoma came on the night of my second dose of chemotherapy. The steroids that are given alongside the chemotherapy drugs make sleep hard to come by and I found myself still wide awake gone 1am. As I lay on my bed - alone as Liz was sleeping in the spare room – I entered into an engagement with God which lasted a couple of hours or so. During this time I was drawn to reflect on what happened to Lazarus and his sisters when he became seriously ill and died (see John's gospel chapter 11). During this I sensed the Lord speaking to me in a most unexpected way: "Rayfield - take off the grave clothes and come out!"

Within the whole period of engagement, at times musing with God and wondering what would happen to me over the course of this illness, I realised that the Father was spurring me to make this an opportunity for witness to him and to Christ Jesus. Hearing the Lord calling me by my surname felt like an exhortation to step up and step out. Some particular ways in which I could do this followed swiftly, not by a kind of 'divine download' but through looking back at my experience since diagnosis and starting treatment. I realised I wanted to email Radio 5's 'Movie Review' and to write to 'Cycling Plus' – the radio programme and the magazine had both been sources of particular blessing. Another step was to wear a white clerical shirt as a sign and symbol of what God had called me into despite the overtones of Gandalf in 'Lord of the Rings! Of course, all of this could be put down to a manic episode brought on by the steroids – it certainly did make me 'hyper'! But realising this possibility I

received an assurance that space precludes me sharing here which made it clear God was in this.

As we move into the lead up to Easter I am wondering where others may have found themselves wrapped in grave clothes. Many of us struggle to either articulate or share our experiences of God, perhaps because of how we feel they will be received. Bishop Mike and I have found that people are much more willing to hear our stories of faith than we are to share them. Our goal of having 10 000 individuals in the Diocese share their faith story seems like a moment when all of us have opportunity to step out and not let any grave clothes stifle our voice.

+Lee

All Saints' Easter Monday Walk

This year we have planned a circular 4.5 mile walk around the footpaths of Failand. We hope it will appeal as it has been planned to involve as little driving as possible, combined with enough fresh air to clear the haze caused by post-Lenten indulgence. We will meet at the layby outside St Bartholomew's, Failand ST516 736 at 11.30 am. Bring a picnic as there is no pub on the route. We will pass landmarks such as the 7th Bristol Scouts' hut and camping ground and Charlton House, now the home of the Downs School and formerly a residence of the Gibbs family who went on the build nearby Tyntesfield on the proceeds of their guano-importing empire.

We will then return to Bristol and consume tea and cake at a location to be divulged nearer the time.

All are most welcome. We're good at bribing and cajoling smaller reluctant walkers. If you would like to have a map of the route, or want to make sure we don't depart without you, e-mail webmaster@allsaintsclifton.org.