

April 2017

Fake News and the Easter Message: thoughts from Father Charles

Digital Dependency

There is no doubt, over the last few years we have become increasingly dependent upon our digital and connected communication systems and processes. For industry, public administration and other forms of 'organization' this has been extremely useful and of considerable benefit. Though, it should be recognised that, most of us will be able to quote situation where this 'advance' has had a detrimental impact on individual and collective life. What is very surprising is the extent to which this huge digital step-forward has had on our individual lives. Partly on the ways we interconnect and order our lives, but also in ways we exchange and interact with large organizations (from utilities to HMRC), and also in the ways we source information and guidance.

There are times when the information or instruction we receive is incorrect.

There are many explanations for this erroneous material, and the motivation that has caused their creation is often easy to see. Frequently the motivation is a desire to shift public opinion or to defraud individuals or companies. Sometimes the drive is more complex and associated with individual's desire for notoriety or fame.

April Fool's Day

Today, as I write this, it is the first of April, and in 1957, six decades before we coined the phrase 'Fake News', Panorama gave us the documentary broadcast of the Spaghetti harvest in Ticino Switzerland. Then we were amused, and we continue to be entertained by 'quality' April Fool's Day reporting in the news.

However, in the last year 'Fake News' has become a frequently used and understood term that is not associated with entertainment. Perhaps we should remind ourselves that, like April Fool's Day (celebrated by Romans and Celts at the Vernal Equinox), so too was 'Fake News' an effective tool in antiquity. Octavian (at about the time of the birth of Christ) not only used a campaign of disinformation to secure a victory over Marc Anthony, but also, with a name change to Augustus, created a youthful and vigorous image of himself throughout the Empire.

The 'dark' nature of 'Fake News' is well established. Historically and currently we see racial stereotyping to encourage discrimination against specific ethnic or religious communities. This is easily recognised in many parts of the world, sometimes less so in government statements and reporting in the US, and very often quite subtly in elements of the UK media.

Real or Fake?

Should this type of news, 'fake', worry us? Surely people are equipped to identify fake from real news? Sadly, not so.

Research amongst a student (secondary and tertiary) population in the US across 12 states with approximately 8,000 participants led to 'astonishment' amongst the researchers (Stanford University School of Education). Showing a surprising level of emotion for an academic paper, the researchers concluded that they were 'shocked', and that students showed a 'stunning and dismaying consistency' in their inability to evaluate information at the most basic levels.

Of course this research was conducted amongst students, fortunately adults are better equipped to separate the real from the false? In the UK 'Yougov' research answers this for us with a resounding no. Broadly speaking about half of all participants failed to distinguish fake from real; and if they were regular Facebook users this proportion grew to nearly three quarters. Three quarters of Facebook users who were unable to distinguish fake from real.

So, this should give us cause for concern and also make us step back and reflect on our responsibility, as individual Christians and as the Church, to use our critical skills, to share/broadcast only that news and information that is reliable, and to speak-up on those occasions when news is inaccurate, improbable, offensive or clearly designed to create the wrong responses.

Why is this my Easter Thought?

When we enter Passiontide, we start to use a refrain, before and after the Benedictus (at Morning Prayer), which reads:

The word of the cross is folly
to those who are perishing,
but to those who are saved
it is the power of God.

We recognise these lines from 1 Corinthians 1:18. When Paul wrote these words crucifixion was a Roman public spectacle, it was 'designed' to shame victims through degradation, humiliation and torture; it worked before and after death as part of the spectacle. It was a clear political statement that any, and all, who threatened the Imperial Social Order were at risk of this end to their pointless life.

Given this, it would be beyond foolishness to contemplate how the cross could become the means for divine revelation. Paul points out that God has intentionally selected the absolute opposite to what we might have expected to initiate our salvation. Like so much of the Gospel, this is a reversal, a turning-upside-down, of what the world views as important or values.

This is the reason I draw our attention to 'Fake News' this Easter. The strength of fake news is that it plays, with great effectiveness and ingenuity, on the adopted values of the

world. It calls on those more base human characteristics of hatred, ridicule, fear, selfishness, power and others that can be employed to fire the emotion.

This is part of our Easter thinking, just as the Cross may be seen as folly to some, we are reminded of the words of Isaiah 'my thoughts are not your thoughts, says the Lord, neither are your ways my ways' (Isaiah 55:8).

This Easter let us take the opportunity to reflect in greater depth about what this element of the Easter message means in our own lives. Not just about how we react responsibly to the issue of 'fake news' but also how we understand God's act of love in creation through thoughts and ways which are more akin to his than to those of humankind.

May I take this opportunity to wish you happy and blessed Easter,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles". The signature is stylized with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

University of the West of England

Department of Architecture and the Built Environment

The Department of Architecture and the Built Environment brings together students and academics from a broad range of architectural, engineering, property and construction disciplines in a creative and inter-disciplinary environment.

Here at All Saints we see a good deal of the Architecture Students, they spend a part of their first year studying our building and are often on-site working and drawing as they explore the concept, integrity and detail of our extraordinary building.

We have also benefited from an afternoon seminar delivered by James Burch (Senior Lecturer in the department) who provided some wonderful insights into the design and thinking that informed Robert Potter as the preparation for the building of this new church progressed.

Later in April the seminar 'exchange' will be reversed and Fr Charles will be providing a seminar for students on the engagement of Organizational Psychologists within construction projects, specifically two of his major engagements; Terminal 5 at Heathrow and The Shard in 'London Bridge Quarter'.

The Agency Project

Starting in Holy Week, and for a duration of six weeks, we will be welcoming three final year students. They will be working on a consultancy engagement which is termed the 'Agency

Project'. They will receive a brief and then need to explore how best to deliver a product that will enable students to develop a real understanding of a living church community, a sense of how a building and space delivers to different audiences aligns with differing needs and will gain invaluable practical experience. This is only achievable through hands-on learning.

Their brief will be to explore and understand the use of the Atrium and its potential use so as to develop ideas that might be employed to make it a much more significant element of our 'church plant'.

There will be more information about this project in coming weeks – we look forward to welcoming the students (and their staff) later in April.

Trinity Placement Students for June 2017

At Trinity College great value is seen to be contributed to the learning, growth and development of Ordinands through their 'context training' or Parish Placement. At All Saints we share a group of students with Christ Church Clifton, and these students spend time with us (during term-time) over the duration of their two year course at Trinity. This year, one of the students, Cath, has opted to be primarily placed with us which is why we have been getting to know her (and Paul) a great deal better than her colleagues.

The amount of time that students can invest in this placement is limited because of all the other demands of student life. However, in June students have an in-depth parish experience where they work six-days each week in a single placement. This is a key component of their training. There's also a two way aspect and benefit to this process, in that we have the opportunity to learn from them and hear observations from their experience of us.

Starting on Sunday 4 June this year we will have two students with us on placement. These will be Laura, who has provided a short bio for us, and Jordan, who has also given us an account of what brings him from Yorkshire to Bristol. We look forward to welcoming them in June.

Laura Faturoti

My name is Laura Faturoti and I moved to Bristol with my husband Ebum and children Lucas, aged 10, and Elissa (Ellie), aged 8, in mid-August. Since our move we have been joined by our third child Levi who was born on 27th August. Starting training with a tiny baby has added an interesting dimension to our lives over the last few months.

Before moving to Bristol we lived in Chatham, Kent, where we had lived for 12 years. I was working as a Probation Officer, a job I had done in various forms for 16 years, and Ebum was working for the community project attached to our sending church. Having moved out to Kent from Blackheath in London we have spent most of the last few years working in areas of deprivation and I am really valuing the space to explore different areas of ministry and different styles of worship.

I am looking forward to worshipping and working with All Saints, Clifton and continuing to gain deeper understanding and appreciation of the breadth of ministry and worship in the Church of England.

Jordan Allen

Hello! My name is Jordan, I'm 22 years old and I'm from Scarborough in North Yorkshire. I became a Christian when I was 17, so not really that long ago, but God has blessed me with lots of great opportunities and adventures on my journey with him so far!

I've worked at a couple of churches in the Midlands for the past four years and I'm now in my first year of training for ordination at Trinity College. I'm very much looking forward to spending time with you at All Saints in June, I think it will be rather different from my experience of church so far – so that is very exciting.

It'll be great to get to know you, but just so you know a little bit about me first: I'm really interested in making things, I particularly enjoy creating music and taking photographs. I love old films and hot curries! I'll always grab the chance to try something new and learn from as many experiences as I can. Please come and chat to me in June, in the meantime All Saints will be in my prayers.

CAIPIRHINAS AND BRIGADIERAS

The title of this article sums up two of my favourite things about Brasil.

I was very fortunate to join daughter Sarah and son-in-law Paul for two weeks at the beginning of Lent as they came to the end of a 9 week sabbatical in Brazil. For me this was the culmination of a 45 year dream.

As some of you know my late step-father, Ray Racy, was from a Lebanese family who had emigrated to Brazil at the beginning of the 20th century during the Lebanese civil war, though his parents went to Manchester where they set up in the textile trade importing cotton and exporting high quality shirts which were made in their factory. Ray and his two sisters and brother were born over here and they had a very privileged childhood. In the Depression they also moved to São Paulo and set up business there. Ray came back here in 1941 when he joined the RAF and flew spitfires, his brother, at the same time, joined the tank regiment.

Well, a few weeks ago I at last achieved my dream and I flew out to São Paulo to meet up with the huge Racy family out there. I had met a few about 45 years ago when they visited London. I arrived at the end of their summer and temperatures ranged from 28°C to 35°C and was often humid, so we had to keep drinking loads of bottled water. The sun was often too fierce to sit in, so we would spend time in the shelter of trees or on the balcony or veranda, depending where we were, hence the fact I am as pale on return as I was when I went out there.

I will not bore you with a blow by blow travelogue, but I will share some things to give you a flavor of this exciting country.

We spent 3 days at my cousin Peter's house, he is Ray's nephew, on the island of Ilhabela (Beautiful Island), which is a tropical island covered mostly in jungle and rain forest. Peter is the top sound engineer in South America. We spent time splashing around in a waterfall just on the edge of the jungle and also on the beach, swimming, drinking freshly juiced pineapple, passion fruit etc. There were two tropical storms while we were there and after a late supper at an Arabic restaurant we came back to the house to sit on the veranda by the bamboo and palm trees watching the rain come down in sheets and feel the temperature drop. There were many mosquitos so we had to smear ourselves in insect repellent the whole time. There was a gecko in the bedroom of the cabin where we stayed, which ate the mosquitos.

Back in São Paulo the mosquitos were less, but still there. The heat at times was too much and we tended to rest in the middle of the day. There are always the street cafés for coffee and fruit juices and the inevitable sweets and pastries so loved by the Brazilians. Their coffees are tiny and very strong, I preferred mint tea, and our favourite to have with coffee was the brigadiera. This is a truffle like cake and is very rich and chocolaty. In the evening a caipirhina - or two is - very welcome. For those who don't know what this is it is crushed limes with loads of ice and cachaça (distilled sugar cane juice). One is nice, two makes you giggly and mellow, three are too many!

The main Brazilian type meal seemed to be based around beans, rice and beef, then other foods were added i.e. salads, local vegetables etc

The Brazilians have a great respect for the elderly and they are given preferential queues in supermarkets, shops, post office, banks – anywhere where you need to queue. Like over here, anyone over 60 goes free on public transport in the city. If I wanted to cross the road cars would stop for me. There was no road rage! At the airport, both on arrival and departure I was treated with a warm respect.

We found that Brazilians seemed more inclined to engage in proper conversation and would listen and reply. Sadly over here there is a tendency to talk about ourselves and not listen to others. People were polite, in fact somewhat laid back in the shopping centres.

The division between rich and poor, especially in the city, is very marked and we saw a lot of homeless and beggars would come up and blatantly ask for money. We were advised not to look the beggars in the eye and to only carry a few coins visibly on our person. The homeless were not moved on and there were tents pitched, even on the Avenida Paulista, one person had made himself so much at home that he had his pot plant outside the entrance to his tent! In the really wealthy Jardins district there were armed guards on the roads to keep the residents safe. Throughout the city there were groups of armed police, both civil and military. I felt very safe wandering around our district after dark, but there were some areas I wouldn't have gone to after dark. There is a really bad drug problem and it was usual in some areas to see slumped figures on the pavements.

There were many stray dogs, but they were happy. People feed them. Some were in groups, some were alone. I had seen videos on Face Book and You Tube about dogs going to a certain place each evening with a carrier bag to fetch food from kind people to take back to their pack, but I wasn't sure if this was really true. Well, it is, I saw it happen. These dogs looked happy and business like, they were 'on a mission'. The beach dogs on the island of Ilhabela were the same, we met two who posed for us to take their photo!

The government is corrupt and money that should have been spent on infrastructure, on the needs of the community etc hasn't been and apart from the Avenida Paulista the roads are badly surfaced and pavements are bad for those with bad knees and hips. The Avenida Paulista is the Heart of the City; it is a six lane highway and runs on a ridge at the highest point. It has fine buildings and is the financial area of the city. There are coffee bars, restaurants, a couple of shopping malls and the Museum of Art of São Paulo (MASP), but it is mostly high rise banks and offices. Sadly São Paulo had no sense of heritage, so in the 1960s most of the beautiful mansions that line the Paulista were razed to the ground and these high rise buildings put up instead. One or two mansions are left, but are now offices and their gardens are made over to the public. On Sundays the Avenida is closed to traffic and the residents can cycle, skateboard, dance, walk their dogs – and some cats on leads – and stalls spring up along the side. It is an amazing feeling to walk down the centre of this impressive avenue.

We spent a lot of time with various members of the huge family, and family gatherings followed the Lebanese tradition of meeting and socializing over meals, true Middle Eastern hospitality. We went to a few Lebanese restaurants, which were amazing and on the second Sunday went to lunch at the Lebanese Club, which was very much for the privileged members of society. The members were all Lebanese, the staff were Lebanese, only Sarah, Paul I were not Lebanese. On one occasion we met one cousin, who I had known when living in London in 1970-72, at the Brazilian Club where there was a choice of food of many nationalities.

We visited the Equestrian Club where they train the Olympic riders, there is a polo club there, and the whole Club is in a patch of the original jungle in the middle of São Paulo. There were monkeys in the trees! It is an amazing place, two of the cousins are members and one of them keeps her horse there. They have a fully equipped equine hospital with a state of the art operating suite and a resident vet. We walked through the elegant lines of stables and found families of cats – the resident rat catchers!

On our second Sunday there cousin Mario picked me up at 10am and took me to the Greek Orthodox Cathedral for a short while where there was a long Requiem in progress for one of the distant cousins. It is a very impressive Cathedral and is a copy of the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, but a twelfth of the size – it was big! We met three more Racys, distant cousins.

After a while of standing and listening to the singing and looking at the wonderful wall paintings we then left and made our way through the slightly scruffier part of São Paulo to the edge of the Japanese district to the Cathedral Church of Our Lady of Lebanon where I joined with the Lebanese community to attend the Maronite Mass. The Cathedral is a beautiful, light open building with wall paintings of saints, including John Paul II, and an enormous fresco of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the dome behind the altar. The stone from the Cathedral was shipped from the Lebanon. The community are all Lebanese and the Mass was celebrated according to the ancient Antiochene rite, 4th century. The Epistle, Gospel and intercessions were in Portuguese and the sermon was in Portuguese and Arabic; the Liturgy of the Sacrament was in Aramaic, which is the language Jesus would have spoken. The singing was superb and they sang the ancient traditional chants. I felt very at home, in spite of being the only non-Lebanese person there.

When we arrived there was a baptism taking place, but we went through the church and past the Sunday School class into a side chapel to meet Fr Paul, who is a distant relative and a Maronite priest, his brother is a Maronite archbishop who is attached to the Vatican. Fr Paul talked to me non-stop about their tradition and I didn't get much chance to ask questions, but he is a lovely man. We then went back into the church where 3 nuns were leading the Rosary in Arabic before the start of the Mass. I received the Sacrament in one kind from the Bishop.

Here I have to explain that in the area of the Baka'a Valley where the Racy family came from, some were Presbyterian and some were Syrian Orthodox, though many had 'mixed' marriages, which worked as they would worship in each other's churches. Ray's father was Presbyterian and his mother Syrian Orthodox.

When we finally said our emotional 'goodbyes' at the end of this busy, happy, exciting time, we promised that we would meet again soon. I intend to visit the family again in 2-3 years time and find out more about this wonderful country. By birth I am British, by blood I am

Anglo-Irish-American, but I have discovered that by adoption (through my step-father) I am also Lebanese and I am privileged and proud to be the person I am.

Liz Badman

IN THIS MONTH ... APRIL 1986

S Theresa of Avila by Fr Peter Cobb, Vicar of All Saints' 1984 – 2002, here slightly abridged.

When I announced that I was going to give a series of addresses on the spirituality of S Theresa during Lent, I suspect many of you thought you could not imagine that a 16th century Spanish nun would have much to say to you. I hope I have persuaded at least some that she has something to say and that you might read her *Life* or *The Way of Perfection*. I have long believed that she and her one time confessor S John of the Cross were the twin spiritual giants who summed up the whole Christian tradition of prayer and spirituality in their lives and writings.

A woman of deep humanity, she knows people's difficulties in living the Christian life and trying to pray, both from her own experience and from the experience of the nuns she lived with and tried to guide. She is an extremely lively writer who uses vivid and arresting images. She is very down to earth and forthright. She has no time for what she calls 'sour faced saints', those who put off others by sanctimoniousness and self righteousness. Of one woman who seemed to be very devout, and never spoke uncharitably of anyone, but who was obsessed with what people thought of her, she said "everyone thought she was a saint but she frightened me more than any sinner I ever met."

She is very frank about her relationship with God, too. She admits that she entered the convent more out of fear of hell than out of love for God and that for some years she spent her time of prayer listening for the clock to strike. Then years later, after she has been raised to great sanctity, she tells how on a long journey to found another convent, the cart in which she was travelling overturned and she ended up in a ditch. She protested to God that it was no wonder he had so few friends if he treated them like that!

All this is perhaps to trivialise her yet it illustrates the fact that she is no insipid character but a very warm and sympathetic human being. Her mystical experiences were remarkable but she never lost touch with ordinary Christians and she has a great gift for teaching others.

Stand at the Crossroads and Look

Notes from talks given by Bishop John Armes

at All Saints Retreat, Glastonbury, February 2017

Thus says the Lord: 'Stand at the crossroads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.' (Jeremiah 6.16)

We spend much time avoiding God. But God seeks us, as he sought Adam, and the father sought the prodigal son. We need to turn away from whatever causes us to avoid the decision God is calling us to.

A retreat is an invitation to turn down the background noise and pay attention to what God has to say. God comes to us in our everyday lives, but here we have a moment of soulful discernment and decision.

For Jeremiah, the good way lies ahead, but the people refuse to follow, even though in that way lies rest. We can rest in Jesus' comfortable words, 'Come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest' (Matthew 11.28).



Jesus said of Jairus's daughter, 'The child is not dead, but sleeping' (Mark 5.39). What has brought us to the crossroads where we are? In considering what lies ahead, it may help to reflect on what lies behind – a direction of travel or invisible thread that may sustain us. We can look back at moments of insight, affirmed by subsequent developments. Even then, we may see uncertainty, but we may understand God's calling in retrospect.

We may look back on a slow awakening into life, rather than a journey. Jesus called Jairus's daughter out of the destiny others had prescribed for her. 'Little girl, arise,' he said – and the life given must be sustained with food. Are there parts of our lives that we or others have pronounced dead but which Jesus is calling to life? Are there burdens we have imposed on ourselves? And what will sustain us after life has been given?

The biblical narratives were written after the event; the characters may have felt very differently at the time. There are stories of exile and wilderness as well as pilgrimage and hospitality. Our stories will have their share of confusion, lament, shame and apathy.

Part of our calling is to leave home – to follow, and to leave things behind. We have to incorporate this sense of leave-taking, of exile, into what it means to be faithful – to leave home while remaining at home.

The heroes of the Bible share our failings and limitations. Where have we known God's presence, our hearts burning within us on the way? We may never meet God in the same place twice, but it is always the same God who meets us.



Can choice be a tyranny? Are we so taken up with trivial decisions that the larger decisions go unexamined? A retreat is an opportunity to take stock of where we have come from and consider where we are going: every road leaves another road not taken.

What does it mean to have been chosen by God? Often we have choices that are equally good and bad: either choice can mean gain and loss. As Isaiah Berlin said, the tragedy is that when we choose one good, we neglect another good. So we long for the reconciliation of all goods, as expressed in Psalm 85.10: 'Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other.'

But if God is our only choice, perhaps we cannot go wrong if we trust him? Is there room in his purposes for all our choices? There is room for us all in the Father's house with many mansions – or in the realm with many resting places, as William Temple put it. Our lives are on the move, and God is always going ahead of us, not letting us rest too long in one place.

We may make bad choices, and there may be no going back, but even in the bad choices we find God. Each pathway can be a journey with God's presence, and this should give us courage – who knows what treasures may be found along the way?



'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' (Luke 24.32).

Contrasting Christianity with Buddhism, Chesterton wrote: 'The circle is perfect and infinite in its nature; but it is fixed forever in its size; it can never be larger or smaller. But the cross, though it has at its head a collision and a contradiction, can extend its four arms for ever without altering its shape. Because it has a paradox in its centre it can grow without changing. The circle returns upon itself and is bound. The cross opens its arms to the four winds; it is a signpost for free travellers.'

In Jesus' journey, every crossroads leads to Jerusalem – a place of collision. If every choice leads us to God, it is only because God is the crucified God. All our crossroads find their meaning in Golgotha – God's ultimate choice. When I stand at the crossroads, I find you – it is a place where paths meet, because we all want to go somewhere. Our membership of the church draws us into the crucified body, and it is this that unites us. We journey inwards only by God and other people – or risk making ourselves an idol.

There can be no going back – the hope is in the grace given to us on the cross. The Reformation began when Luther discovered he was a sinner and could do nothing about it. When we make a mistake, Jesus still says, 'Come to me,' and loves us all the more.

Since nothing can be perfectly motivated, let us get on and do what we can, with all vainglory and pretence stripped away. The disciples at Emmaus were unwitting witnesses to the resurrection. Easter gives us rest for our souls because of the cross.



'No-one has ever seen God; it is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known' (John 1.18).

We find tensions and discomforts in being part of the church; yet the corporate dimension is essential. Our journey is always made in company with others, in the love of God and the dynamism of the Holy Spirit. Standing at the crossroads cannot be a solitary exercise.

We can look back and remember our history together, and then discern where the Spirit may be leading us. The church at the crossroads may be a place for reflection, for taking stock, before the way forward becomes clear.

Catholicism means drawing from the living faith of the dead, looking to tradition and applying it in personal holiness and in social action. A truly Catholic spirit is both faithful and generous, rather than boundary-setting. Part of the grace of the Catholic tradition is a generosity of hospitality, serving God in situations beyond the spiritual. It will require us to be at ease with ourselves, both in the familiar and in the unfamiliar.

The signpost at the crossroads is the cross: there we plan and decide. We see ruts in the road – the way too often travelled, perhaps. What would the way less travelled look like – a way to delight in all that is various? We need a faith that welcomes all, a voice that even the most unchurched people can hear. 'I need help: will you be beside me?' is a prayer we can both speak and hope to answer.

DEVOTION TO OUR LADY

Those whose interest extends beyond Pembroke Road may like to make a note of the following:

Diocesan Walsingham Mass

Holy Trinity, Westbury-on-Trym 7.30pm Wednesday 10th May

Catholic Societies Assumptiontide Festival

Bristol Cathedral - Solemn Concelebrated Mass

Bishop Martyn Jarrett SSC 12 noon Saturday 19th August

The Nativity of Our Lady

All Hallows, Easton - Solemn Mass, Evensong & Procession

12 noon Saturday 2nd September

Other events of note are:

Ebbsfleet Chrism Mass

Bristol Cathedral 12 noon Monday 10th April

Glastonbury Pilgrimage

Solemn Concelebrated Mass in the Abbey

12 noon Saturday 8th July

Further information from Tony Dolman (0117-957-2878) for All Hallows, or Chris Verity.

Chris Verity