

10th after TRINITY

Well in case you are wondering why I do not have a sun tan, it is because I have been in the Lake District! One beautiful evening though, we went alongside the largest lake, Windermere, to Ambleside, for a concert. The Parish Church has the most glorious new Church Hall I have ever seen, but as to the lake nearby, we didn't see anyone walking on it or indeed, swimming in it! There is a campaign there right now (not unlike the latest news on the Deben) to 'Save Windermere' - from all the sewage and pollution being poured into it daily.

I guess for children and young families in particular, not being able to swim safely is upsetting and annoying when you want to enjoy and relax in the water, however cold it may be. But even more annoying is the lack of respect and care by the water companies concerned; which is why 'celebrities' as well as scientists give up their free time to campaign for change - to clean up - what we have messed up.

Today's Gospel story, captured so vividly in stained glass in so many churches.....is also about our very human fears and weaknesses - whether it is about drowning, or about raging fires – and the tragedy of loss of life which is all too familiar on every news bulletin.

Peter is the disciple singled out who wants to reach out and copy Jesus; he is eager to please, impulsive yet faithful and innocent. Like us, he became frightened enough to shout out

and cry 'Lord, save me!' And just moments before, Jesus said to **all** the disciples: 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'

This is a wonderful line from the Gospel to just centre on and contemplate whenever we gather for prayer, or before a difficult meeting – just to be still and know - Christ's gentle and calming presence in our midst. After this little homily and when we hear the flute play, just close your eyes and repeat Christ's words silently over and over again:

'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'

Tomorrow, Evening Prayer is starting up every week and all are welcome in the Epiphany Chapel – although if you all come some will end up outside! It is a small but very prayerful space. Why not on Tuesday and Wednesdays? Well, because every Tuesday there is our Meditation group and Wednesdays, I try to keep as a day off. Of course, that's no reason not to come on your own; let's just see how it all goes and what you would like to do. It is under half an hour to just be with the Lord - who can calm every storm, and help us to know that he is by our side, reaching out to our every need.

Most clergy say the Daily Office (as it is called) on their own; in fact I met a newly ordained NSM priest on holiday (who was also a vet) who said he was going to the vestry to pray. It doesn't really matter where we pray, but it does make a lovely difference, I think, to be in company with one another, even silent company. It is simply a discipline, a rhythm of prayer if you like, and at early evening-time, it is the service that has the two canticles of the Magnificat and the Nunc

Dimittis within it. They are spoken by young and old, man and woman, one near to a birth and one near to a death, capturing human life and the way God is weaved within it.

The next Dean of Southwark Cathedral, Mark Oakley, has commented: “Both speakers of the canticles, Mary and Simeon, know that God’s heart pours out on his world, especially on those the world laughs at or ignores. The two canticles of Evensong are the two compasses that point us towards the peaceful harbour of the human soul, but also to the humility, courage and generosity with which we must make the journey there.”

When I think of Peter’s brave efforts to jump out of the boat when Jesus simply said ‘Come’, we should see that as our common task and challenge too. Come to St Mary’s to pray, when you can at 5.30pm, and moor your boat a while! Enjoy the company of one another through the gift of prayer and quiet contemplation, and listen to Christ’s voice. His invitation for us to be still, and receive the fullness of his unique, boundless love, is an invitation to treasure and keep close.

Amen.