

*Fr Hoyal Writes*

## **THE WORD OF GOD? YES!**

A recent notice on the Bristol Evening Post website about the forthcoming Bible read-through at Christ Church has elicited two decidedly negative responses.

‘Perhaps,’ writes Chris of Bristol, ‘Mr. Hoyal could point out each example of where is god is the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully?’ A mightily packed sentence, but we can see where Chris is coming from

Less relentlessly adjectival, Mark of Bristol comments with some humour, ‘This is a great way to increase the number of atheists; the more you are exposed to this nonsense, the more likely you are to reject it!’ I rather admire this apothegm, though I do not agree with it, of course.

I am a great Bible man, and I take the view that the Bible can take care of itself, just as God can.

It has to be said, though, that on the face of the text one does find instances where God - as portrayed certain Bible passages - behaves rather less like the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and rather more like a partisan deity exhibiting some of the characteristics Chris describes so graphically.

Christians do not read morally surprising passages woodenly or uncritically, but in the light of the Church’s faith in God as we know him in and through Jesus Christ.

Even modest acquaintance with the Christian authors of old - Christian fathers like St John Chrysostom and St Augustine of Hippo, for example - readily shows the Church has always interpreted Biblical materials at different levels. Commentators have always recognised that the literal or natural meaning of a passage, while perhaps graphic and memorable, may well not provide the best Christian interpretation of the text.

No doubt that is why, as Fr Paul reminded us in his admirable Lent course on the Bible last year, the Fathers evolved an understanding of the different levels of meaning to be found in a Scripture text. In particular there is St John Cassian's famous quartet of senses: literal, analogical, moral and anagogical (for elucidation, ask Fr Paul). We are to approach and feed on Scripture with heart, mind and spirit so that, under the guidance of the same Holy Spirit who inspired the Biblical authors and led the Church to accept their writings as canonical, we can discern what the Holy Spirit is leading us to hear and do.

One can certainly hold a strong view of the inspiration and authority of Scripture (and I do) without needing to be distressed by passages where the attitude of God and scriptural heroes, as presented by human authors, is seemingly out of accord with the character and teachings of our Lord as we glean them from the New Testament.

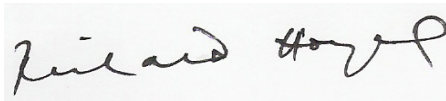
Chris and Mark make very understandable points, and many share their views. But they are reading without the Spirit. They fail to understand the great work of the Holy Spirit in leading God's people – in different ages and from different cultures – into the fullness of truth within that living, growing, learning fellowship of the Spirit which is the Church of Jesus Christ the living Word of God.

All the time the Spirit has been at work on fallible mortal clay - on Bible authors, on Church councils judging the spiritual authenticity of their writings, on Bible teachers and interpreters from the beginning,

and on those hearing and reading Scripture in the fellowship of the Church, including us today. He has been, and remains, at work, sanctifying and shaping us so that we can discern ‘what the Spirit is saying to the churches’ in the name of Christ and as God’s authentic word in Scripture.

It is, as they say, a work in progress, and a complex work, given the huge capacity of free human beings for error and perversity. But it is a glorious work, and I for one rejoice unapologetically in the multi-faceted and challenging brilliance of God’s word in Holy Scripture to his Word made flesh in Jesus Christ.

It is all part of the Spirit’s great work of taking the things of Jesus and declaring them to us (see John 16.13-15). It is in the Spirit that God’s people dialogue with God’s word, and as the servants of him who is The Word.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light background. The signature appears to read "Richard Hoag" in a cursive, flowing script.

### **Deanery Synod 19 May 2011: Discussion regarding the Ordination of Women to the Episcopate**

After a PowerPoint presentation setting the scene, we were given two questions to encourage debate;

Should the draft legislation be passed to set in motion the Ordination of Women to the Episcopate?

Was the Code of Practice adequate provision for those who in conscience could not accept the Ordination of Women to the Episcopate?

Most of the initial questions applied to the Code of Practice, and there was disbelief and even disapproval that this was unwritten, would not be written until after all the Diocesan Synods had voted and had to be taken on trust.

There was also displeasure that the Deanery Synod had been advised only to discuss and not to vote, and there was a general request from the floor that there should be a vote to show general feeling specifically about the Ordination of Women to the Episcopate. This was agreed to, but some discussion was held first. The Lay Chair made the point that one difficulty we faced was that some people knew a great deal about the subject, and others virtually nothing; he asked if we wished to break up into small groups but the consensus was that we would all benefit from hearing everyone. There were questions regarding the evangelical stance, whether any male bishop would be acceptable to those who needed provision and if not why not. The reply to this (sacramental assurance and bishops with a pedigree) proved unacceptable/incomprehensible to the general. There was repeated reference to the fact that both evangelicals and Catholics had difficulties with the legislation, but there was a tendency to move towards a feeling that this was a catholic problem and that in the last resort the Ordinariate would solve any lasting problems. Having said that, there was also a clear feeling that this was a regrettable situation, and twice the Lay Chair emphasised that whatever happened, people would be hurt. There was also the question, if the legislation were to be defeated, could it be brought in again at a later date. The practical answer to this was yes, legally it could eventually be reintroduced, but the gut reaction from perhaps everyone and certainly from a majority was that the legislation must be passed and that the Church needed closure on this issue so that we could all get on with Mission.

When the vote was taken, a substantial majority voted in favour of the Ordination of Women to the Episcopate. One voted against, about half a dozen abstained.

The representatives from the Deanery's ABC parish were then asked to explain the idea of the 'following motion'. The substantive motion cannot be amended, lest chaos ensue, but there can be a request that it be revisited, and the Church of England Evangelical Council has put together a following motion that is acceptable to evangelicals, and also to the Catholic Group in General Synod:

This synod

- desires that all faithful Anglicans remain and thrive together in the Church of England; and therefore
- calls upon the House of Bishops to bring forward amendments to the draft Bishops and Priests (Consecration and Ordination of Women) Measure to ensure that those unable on theological grounds to accept the ministry of women bishops are able to receive episcopal oversight from a bishop with authority (i.e. ordinary jurisdiction) conferred by the Measure rather than by delegation from a Diocesan Bishop.

Current provision included legislative provision, the code of practice operated on trust; this provision would in fact be even stronger than current provision in that it requested bishops with ordinary jurisdiction. In general, the meeting was uncomfortable with this and the discomfort was expressed in the feeling that this would diminish the status of women bishops.

So, sympathy with those who ask for provision, dissatisfaction with the Code of Practice, acute discomfort with the side effects of the level of provision requested.

In practical terms, the Chair and Lay Chair discussed the way forward, as it appears that there is no actual machinery for submitting the Deanery Synod's views to Diocesan Synod, and at an informal meeting in the coffee break of Diocesan Synod on 21 May, it was agreed that the Rev Emma Langley (St Alban's and Affirming Catholicism) and Mrs Anne Bradley (All Saints and Ebbsfleet) should meet to put together a joint statement. This they would forward to Lesley Farrell, so that it could reach the Diocesan Synod agenda in the most appropriate way.

Beyond that, given that this was a friendly and constructive meeting, with everyone trying to understand what is happening and with not one rancorous word, and that even so we could not make a clear statement, it's up to the House of Bishops to square the circle.

Anne Bradley  
21 May 2011

# ASCENSION DAY

Thursday 2 June



**7.30 & 10.30 am Low Mass**

*10.30 am Mass at All Hallows Easton*

*1.05 pm Mass at Christ Church City*

**7.30 pm PROCESSION  
& FESTIVAL MASS**

**Guest Preacher The Revd John Masding**  
MA LLM DipEd FRSA

*Chairman of the English Clergy Association*

*Refreshments afterwards. Come and join us in celebration of Christ who  
lives and reigns.*

## **'THE SOCIETY'**

If you have not already done so, please think about joining the Society of St Wilfrid and St Hilda, working to support church people who, whatever their own views about the Ministry, want to see traditionalists able to remain in the Church of England. There are forms in church to complete and send off.

## **CONFIRMATION**

Do please pray for candidates from All Saints and All Hallows being confirmed at our 7.30 pm Mass on St Peter & Paul's Day Wednesday 29 June) and be with us to support them, if you can. Our junior candidates are Charlotte Rudd, Isabel Sutton and Thea Griffiths.

## **Forthcoming Events**

### **June Concert Matinee**

4 pm Saturday 4 June. Mendelssohn's D minor Piano is the main item in this concert by the newly formed **Ystavää Piano Trio**, top professional players who hail from Bristol – Katy Latham, Christine Johnstone and Helen Mills. It is a privilege to welcome them to All Saints.

## **FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI**

*Day of Thanksgiving for Christ's Institution of  
the Holy Eucharist*



**THURSDAY 23 JUNE**

7.30 & 10.30 am Mass (said)

1.05 pm Mass at Christ Church City

**7.30 pm SOLEMN MASS &  
SACRAMENT PROCESSION**

**Guest Preacher**

**The Dean of Bristol**, the Very Revd Dr David Hoyle

*Do be with us as we celebrate our particular gratitude for the All-Holy Sacrament of the Altar, the power of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, and the Real Presence of Our Lord in his Sacrament. Refreshments after the service.*

### **'The Opera Picnic'**

Saturday 25 June. For details of this firmly established highlight of our musical year see posters in church.

# FEAST OF APOSTLES SS PETER & PAUL

*Day of Prayer for  
the Apostolic Ministry*

**WEDNESDAY 29 JUNE**

10.30 am Mass

**7.30 pm FESTIVAL MASS  
& CONFIRMATION**

*Chief Celebrant & Preacher*

**The Right Revd John Ford, Bishop of Plymouth**



**SUNDAY 3<sup>rd</sup> JULY**

## **DEDICATION FESTIVAL**

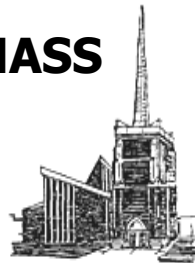
*44th Anniversary of Consecration of the new All Saints and  
the 143<sup>rd</sup> of the original Consecration*

**11.00 am FESTIVAL MASS**

- attended by **Friends of All Saints**

**Sermon Fr Roger Durbin**

**Parish Picnic (catered)  
afterwards in church gardens.**



***Come and give thanks for All Saints as we rededicate  
ourselves in God's service.***

### **July Concert Matinee**

**4 pm Saturday 2 July - Jeremy Watkins** (baritone) and **David Naysmyth** (piano) return again to delight us with a programme of songs by Schubert, Mahler and Butterworth.

### **'RAGA' All Saints - 7.30 pm Friday 8 July**

A night of classical Indian music and traditional food, with Simon Kolhi (*Sarod*) and Tapan Roy (*Tabla*). All proceeds to the Indian charities SEEDS INDIA – [www.seedsindia.net](http://www.seedsindia.net) . Tickets £8.50 (£7 concessions) including an Indian snack supper.

Enquiries and tickets: please contact Peter Graham at 0117 9497379 or [peter.graham@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:peter.graham@blueyonder.co.uk).

This concert is one of several this summer arranged by Richard Lees, an enterprising Church of England ordinand, who has been working with these SEEDS in India. We are hoping to adopt SEEDS as one of our official charities for the year.

For details, see posters and flyers in church and our May magazine article on SEEDS.

### **FAITH & DOUBT**

*Sermon preached by Fr Hoyal at 8 am Mass on Low Sunday 1 May 2011*

#### **Readings**

*1 Peter 1.3-9 Our great inheritance in Christ*

*John 20.19-31 The Appearance to Doubting Thomas*

I haven't managed to pinpoint when it was made, but the late Cardinal Leon Suenens refers in a book of his to an American film called *The World in Darkness*.

The plot concerns an archaeologist excavating in Jerusalem in the Calvary area. He announces he has found the tomb where Jesus was laid – the tomb built by Joseph of Arimathea – but the tomb is not empty. It contains a mummified corpse, which is put on show. The find is a sensation, and is pronounced authentic. People come in crowds. So Christ did not, after all, rise from the dead.

The news quickly spreads worldwide. As a result the world rapidly descends into global spiritual gloom. Everything which speaks of Christ, everything for which he has been the inspiration, everything which bears his mark or a trace of his memory, it all begins to disappear. Congregations disperse, churches and cathedrals are closed and demolished. Countless pictures and other artworks portraying Christ are put into indefinite storage; seminaries and monasteries empty. Missionaries pack up and return home. People everywhere dump their Bibles and discard their crosses and crucifixes.

At length, when the world, shattered by this immense, almost seismic shock, has been plunged into moreorless total spiritual darkness, the archaeologist confesses on his deathbed that he had lied. The tomb was empty and the corpse was from elsewhere.

I don't know whether the film is any good, but the point is clear. Whether Christ rose from the dead is a hugely vital question. If he did, we have everything to live for, everything to hope for. If he didn't we are spiritually very much in the dark as to whether God is good and his love stronger than death. The resurrection is everything.

These are themes also treated by the American playwright Eugene O'Neill in a play of his called *Lazarus Laughed*. In the play Lazarus returns from the dead testifying to the goodness of God and how death is not to be feared. The people of his village lose their fear of death and begin to live in freedom and laughter. But the Roman Imperial authorities get wind of the situation and despatch soldiers to destroy

the town and kill all inhabitants. Tyrants understand that when people lose their fear of death they can no longer be controlled.

We know they have made a mistake. Yes, Lazarus can be killed, and in the play he is – his was a resurrection to this life. But Christ rises in glory to the life immortal, and in him that is our destiny too. He will not die again. The tyrants cannot ultimately win. Death does not have the last laugh.

To-day's wonderful readings all testify to the reality of the resurrection of Christ. At heart it is clearly a deeply spiritual event of immense significance for the whole universe. But our readings today, like all the Bible passages about the Lord's resurrection, take it as certain that it involved his physical body. It was not left to decay. It is he rose incorruptible. His friends see him, hear him, touch him. The scars are real. He eats with his disciples. It is not just Thomas who sees and believes. They all have that privilege.

We of course do not. But we do have the powerful evidence of 20 centuries years of Church and Bible. And we do have 20 centuries Christian witness, and service and proclamation, 20 centuries of the work of the Spirit bringing the light and life of Christ to the world in countless lives and countless situations, despite all the darkness and fear worked by human folly, human deceit and human wickedness. The light shines on in darkness, and the darkness can never overpower it.

No we have not seen him, but we can love him. We may not have seen him in the flesh, but we can certainly put our faith in him. We may not be able to reach out and physically touch the scars he bears, but in heart and soul we can certainly reach out in wonder and love to Saviour who willingly suffered for us. And in this Holy Eucharist, we can certainly eat and drink in his real presence. Those times when we really see the light and fear departs tell us that we are not deceived.

Far from it. In Christ we know that God can be trusted, and we shall trust him.

### **Use words – we must!**

*This month Bishop Lee reminds us of the importance of evangelism – being confident to speak of the faith we have in Christ and releasing the evangelists God has gifted to his Church.*

I always enjoy the Initial Ministerial Education sessions I lead for curates in their early years of ordained ministry. In a recent one I chose the subject of evangelism and started with a very simple exercise. Without going into details I invited our curates to consider first how important each one of them believed evangelism was in the life of their respective parishes, then in the way they carried out their ministries, and lastly in the ministry of Jesus.

The last question raised some interesting theological reflections but the exercise achieved its purpose. The contrast between the place of evangelism in the life of the early Church and many of the churches represented that day was stark. For most parishes evangelism has such a low priority that it rarely features on a PCC agenda.

For a variety of reasons evangelism has become an activity that many Christians and congregations are confused or embarrassed about. Most of us have a story to tell about an experience of ‘bad evangelism’, including being harassed in the street or hectoring from the pulpit. However, that does not mean we should abandon evangelism – it needs to be rescued. Evangelism is a key dimension of Mission and as such it cannot be quietly dropped from the Mission agenda.

Stephen Cottrell, the new Bishop of Chelmsford, helpfully defines evangelism as ‘the process by which a person is initiated into the Kingdom of God’. How that happens is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit but as the Scriptures clearly demonstrate it needs Christians to tell stories – the fantastic news of God in Christ and our own response of faith. We should always be ready, as the apostle Peter urged, to give a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3: 15).

All Christians are to be witnesses – prepared and able to speak of our faith in Christ in hospitable, and sometimes hostile, environments. To say why we believe and what difference it makes. We do not have to be experts in theology or apologetics, just authentic and ready. And as we do this we are promised that the Spirit of God will be alongside us in support.

Yet if we are to properly recover evangelism in the life and mission of our churches our collective witness has to be supplemented by those whom God has particularly gifted for the task. We need to identify, appreciate and release the evangelists in our churches.

Forget any ‘Billy Graham’ or ‘Luis Palau’ template! These are men, women and, yes, children, of all shapes and sizes, temperaments and backgrounds, who share a quality in common. They naturally reach out and connect people with Jesus Christ. For evangelists, speaking of Jesus, of God and his ways, to those who know little or nothing of the Christian faith is both normal and effortless. And what is more, every church in our diocese is gifted with them.

Evangelists can be uncomfortable people to have around as their focus on sharing faith with those outside the churches makes them raise awkward questions. But they are essential for the vitality of the Church. Let’s value and encourage them and receive their gifting to

get evangelism firmly back on our mission agendas across the Diocese.

+Lee

## **Bristol Catholic Societies Assumptiontide Festival 2011**

This now firmly established annual Festival takes place this year on **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> August**, and follows the customary format.

**Solemn Mass**, preceded by a Procession of Our Lady, will be concelebrated in **Bristol Cathedral at noon**; the Principal Celebrant and Preacher will be the Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe the Rt Revd Dr Geoffrey Rowell.

After Mass, the Cathedral Coffee Shop will be open, or there is ample picnic space either in the quiet, secluded Cathedral garden, or in the “crowded clangour” of College Green.

In the afternoon, the **Blessed Sacrament will be Exposed** for prayer and adoration in the **Lord Mayor’s Chapel from 3.15pm**, followed by **Solemn Benediction**.

The Choir at both services will be provided by St Mary and St John, Bathwick.

These services provide a unique opportunity to worship Almighty God and to celebrate the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin in glorious architectural surroundings, and in the manner that all Catholic Anglicans would wish.

Over the past years, the support of the Parish Priest, clergy and servers of All Saints and All Hallows has been outstanding. Perhaps the unfortunate cancellation of the Glastonbury Pilgrimage this year may persuade the congregations in general that the Assumptiontide Festival is a viable alternative, and worthy of support. All are welcome.

Further details may be had from the writer.

*Chris Verity*

## **THANK YOU**

Four years sounds a long time when you start, but not so long when you finish. During my second term as churchwarden, I have discovered again the privilege it is to serve All Saints in this way. Commitment it requires, hard work it is, but also a real delight to meet and greet everyone Sunday by Sunday, festival by festival and to be able to make some sort of difference to the life and work of All Saints. Thank you so much for the standard rose ('Bloomin' Warden') I was given on my last Sunday. It's planted and flowering. I now need to ensure I don't kill it. I'm taking tips from my two predecessors who were similarly honoured!

*Roger Hopkins*

## **Fr Roger**

Fr Roger celebrates an important birthday at this this time. It will be marked by drinks, nibbles and cake following Solemn Mass on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> May. The people of All Saints would like to thank Fr Roger for his faithful, quiet and consistent ministry over the years. It is very much appreciated.