

Diary dates for March and April 2012

1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th March & 5th April:
10.30 Holy Communion; 11.00 Bible Study; 12.00 Bring & Share Lunch
31st March 10.30 Council Meeting
5th April 10.30 Maundy Thursday Holy Communion
6th April 11.00 Good Friday Service of Meditation
8th April 11.00 Easter Day
15th April 12.00 AGM



Prayer of the month

Lord of justice and kindness,
keep us strong through Lent.
Unite us to our neighbours in need,
and strengthen our desire to make this world a better place.
Amen.

Bishop David's blog



Prayer focus

Who am I ?
What am I ?
What am I about ?
What am I about to do ?
What ought I be about to do?

Who are you, Lord?
What do you want me to learn from you ?
What is the best way I can serve you today ?

St Bart's Monthly



March, 2012

Services

Sunday 11.00 Holy Communion (with hymns)

Thursday 10.00 Holy Communion (said)

A warm welcome to all who worship with us.
After the service coffee is served.

Priest-in-charge: The Revd Gareth Randall

For further information concerning baptisms,
marriages or funerals:

 **02 99 46 77 00**

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March, 2012

Dear Friends,

'Who's who ?'

What have Astaruth and Becher, Polymius and Astyages, in common? If you said they are all proper nouns, names of people, then you'd be dead right. And because we are a church dedicated to St Bartholomew, if you also said they were all connected to him, you'd be right too.

The story of Bartholomew's martyrdom is not certain but the one I take as normative is his flaying alive at Albanopolis in Armenia on the shore of the Caspian Sea. In Armenia, there was a temple to the god, Astaruth. From it, Bartholomew exorcised a demon, Becher, and as a result, came to the notice of King Polymius who asked the apostle to cure his daughter – which he did. The King's brother, Astyages, was less than pleased. A king in his own right, Astyages was an inveterate pagan, opposed to this new gospel of love that Bartholomew had brought to their land. On his orders, Bartholomew was seized and sentenced to death by being flayed alive.

Now clearly Astaruth, Becher, Polymius and Astyages are not familiar names but given we are part of the church of St Bartholomew's, it is good to know who they are and how they are connected with our patron saint. But more important, given that we have just moved into the season of Lent, is to know who we are. Given how busy we are most of the time, it is easy to lose ourselves in what we do rather than making an effort to step back and see who and what we are.

My challenge to you – and to me – this Lent is to make and to take the time to discover more about the person we are and the person we could truly be. We could all be surprised at what follows !

Father Gareth



➤ **Notices**

- **Lent Appeal 2012** As promised at Advent, the Banque Alimentaire is also the focus of our giving – please be generous
- **Church Spring Clean – 7th February** a big thank you on our behalf to all the folk who turned up at Corrie's invitation to give the church a good clean. St Bart's looks good and smells good.
- **Tournebride Monthly Lunch** 3rd March at the Relais de Tournebride - a good opportunity for British and French folk to meet. 15€ includes an aperitif, a four course meal, wine and coffee. Mike Baber 02 99 73 56 06/annebaber5050@aol.com
- **Easter Day – 13.00** after the service, lunch at the Café Anglais (19€). Menus and details from Val Carter (25th March).
- **Poppy Appeal 2011** A record 10,575€ was raised last November in Brittany for the annual British Legion Poppy Appeal.
- **Collection** 120€ was sent to ACAT from the collection at our service during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity held here on 19th January.
- **Retiring Collection** 201€ was donated for work among those suffering leprosy sponsored by the Order de Malte at our service on 29th January .
- **Deadline** for submission of material for the April edition of the St Bart's Monthly is *midday on Thursday 29th March*
- **Church Finances for January**
Income: €3,562 Expenditure: €8,925
The large deficit is due principally to the payment of our annual contribution to our Diocese and Archdeaconry.

Root Canal treatment

*I have an excellent French dentist, Dr Ardouin in St Servan,
who told me this joke in French, just before embarking
on some root canal work on an ageing tooth!*

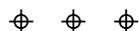
An ageing English couple from Yorkshire, who adored each other, France and the French language, had just returned home to their windy cottage on the North Yorkshire moors from a late autumn break in Dinard.

The man had just come in from the garden carrying a basket of logs for the fire from the woodshed, thinking how mild it had been in Brittany, when he was surprised to hear his wife say, “Je t’adore!”

He looked across the kitchen at her and was just thinking how lucky he was to have married so affectionate and so caring a woman when she repeats the phrase - this time with a note of slight irritation in her voice, “Je t’adore”.

Confused, he says, “Yes darling, and I love you too. “

“What are you going on about? All I want you to do is shut the door - it’s draughty in here!”



A question of whining?

This one was sent to me by Peter Campbell.

Sitting next to her husband on their patio one balmy summer’s evening, a lady of a certain age, sipping a glass of chilled Sancerre, is heard to murmur in a voice deep with appreciation: ‘I love you so much. I don’t know how I could ever live without you.’ With a skipping heart, he playfully enquires: ‘Is that really you talking, my dear, or is it the wine? Without pausing, she replies, ‘It’s me . . . talking to the wine!’

The story of the Hospice shop in Jugon-les-Lacs

When the young Anne Merriman was growing up in Liverpool during the 1940s, she was inspired by the stories told of life in Africa by returning missionaries to her class in school.

In Jersey in November 1999, I met the then Doctor Merriman, founder and medical director of Hospice Africa and she persuaded me to come to Uganda for three months as a volunteer in the finance department of the Hospice in Kampala.

In 2005, my wife Jane and I moved to live full time in Brittany. Jane joined a women’s coffee morning group in Jugon-les-Lacs which acted as a way for some of the British residents to get to know one another.

All these three elements came together towards the end of 2008 when Dr Anne asked us if we could set up a fund-raising group in France to raise funds to replicate in French-speaking Africa the work she had been doing in Anglophone countries.

Jane and I had returned to Uganda many times since 1999 and were able to tell an inspiring tale to the ladies of the coffee morning about the need for hospice care in Africa and the fantastic work Anne and her team were doing. We immediately had enough volunteers to run a shop and offers of goods to sell. We knew of an empty shop in the market square in Jugon-les-Lacs which was owned by the municipality. An English kitchen-maker had permission to use it as a show room for his furniture and he agreed we could share the rent and use his pieces to display our wares.

A quick visit to the mayor was enough to ensure this change of use and for the mayor to offer us a very affordable rent. BML insurance brokers of Dinan gave us free insurance cover (which they still do) and

the president of the Conseil Générale made sure that we got our tax free status. Our shop was opened by the mayor on 8th May 2009. Except for the fêtes de fin année and Armistice Day we have been open every day Tuesday to Saturday (and more in the summer) since then.

What does the money go to?

Hospice care is care to those in the terminal stages of a disease, usually cancer but also other diseases. Acknowledging that cure is not possible, it first concentrates on pain and symptom relief and then on spiritual and social care for the patient and the family so that the time left to them can be as positive as possible. ‘Adding life to days not days to life’ is a common slogan. The most common medicine for severe pain is morphine and Hospice Africa has pioneered the provision of liquid morphine made up in different strengths from powder. This is a very cheap and easily controlled form of the drug. Hospice Africa considers it more appropriate and cheaper to provide this care in the patient’s home or through local community leaders.

The World Health Organisation estimates that about 1 million people a year will die of cancer in Africa in 2020.

Only 16 of 48 African countries declare they have hospice care and only 12 have imported affordable morphine, often restricted to one or two services in the country. Dr Merriman founded Hospice Africa in 1993 to provide a model of palliative care that was appropriate for poorer countries and to militate for the same care to be available in all sub-Saharan Africa. The three centres in Uganda provide care to patients in their surrounding areas. However the education department (now with University status) has, since 1993, educated all new doctors and nurses in hospice care. This care is now available in Government hospitals and clinics in the majority of districts of Uganda. Since 2000,

Readings in church

March 4 2nd Sunday of Lent

Genesis 17 v1 – 7, 15, 16

Romans 4 v13 – end

Psalm 22 v23 - end

Matthew 8 v31 – end

March 11 3rd Sunday of Lent

Exodus 20 v1 – 17

1 Corinthians 1 v18 – 25

Psalm 19 v7 - end

John 2 v13 - 22

March 18 Mothering Sunday

Exodus 2 v1 – 10

Colossians 3 v12 - 17

Psalm 127 v1 - 4

John 19 v25b – 27

March 25 Passion Sunday

Jeremiah 31 v31 – 34

Hebrews 5 v5 – 10

Psalm 51 v1 - 13

John 12 v20 - 33



Old French jokes 1/4

*Our regular correspondent, Ron Frankel, sent me these and I laughed.
I don't normally understand French humour !*

Deux femmes d'un certain âge se présentent à la caisse du cinéma,
« Faites-vous quelque chose pour les personnes âgées ? »
« Oui, mesdames, nous les réveillons en fin de séance ! »



Quotation of the month

The following motto attributed to Queen Catherine Parr, sixth wife of Henry VIII may be found in chapter three of C J Sansom's novel, 'Heartstone'

To be useful in what I do



Sunday School humour - 3/7

With our Sunday School closed for the winter, the following quips sent by Peter Campbell may raise a smile

A Higher Power ?

'We have been learning how powerful kings and queens were in Bible times. But there is a Higher Power. Can anybody tell me what it is?'

Without hesitation Pierre replied, 'Aces!'



Confused ? 3

Everyone was pleased when Jesus healed the paralytic man, except Simon who had to pay to have the roof mended.

John Marshall



this educational effort has been spread to other English-speaking African countries and services based on that in Uganda have been started in 8 other countries.

The money from our shop has gone to training a Congolese nurse to be an advocate for Hospice in French-speaking Africa and forming links with hospice care specialists in France who can work with us to spread the Ugandan model. This model is being followed in the English-speaking region of Cameroon. We have now targeted the French-speaking region of that country to establish our model for francophone Africa. We have adequate funds to run a five week introductory course for delegates from throughout the region who want to set up services in their countries. This will take place in spring 2012. We are looking to raise a sum of ½ million€ to build a centre in Cameroon from which we can continue the advocacy and education in the whole region. We will need annual funding of another 150,000€ a year to actually do the work.

Although we will look to government and foundation for part of these funds, we also look to raising more from new shops such as ours in Jugon. Perhaps you could put together a group volunteers to open one in your town. We have found it to be a way for British expatriates to interrelate in a positive way with the locals. 20% of our shop volunteers are now French as are over 50% of our donors and customers. Volunteering is a good way to practise your French. It is a lot of work but we all enjoy it and regular visits from Dr Merriman and Sylvia, our Congolese nurse, have been excuses for social and morale boosting gatherings. We would be happy to support any new group with the experience we've acquired in Jugon.

With the developments in Cameroon this is a very exciting time to be involved with the project.

Jim Bennett

Common Senses
Five pieces on how it feels to live in France

1 Smells like home

What can you say ?

People are always asking *What's the big difference between living in France and living in Britain ?* And it's not easy to give a sensible answer - not for me, anyway.

“Well now, chitterling sausages are cheaper in France...” (*Except I wouldn't touch them – pas même avec une gaffe...*)

“You just can't find EMVA Cream over here...” (*Grâce à Dieu !*)

“In fact, everything's pretty much the same here as it was there, and yet... totalement différent.”

Which is what I said to my doctor when he asked the usual question, and that's why I'm currently on mental health watch.

But it was only last week that I sensed that there might be a better answer.

I was in the local *boulangerie*, enjoying the warm, sweet smell of baking. I was also there to buy a *baguette*, straight from the oven.

Outside the shop, I put the *baguette* to my nose. *Mmm... Abbb...*

Ab-tishoo !

- and I sneezed -

- Beat thoroughly to make a smooth light batter.
- Pour it round, not over the meatballs.
- Bake in a moderately hot oven (190c, 375f gas 5) for 55 to 60 minutes.
- When cooked, the batter should be risen and golden brown.
- Serve at once.



My onion gravy

- Fry a large onion (sliced into rings) in a little beef dripping, butter or oil until lightly browned. Do this slowly so that the onion does not burn.
- Stir in 3tbs plain flour then crumble in a beef stock cube and gradually pour in 350ml boiling water.
- Bring to the boil then simmer gently for about 20 minutes.
- Stir in a little gravy browning before serving.

Victor Pumfrett



Thought for the Day

It's hard to soar with eagles when you're working with chickens.

Bill Wignall



Recipe of the Month Meatballs-in-the-hole (serves 4)

*This is my variation on that old favourite, toad in the hole.
Serve with Onion Gravy and offer some simple vegetable cooked cabbage
creamed or baked potatoes or carrots.*

- ✓ 450gm/1lb minced beef
- ✓ 50gm/2oz fresh breadcrumbs
- ✓ Generous dash of Worcestershire sauce
- ✓ 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs
- ✓ 1 egg
- ✓ 2 tbsl chopped parsley

- ✓ salt and freshly ground black pepper

The Batter

- ✓ 100gm/4oz plain flour
- ✓ 2 eggs
- ✓ 300ml/½pint of milk.



- Put the mince in a bowl then add the breadcrumbs, Worcestershire sauce, herbs, egg and parsley and seasoning to taste.
- Mix thoroughly until all the ingredients are well combined then shape the mixture into eight meatballs.
- Place these in greased ovenproof dish.
- For the batter, sift the flour into a bowl, add a pinch of salt
- Make a well in the middle, break the eggs into the well.
- Gradually beat in the flour, at the same time pouring in the milk little by little.

Ab-tishoo !

- all the way home.

Ab-tishoo !

Crumbs up my nose.

Sensibly they do give you a little piece of tissue with every *baguette*. So they must know.

Which all put me in mind of running an errand for my mum many years ago. *A large Mother's Pride, please - white, sliced and wrapped.*

When I got it home I squeezed it slightly, closed my eyes and smelled it – something I'd seen Philip Harben do on television, with a barm cake.

Nothing.

"It doesn't smell of anything, this bread !"

"That's how you know something's fresh," my mum said, wisely.

Not that there weren't plenty of rich aromas in our house, some of them in the kitchen. *A smoking chip-pan... cabbage on the boil... opening a tin of baked beans... True British cuisine.*

Nowadays all I've got to savour is a bubbling *bouillabaise*... a slow-cooking *confit de canard*... a ripe *camembert*...

...Which reminds me once again of Salford days and our inside toilet – when we finally got one. It came – I think I've got this right – with an endless *Air-Wick* that instantly became the scent of the house.

Concentrated fresh air we called it. When the fragrances from the rubber works and the crisp factory met, mingled and wafted in through our back door, we retreated under the stairs, into the recess – into our new WC – and breathed in deeply. *Better than Blackpool!*

Whereas now, sixty-odd years later, I've just bought a new bathroom aerosol – *Natural Waterfalls* – from the local supermarket. Yesterday I pressed it and - a burst of concentrated citrus – juice, rind and zest!

Did it zap all pongs? Yes, it certainly did. But I just hadn't realized that the 6 million cubic feet of foam tumbling over Niagara every minute is actually lemonade...

Soap's the same. In days of yore it was simply carbolic for us, for everything. Then my mum got a job and we moved up to *Coal Tar*. Then I went through an up-market phase (paisley cravats and *Brylcreme*) and procured my own tablet of *Knights Castille*, in a matching bakelite tray. *You smell like Boots*, my dad said. *And look like Lord Muck*, my mum added.

Now I use lab-tested, skin-friendly soap in a squeeze-eezy plastic bottle: *mango, kiwi* or *passion-fruit*. Very economical - and like washing your hands in fruit salad.

I also have a *gel douche* which promises (in seductive French) to be *every bit as revitalising as a mentholated iceberg*. But far from leaping out of the shower feeling as if I've been rolling in the snow, I stagger out just the same, except smelling like an *After Eight*.

And then there's hair shampoo. In the good old days I suspect we used good old *Fairy Liquid*, and so my hair *and* the washing-up *and* the oilcloth – well, we all smelled like home from home. Now I have to choose – and choose from shelf upon shelf of exotically scented detergents...

Blessed are

Starting on All Saints' Day last year, I preached a four sermon series on the qualities or virtues evinced by the heroes of our faith, saints like our own St Bartholomew. As a guide, I took the Beatitudes found at the start of Mathew's summary of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. My sermons are accessible on the Website but to make the teaching more readily available, I am writing a series of articles to explore the nine Beatitudes of which this is the introduction.

Each starts with the phrase 'Blessed are . . .' and immediately we have a problem. What we are reading is not so much a translation of the original Greek but a rephrasing that works in English, a paraphrase. What we have which is translated as 'Blessed are', in the Greek literally means 'O the blessedness of . . .' As such we have something that is very exciting – not a pious hope of what might be but a joyful recognition of what in fact is. Of course, ultimately the virtue will be perfected in heaven but it is very much a present reality here and now.

This God-like joy is implied by μακάριος (makarios), the Greek word used at the start of each Beatitude. Μακάριος encapsulates a joy which is perfect in itself, an inner serenity that cannot be upset by the changes and chances of this life. Do you remember the name of the former leader of Cyprus was a certain Archbishop Makarios? Curiously, makarios was the adjective used in the classical world to describe the island because Cyprus was blessed with all that was needful for the happy life: good climate, food and drink!

So in the months to come as we explore the meaning of each beatitude, I trust you too will feel blessed.

Father Gareth



Film Review of the month
'The Artist', Michel Hazanavicius - 2011

David Norris strongly recommended the film so I went one Sunday night before Lent to a packed Dinard cinema and at the end, I was not surprised when the audience, including Sarah Hardenberg, clapped!

The film is set over a six year period in Hollywood from 1927 to 1933 and focuses on a silent movie star, George Valentin, (Jean Dujardin) and bridges the transition from silent movies to talkies and touches on the Wall Street Crash. It is a homage in Black and White to a past art-form and this French-Belgium production without dialogue apart from the captions is eloquent in gesture and underscored by an effective soundtrack. For once, I can confirm that watching a French film without subtitles was 95% comprehensible to me!

It was a true delight to watch – delightful in the original sense of the word. I loved the richness and subtlety, the gradation of tone of the black and white photography – who needs colour? – and the beautiful way the images were composed. I loved the expressive way gesture and look, body language and movement, combined to communicate a clear range of meaning – who needs words?

But I am English and though Jean Dujardin and Bérénice Bejo (Peppy Miller) look the part and are the central interest of an attractive love story, the star of the film for me was Uggy the dog! He reminded me of Nipper, the HMV dog, but this K9 was almost human: intelligent, perky, self-assured, the embodiment of unequivocal friendship.

'The Artist' is a must-see and will, I have no doubt, win several Oscars in a year when there are many films worthy of the award. Who knows, if you do go, at the end you may want to clap too!

Gareth Randall

...Soft & Sweet Grapefruit – distilled with neroli and ylang ylang and spiced with tuberose... Shampoo des Œufs – rich in the incense of the rarest eastern peppers... Green Tea – evocative of the golden sands of Egypt and tinged with essences of imidazolidiny urea ...

It sounds more like having breakfast with King Farouk (*sans* interpreter), than washing your hair. Let alone what it smells like...

Yet it's no use having a sentimental nose. The old familiar whiffs of my early mornings, say, of over half a century ago, are long gone. *The freshly-emptied dustbins... the double-decker revving up at the bus stop... our cat slinking in, wet through...*

Ah, goodbye nostalgia – it's been nice knowing you! But now haven't we work to do, to capitalize on everything we can... even on our senses? Innovation. Enterprise. Profit. Let's get Europe going again. Let's lead it by the nose.

So I'm bringing out my own perfume range. *French Wind*. Roughly translated – though I *may* have to get this checked when the products take off – it's *Flatulence Française*.

I have three typically Gallic fragrances in mind for the launch, each with their alluring promotional tags. *Gaulloise – addictive... Gare du Nord – transporting... Garlique – the true breath of France...*

David Norris



Through the Canal – January 2012

Hi All:

This will bring you up-to-date on the highlights of our travels so far. After crossing between Cuba and Haiti, we continued on to the two islands that are part of the Dutch presence in the Caribbean - Curacao and Aruba. Today they function as autonomous political entities but are Dutch protectorates from the standpoint of defence and foreign policy. This was our first visit to Curacao and the second to Aruba so we planned tours at each destination. Curacao was as colourful as advertised and the Dutch colonial architecture very apparent in the town centre. The hilly terrain provided some excellent views and the island is dotted with an array of homes ranging from the modest to the very exclusive - many more of the former than of the latter. We saw some resort hotels and many opportunities to enjoy the various activities on the water surrounding the island. The climate is moderate year around and it is out of the hurricane belt lying only some 30+ miles off the coast of Venezuela.

I remember Aruba as a name from my working days at Esso since it was the location of Largo Petroleum, a Standard Oil subsidiary and a major refinery processing crude from Venezuela into heavy fuel oil and lighter fractions which were shipped to the US for further processing. The refinery was shut down many years ago and still closed when we first visited the island in the late 1990's but the aroma as we entered the harbour this time announced that it was back in operation and we learned that Valero had bought the refinery and reopened it. The island of Aruba is considerably larger than Curacao and our tour covered most of the island. The island is relatively arid and the country side is covered with mostly scrub bushes and dotted with many pipe organ cacti. Even though the island is volcanic in origin, there appears to be little effort to cultivate the soil and most of the area is used for

Rules for Reverends 1/11 – Canon Jeremy Fletcher

The following were forwarded to me by my friend Father Peter Bevan

1. The house you are looking for in the dark will be the one without a number.
2. You will receive your first complaint about a service you thought was brilliant within ten minutes of arriving home.
3. No doorbell ever works.
4. The only people who ring before nine o'clock in the morning are undertakers or Bishops.
5. The one time you answer the phone in an amusing way will be the one time you wish you hadn't.
6. No dog which 'just wants to play' should be trusted.
7. You should always have a grace ready. Or 'a few words'. Or (in Africa) a sermon.
8. You think that wearing a dog collar will get you a better deal, or give weight when you complain. It won't.
9. In a PCC meeting even those you know well will say stuff that you wouldn't believe.
10. No, it's not a job. Yes, it is the best in the world.



99 Words

Helen Morgan is the first to rise to challenge of penning 99 words

Christ came to serve.

A humble heart honours others. Jesus was a carpenter. He washed the feet of his followers, was happy to be mistaken for a gardener. He serves us at His table each Sunday. He makes people his priority. Can we do the same for His Kingdom? There is so much work to do for Him: the poor, the hungry, the lonely and the sick need us. He lavishes us with strengths. Go out on a limb! Take a big risk. He will not let you fail. We were chosen to glorify Him. He chose the nails for us.

On 6th February 1952, while in Kenya, Princess Elizabeth received the news of her father King George VI's death and her own accession to the throne. Her Majesty has issued this message to her people today:

"Today, as I mark 60 years as your Queen, I am writing to thank you for the wonderful support and encouragement that you have given to me and Prince Philip over these years and to tell you how deeply moved we have been to receive so many kind messages about the Diamond Jubilee. In this special year, as I dedicate myself anew to your service, I hope we will all be reminded of the power of togetherness and the convening strength of family, friendship and good neighbourliness, examples of which I have been fortunate to see throughout my reign and which my family and I look forward to seeing in many forms as we travel throughout the United Kingdom and the wider Commonwealth. I hope also that this Jubilee year will be a time to give thanks for the great advances that have been made since 1952 and to look forward to the future with clear head and warm heart as we join together in our celebrations.

I send my sincere good wishes to you all.

ELIZABETH R'

Personal Column

Ida Beau
6th February, 2012
RIP

Congratulations to:

The Revd Hazel Door, formerly priest-in-charge of Christ Church, Brittany, who was installed as priest-in-charge of the Church of Christ the Good Shepherd, Poitou Charente, on 28th January;
Pam and Chris Rowlands who've sold their home in North Wales and will be moving back to Essex. 14

grazing or underdeveloped. There are some interesting rock formations and the western coast is very rugged with heavy surf and interesting formations including what was, at one time until it collapsed in 2005, a natural rock bridge spanning over 100 feet and quite different from others we have seen. The remains of the bridge show that it looked very much like a highway bridge being level and flat, about two lanes wide and standing only 15 to 20 feet over the water. At one time gold was mined on the island and the remains of a gold smelter are on this side of the island. Our tour saved the resort area for last and it is a sight to behold beginning with a Robert Trent Jones designed golf course and resort complex where about every leading resort hotel one has ever heard of was represented, each with its own casino. There are many large private homes and condominium complexes with prices ranging up into the \$3 million range - a stark contrast to most of the island where homes are modest and priced accordingly. This part of the island is blessed with literally miles of beautiful beaches and every kind of beach and water oriented activity.

We next called at Cartagena and made the mistake of taking a "Spanish Galleon" tour around the bay. The weather was hot, the shelter from the sun limited and the amplification system for the dancers, drummers and tour guide much too loud - you do live and learn, even at our age! We made no effort to go into the town centre both because we had been there and it was hot. Also the local taxi drivers made a road block cancelling out the shuttle bus.

The next morning we arrived at the entrance of the Panama Canal and started our transit at about 8am. The weather was excellent and, as always, the transit was most interesting. Terry Breen had given an excellent lecture on the canal and, in particular, the major project now in process to build new sets of locks at both the Caribbean and Pacific ends of the canal to permit the largest container ships to be able to get

through. The project is scheduled to be completed on the 100th anniversary of the opening of the canal in 1914 although we were told that this will probably be a ceremonial opening with operation of the new locks beginning in 2015.

Our weather turned cloudy and rainy as we headed south and our first port in Ecuador, Manta was very wet as we arrived. I was scheduled to go to Quito that morning and it looked very much like that excursion was to be cancelled since the airport was closed due to low visibility. Fortunately, it did clear and we got off about 2 hours late. Mary had decided not to go being concerned about the altitude (9,250 feet) and getting on a local airline. While we did make a safe trip up, the weather at Quito was very unsettled - sunny when we arrived, a light hail storm during our afternoon tour and lots of rain that night which, fortunately, came while we were dining at the refectory at the Convent of San Francisco and had stopped before we left. The convent and, particularly, its museum of religious paintings, carved figures and silver items was a nice setting for what was a pretty bad meal - but then we are spoiled by the dining on the ship! Overall I was disappointed by the "Old Town" of Quito both because the old architecture did not appear that interesting and because the weather made it very difficult to see it and most of our touring was, by necessity, in the bus. It does have a spectacular church that we visited, San Francisco, with tons of gold leaf decorations throughout. No pictures allowed in the church, however, so I will just have to remember it.

The large city of Quito, 2 million inhabitants, is set on a plateau surrounded by active volcanoes, two of which have erupted in recent years covering the city with ash which took several years to clear. The setting is quite spectacular and would have been more impressive had we been able to have seen more of it. The next day, however, turned out to be very good. We left Quito for the "Centre of the Earth" where the zero latitude line is located at the highest level in the world.

Here we saw the original monument erected on the location of the zero latitude line originally determined in the 1700's by an international team and a newer park located about a quarter mile away on the actual zero latitude line. The early scientists did pretty well with only a large compass to work with! The new park was well designed to demonstrate the interesting phenomena associated with the precise change from north to south including the fact that the direction of the spin of water going down a drain does change from clockwise to counter clockwise as you move from the Northern Hemisphere to the Southern and also that, at zero latitude, there is no spin - the water simply drains directly down! The park includes extensive recreations of houses and living conditions of the native population of Ecuador. The guide provided was very good, the weather cooperated very well all contributing to a good taste in our mouths as we headed back to the airport and our arrival at the ship at about 4:30pm where we were ceremoniously greeted by all of the officers and most of the crew.

Today we are sailing down the Pacific coast on our way to Salaverry, Peru and then to Callao and the end of the first segment of the cruise.

We are thoroughly enjoying being back on the *Mariner* and have been most pleased with all that is going on. We had known Ray Solaire from the maiden cruise on the *Silver Shadow* in 2000 but find that he has many dimensions that we had not known of before including an excellent voice. We also were much impressed by the lecture Terry Breen gave on the Canal. We look forward to the remaining two months and will try to keep you up to date.

Robert Pierpont - New Year's Day, 2012

Flowers in Church

Flowers in church in February were dedicated to Diana Wilson's mum, and to Henry Spenceley. If you'd like to fund flowers for a loved one then see Corrie Stein.