

Letter from the Vicar

Saturday 6 February 2021

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today is Accession Day, marking the 69th anniversary of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II ascending the throne on the death of her father King George VI. During my time in Westminster, being a Royal Peculiar, we always marked this occasion by singing a special set of Responses at Evensong. Accession Day for The Queen is a bitter-sweet day: it is a day for us and Her Majesty to celebrate as we give thanks for our sovereign's long and dutiful reign but also a day of sadness as Her Majesty recalls the day her father entered into glory. Usually The Queen keeps a low profile on Accession Day at Sandringham – where her father died – but this year I believe the Household are at Windsor. Over Christmas Emma and I watched *The Crown* on Netflix and were deeply moved by the way the show depicted Her Majesty's response to becoming Queen. Of course there will have been some artistic licence but what a responsibility the young Princess Elizabeth assumed, and (in my humble opinion) what faithful and dutiful service she has given to this country and the commonwealth ever since.

Anniversaries are important milestones plotting our corporate and personal history. Be it a birthday or wedding anniversary, or some other significant event, anniversaries remind us of what is important. As any man who has ever forgotten an anniversary will testify, anniversaries hold a lot of meaning and you forget them at your own peril!!! In a few weeks' time I will celebrate being your Vicar for the past 7 years whilst you may lament the same anniversary! So much has happened during these few short years and yet there is still so much to be done. One of the biggest tasks facing us as we move forward is how to rebuild and reconnect – with each other and our wider community – when we eventually escape the grip of this pandemic. I don't pretend to know how to do this but it seems to me some of the important factors will be congregational singing, in-person social events, and laughter!

Anniversaries are important and today, our former curate Fr Ben, with the assistance of his fiancée Liz Griffiths will create a new reason to celebrate as they wed in Portsea. Covid has prevented them from having the ceremony they initially hoped for but, regardless of the restrictions, they will still be able to do that which is most important to them: exchanging vows in the presence of God and receiving God's blessing on their new life together as they receive the Blessed Sacrament. I hope to be able to share photos of the occasion with you next week, but for now we wish them well and pray they may have a happy, healthy and long marriage.

Next week we mark another milestone, albeit a movable feast: Ash Wednesday. It doesn't seem possible to be entering a new Lenten season (especially when last Lent was so rudely interrupted by the pandemic) but alas the calendars tell us so. I had hoped that we might be able to restart our Study Course on Prayer but on reflection I think it will have to wait until we are able to meet in person. To talk about and encourage you in prayer, such an intimate relationship, on Zoom would lose a lot of its significance and meaning. However, Prayer remains something that I hope we are all committed to. I know it is hard not praying together at the moment and I know that some people are really struggling to say their prayers during lockdown. This Lent however, I should like to encourage you to strengthen your resolve and commit to saying your prayers more regularly. One way I plan to help you is to upload short services of Compline (Night Prayer) to our Website each week for you to say with me. When, for the vast majority of us, there is so little else for us to do at the moment, are you able to carve out 15 or 30 minutes a week to grow in prayer and faithfulness with Christ this Lent?

More will follow next week re Lent, but for now I leave you with my prayers and best wishes. Keep safe; keep positive; keep warm; and remain steadfast in faith that God loves us, cares for us, and enfolds us in his arms.

In Christ,



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Vicar

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