

BEMA

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“Jesus, who was crucified, he has risen, as he said.”

Matthew 28:5-6

BRACKLEY

BUCKINGHAM

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LENT LUNCH SPEECH

“My favourite Psalm” was the theme of the speech for the Churches in Brackley Lent Lunches this year. For those who missed it, here is a résumé of my speech:

What is my favourite psalm? Surely, that is almost as difficult to answer as what is my favourite piece of music? There are many pieces of music which would be nominated among my favourites, but choosing one above all others is almost impossible. To try and choose, I would have to qualify my answer with: It depends upon the mood I was in at the time. There is music that particularly appeals when I am happy, music that appeals when I feel solemn and music that appeals when I feel quite sad, so choosing one above all others is difficult. So it is with the psalms. Whichever one I chose at any given moment would seem to depend very much on how I felt at the time.

The Holy Bible is more than a book; more a library or compendium of books. Among this great collection of writings, however, the book of psalms or the ‘Psalter,’ stands on its own. The style and writing is unique, challenged only distantly perhaps by the canticles. Even though the lyric poetry used in the psalms was popular in Israel and other countries in the Middle East from the earliest times, the particular style found in the psalms is unique to the Psalter. The Psalter might be called Israel’s hymn book. To twenty-first century eyes, we might say that the psalms appear like poems, songs or perhaps hymns and quite different from the way that we would express our thoughts. It is the form of this lyric poetry which attracts your attention when you flick through the pages of the bible and, as you read, gives the psalms their special appeal as something inviting and friendly, in much the same way as people find that the writings of Shakespeare stand uniquely on their own.

Various psalms are very familiar to those reciting the daily prayer of the church. In the rotation of the four weekly cycle of the Psalter used throughout the Church’s year, certain psalms seem to jump out as they reoccur in their due time. Responsorial psalms are also very familiar from Masses throughout the Church’s year but which to choose? On reflection, four psalms spring to mind – Ps130, Ps 23, Ps 24 & Ps 100 – psalms you may know well.

Ps 130 begins:

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice!
O let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleading ...

and concludes:

Because with the Lord there is mercy
And fullness of redemption,

Israel indeed he will redeem
from all its iniquity.

... truly a psalm to lift me out of despondency with the hope and assurance of salvation and the forgiveness of my faults and failings. But this psalm inevitably has links with sad times and funerals, so while inspirational perhaps not the one to choose as my favourite.

Ps 23 begins:

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
In grassy meadows he lets me lie.

By tranquil streams he leads me
to restore my spirit.
He guides me in paths of saving justice
as befits his name.

Even were I to walk in a ravine as dark as death
I should fear no danger, for you are at my side ...

and concludes:

Kindness and faithful love pursue me
everyday of my life
I make my home in the house of the Lord
for all time to come.

... probably the most well known of all the psalms and full of the Christian message. It seeks to console the drooping spirit and brings comfort in the darkest moments of life, but again, inevitably, has come to be very much associated with funerals, so while finding its words inspiring and comforting, I step back from calling it my favourite.

Ps 24 begins:

The Lord's is the earth and its fullness
the world and all its peoples.
It is he who set it on the seas
On the waters he made it firm.

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?
Who shall stand in his holy place?
The man with clean hands and a pure heart
Who desires not worthless things,
Who has not sworn so as to deceive his neighbour ...

and concludes:

Who is he the king of glory?
He the Lord of armies,
he is the king of glory.

Yes! This is a psalm having potential to be one's favourite – the Lord in his sanctuary welcoming the just and the honourable. The message is positive and uplifting for the people of God with its indication of the Lord's victory in the battle against evil, but still does not leave me with lofty feelings of peace and freedom from struggle, so again I could not claim it as my favourite.

Finally to Ps 100:

Cry out with joy to God all the earth!
Serve the Lord with gladness.
Come before him singing for joy.

Know that he the Lord is God.
He made us, we belong to him,
We are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Go within his gates, giving thanks.
Enter his courts with songs of praise.
Give thanks to him and bless his name.

Indeed how good is the Lord,
Eternal his merciful love.
He is faithful from age to age.

Now isn't that much more worthy of being a favourite? Joy for those who enter the temple of the Lord – acknowledgement of God in his rightful place and through his mercy we – his sheep – taking our place with the good shepherd. No lamenting – no talk of sin and death. Gladness and joyfulness are ours as we give him thanks and praise in the embrace of his love everlasting. Come to think of it, this is one of the psalms with which Morning Prayer frequently begins and what better way to start the day? So not only do I think this an excellent beginning to the day, I have, at last, reached the conclusion that this has to be the psalm I choose as my favourite.

Deacon John

THE BREENER

In Co Kildare the parishioners of the church of the Immaculate Conception at Ballymore Eustace mourn Fr Sean Breen who died in mid-January. His requiem Mass, lasting two hours, was concelebrated by 37 priests (*Daily Telegraph* 28/01/2009). It was a funeral with a difference. Well attended by many famous names in horse racing, including Kieron Fallon and a couple of Irish trainers, the congregation was entertained by comedian Brendan Grace and the singer Red Hurley. No need to ask whether Fr Breen would have approved. He was larger than life and known as The Breener, being well known at the Ballymore Inn. There was even a horse with this same nickname.

Starting in March 1964, for over 40 years he had attended the Cheltenham Festival and often said Mass in a local hotel. The Festival is famous for the large numbers of Irish visitors each year. They may well stand in silence for him at this year's meeting. He also partly owned race horses being a third of the Heavenly Syndicate with two friends who were all happy with their success. Even his parish was well chosen for him to indulge his hobby being handily placed between the courses at Punchestown and Naas.

The local bookies may not be missing him as much as closer friends. He wrote a column for the weekly *Kildare Post* and gave advice to punters over local radio. One even claimed to have become a Christian on account of his advice.

The Irish Bishops were not always enthusiastic. Until the mid-sixties priests were banned from attending race meetings. No-one is sure why they relented but a fall in vocations may have had something to do with it. Fr Breen did not stop at horses – he tipped Cardinal Ratzinger to succeed Pope John Paul II. He felt it would be irreverent for him to back the Cardinal but he is quoted. “A few of the lads got on at 13-2.”

One of the Heavenly Syndicate's hurdlers ran at Cheltenham this year. The horse's name is taken from the injunction that comes just before The Preface. It was probably heavily backed by Irishmen from Co Kildare!

Jack Steggles

WOMEN'S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER - 2009.

On 6th March, at St. Edmund's, Maids Moreton, parishioners from St. Bemardine's joined with at least thirteen other Churches and Chapels in and around Buckingham, to unite in prayer for the women of Papua New Guinea.

Papua New Guinea is a country of some 600 islands, with almost as many languages and cultural groups. They are united by their Christian beliefs. It is a very beautiful country, rich in natural resources, often described as "a mountain of gold floating on a sea of oil."

United by their Christian faith, the women are using their influence to curb the environmental damage caused by indiscriminate mining activities. They are also instrumental in bringing peace and reconciliation to villages that have a long history of feuding with their neighbours.

Despite the isolation caused by the rugged landscape and the diverse cultures and languages, they are united by their belief in God. They take as their theme "In Christ we are many members yet one body."

There was a collection to help provide Christian literature for Papua New Guinea. This year it raised £351.90.

In 2010, St. Bemardine's will be the host Church for the service prepared by the women of Cameroon.

Christine Rayner

ST BERNARDINE'S PASTORAL COUNCIL

During the last few months we have continued to meet as usual each month, in order to assist Father Dan with the smooth running of the parish. This year we have four new (or recently joined) members of the Council, while the same number of "old hands" have stepped down after serving for several years. We are very appreciative of the time and effort they have given. At the same time, it is good to have some new faces bringing fresh ideas to our discussions.

In February we ran a very successful "Silly Night." It was suggested that we have a Beetle Drive – (for those who don't know it's a simple game of throwing a dice in order to draw the bits of a Beetle) add to that a Fish and Chip supper, and encourage people to wear a silly hat, jacket or tie and we ended up with an evening full of laughs and friendship. Many thanks to all who joined in the fun.

Future events include a **Quiz Night** on 8 May, the **Annual Barbecue** in July (date to be fixed), **Gift Day and Harvest Sale** on 13 September, a **Race Night** in aid of CAFOD in October and we end the year with the **Christmas Raffle**. Watch out for more details as the year progresses.

The recent Parish Census is intended to make sure that Fr Dan's records are up to date, but will also give us an idea of the number of parishioners and how the widespread the parish is. Thank you for completing the forms, which are still available if you have not completed one.

We have been discussing our Bishop's plans for the future of the Diocese and this will obviously be a continuing process as the plans are finalised and the details become known. At the moment we do not have a clear picture of what will happen.

We are here to help the parish, so feel free to speak to any of the council members if there is something which you would like to be discussed, or if you have something that concerns you.

Margaret Vince
Chairman

ST.MARTIN'S PASTORAL COUNCIL

Spring is here and we are now looking forward to our summer. What will this bring for us?

Bishop Peter recently asked us to share in his vision for our Diocese of Northampton. A DVD was shown in both Churches in which we heard his hopes and aspirations for our diocesan family.

He introduced us to three key words. "Confidence, Conversation, and Connections". These were in his main theme of "walking humbly with our God.

I have a copy of this DVD if anyone else would like to see it. We held a meeting here in St.Martin's recently at which we were asked to provide our thoughts and ideas, which would be collated with the rest of the Diocese, and our findings published in due course.

Moving on I would like to make my usual appeal for new members to join us on the Committee. Several of us have been in place for some years now and we should really be put out to grass!

May I thank all of you who have helped to clean, provide flowers, played the organ and entered into the spirit of our community.

Easter is upon us and we look forward to the celebrations.

May I give our thanks to Father Dan and Deacon John for their continuing service to us all here at St.Martin's.

David Connolly
Chariman

Bring Flowers of the Rarest...



This Cross represents the passion and Crucifixion of Our Lord. Through His suffering He redeemed the world. At Eastertide we celebrate our risen life in the Lord. In the right hand corner of the cross you can see a bright star or is it the sun? Whatever it is, I believe it symbolises light coming out of darkness. When God the Father placed His only Son on this Earth He knew there would be light times and dark, happy and sad. The darkness culminated in His death but the lightest, brightest and redeeming feature was the Resurrection.

A very happy and Holy Easter to you all!

The Flower Alphabet



Osteospermum

Osteospermum plants originate from South Africa and the name is derived from the Greek *osteon* (= bone) and Latin *spermum* (= seed). They have lots of 'common' names such as African Daisy or South African Daisy, Cape Daisy and Blue-eyed Daisy. They are half-hardy perennials or sub shrubs meaning that they are not entirely hardy and will therefore not survive persistent frosts. They have become more and more popular in the UK and abound in garden centres, nurseries and market stalls when summer bedding plants become available. The only problem here is that need sunshine to unfurl their beautiful petals. Let's hope we get some this year

Veronica Barnes

Bring blossoms the fairest...

UNCOMFORTABLE ECHOES FROM THE PAST

The tele-film of civilian Palestinian victims in Gaza is almost a re-run of news reel film shown 70 years ago. In those days we had to visit the cinema to see such frightful scenes. But black and white images then were no less horrifying than today's full colour.

In the four years leading up to the Second World War three nasty wars were shown on our screens. Italy had invaded Abyssinia (known now as Ethiopia) on October 3 1935 and pounded the people for seven long months. Overlapping these dreadful scenes was the carnage of the Spanish Civil War, lasting three years until 1939. Then from July 7 1937 came the Sino-Japanese war with scenes of Chinese homes being smashed and the sight of long trails of refugees trying to get away to safety. In some way these places were practice grounds for the Axis powers that we and our Allies had to defeat in 1945. In particular German and Italian planes bombed Spanish families in their homes while German tanks and artillery hammered the poorly equipped members of the International Brigade fighting on the side of the Republic.

Cine-journalists were quick to reach war zones. Every cinema programme included their newsreels stuck in between the two main films relieved perhaps by a Mickey Mouse cartoon. But that was not enough to calm the mind of one young schoolboy. Three news companies: our own Gaumont-British, the American Movietone News and the French Pathe distributed their film widely. Any child taken to the pictures became familiar with war and frightened by it. For about two years we heard talk of war with Germany before it was finally declared in 1939. Everyone had been issued with gasmasks in 1938 at the time that Prime Minister Chamberlain came back with his piece of paper carrying Hitler's worthless signature. For weeks after September 3rd 1939 I, an active boy approaching his eleventh birthday, was scared to go to bed.

Family members were involved from the start; my mother's cousin was called up six months before the outbreak of war. He became one of the first soldiers to go to France thence to escape from Dunkirk. Then he went into the 8th Army in North Africa. My father's cousin volunteered for the RAF months before his call-up was due. Before long he was dropping leaflets over German cities in a futile attempt to persuade the civilian population to resist their government. He was none too pleased to be dropping paper while German guns fired at his aircraft. As the years rolled on the soldier's three younger brothers were also in the Forces while my uncle, aged 30 in 1939, later commanded a minesweeper in Russian waters.

Meanwhile at home we were bombed repeatedly from 1940 until the end of March 1945 when invading forces over-ran German rocket launching sites.

Throughout my secondary education we had been under fire at home. The result was a seething hate of all things German for years afterwards. Yet as a young soldier in the Rhine Army I knew and admired many Germans. Over the years since, it has become one of my favourite countries to visit and study. This liking mystifies many English friends.

The one-sided support for Israel by the West has brought about similar hatred from Arab peoples, a deep resentment that is unlikely to subside for many decades. Shall we ever have peace in the Middle East?

Jack Steggles

REVELATION

In the far South of Ireland, every window but one is of stained glass, representing Christ and his saints. Through the plain glass window may be seen a breathtaking view – a lake of the deepest view, studded with green islets and backed by range after range of purple hills. Under the window is the inscription:

“The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork.”

Robert Gibbings

RECIPE PAGE

Just in case you are suffering from a lack of chocolate at Easter, perhaps you would like to try this dessert recipe from the Friary Cookbook, which was published in 1980.

Chocolate Mousse Basque

Preparation time

5 minutes

Cooking time

5 minutes

Serves 6

You will need

- 1) 6 oz good block chocolate
- 2) 1 x small cup of black coffee
- 3) Tot of rum – vanilla or orange flavouring if preferred
- 4) ½ oz butter
- 5) 3 eggs

Method

- 1) Dissolve the chocolate into the coffee over a gentle heat.
- 2) Beat in butter.
- 3) Beat in egg yolks – one at a time.
- 4) Beat in rum or preferred flavouring.
- 5) Whisk egg whites stiffly.
- 6) Stir egg whites briskly into the chocolate mix.
- 7) Allow to cool.

We may live without poetry, music and art.

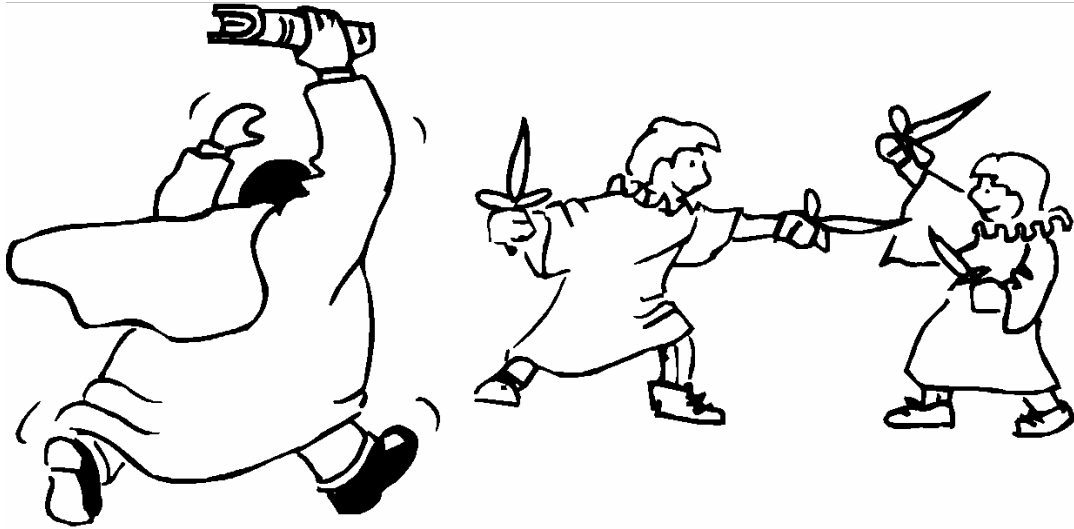
We may live without conscience and live without heart

We may live without friends,

We may live without books

But civilised cannot live without cooks.

CHUCKLE TIME



Father Flynn wouldn't tolerate sword play with the Palm crosses

“Can you tell me, Sam” the teacher asked, “who made you?”

“God made part of me,” came the reply.

“What do you mean?” the teacher queried.

“I mean he made me little, I grewed the rest myself!”

A Sunday school teacher was questioning her class after a series of lessons on God's omnipotence.

She asked the class: “Is there anything God cannot do?”

There was complete silence, until finally a boy raised his hand. With an air of resignation that the whole point of the classes had been missed, she asked:

“Well what do you think God cannot do?”

“He can't please everybody Miss,” the boy replied.