

Diary dates for September and October, 2013

5 th September	10.30 Council Meeting
7 th September	14.30 Memorial service for George Dobinson
12 th September	10.30 Holy Communion
	11.00 Bible Study - St Paul 1
	12.00 Bring and share lunch
29 th September	11.00 Harvest Festival

Prayer of the month

May your angels, holy Son,
guard our homes when day is done;
when at peace, our sleep is best,
bid them watch us while we rest.

Prince of everything that is,
High Priest of the mysteries,
let your angels, God supreme,
tell us truth dressed as a dream.

May no terror and no fright
spoil our slumber in the night;
free from care our eyelids close;
Spirit, give us prompt repose.

We have laboured through the day:
lift our burdens when we pray,
then our souls in safety keep,
that our sleep be soft and deep

*Attributed to St Patrick (c390 – 460)
Translated by Michael Counsell*

Prayer focus

Being under the protecting hand of our Lord, the Good Shepherd.

St Bart's Monthly



September, 2013

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

e-mail : gareth.randall@nordnet.fr

Website : www.stbarts-dinard.org.uk



September, 2013

Dear Friends,

On our own but not alone

Many of those who read our St Bart's Monthly will live alone. Some of us are widowed; some of us, like me, are single. Living alone can be a gift but it can present a problem if things go wrong.

It's June and the middle finger on my left hand is tender and swelling. For some days, I've been aware that things are not right with it and using the different types of ointment from the bathroom cabinet, I try to treat the problem, even resorting to soaking it in warm salt water. No good any of it. Eventually, first thing Saturday morning, I go to my doctor's surgery and get an appointment for 10.30 that same day. Dr Panzlatto quickly diagnoses the problem - un panaris, a nasty infection. He squeezes out the pus ('pus' in French is the same word - not Minou or Minet which means 'puss'!) A prescription for ten days of antibiotics, a solution to bathe the finger, an ointment - together costing over 40€ - is given to me once I've coughed up 23€ for seeing him. It was worth every penny and I was soon restored to rude health.

Being ill and in need of help is a reminder none of us can be totally self-sufficient however independently minded we are. The great thing being here in France is not only have we friends and family but we have the support of doctors, dentists and hospitals and even of a Maison de Retraite !

Neither as Christians are we ultimately alone since we believe in a God who is with us - Emmanuel. That was Jesus' promise at the end of Matthew's gospel and the Holy Spirit is one way in which God is with us here and now today. Dr Richard Dawkins dismisses God as our 'imaginary friend'. But for me, for you, for us, that friend can be real!

Father Gareth

Notices

- **Garden Party** A big thank you to all involved but especially to Diana for hosting the event. We raised 4,229€ for St Bart's – well done everyone !
- **Sunday School** will be closing on 2nd September and will reopen on Palm Sunday (13th April) 2014.
- **Banque Alimentaire** - Helen Morgan would like to thank you for all your gifts of support and the organizers are grateful for your kindness. Each month a delivery is made of 3-4 boxes of groceries continuing the work that was initially organised by Ida Beau.
- **Thanks** - Val Carter would like to thank Hilary Underwood for her generous support of the work of the Sunday School and I would also like to add my thanks to the many folk whose time, effort and money go towards making St Bart's the church it is today.
- **Deadline** for submission of material for the October edition of the St Bart's Monthly is ***midday on 26th September***
- **Church Finances for July**
Income: 3,101€ Expenditure 4,763€



Harvest Festival

Our Harvest Festival this year will be celebrated on Sunday 29th September. Donations of fruit and vegetables and other foods are requested to decorate the church. All fresh produce will be delivered to the Little Sisters of the Poor at Saint Servan while tinned food, cereals etc. will be used to help the Banque Alimentaire in Dinard. The church will be open on Friday morning from 10am to receive donations. These can also be brought to the service on Sunday.

Helen Morgan

Readings in church

Sept 1

Proverbs 25 v6 - 7

Hebrews 13 v1 – 8, 15 - 16

14th Sunday after Trinity

Psalm 112

Luke 12 v32 - 40

Sept 8

Isaiah 66 v10 - 11

Galatians 4 v4 - 7

Birth of the BVM

Psalm 45 v10 - end

Luke 1 v46 - 55

Sept 15

Exodus 32 v7 - 14

1 Timothy 1 v12 -17

16th Sunday after Trinity

Psalm 51 v1 - 11

Luke 15 v1 - 10

Sept 22

Amos 8 v4 - 7

1 Timothy 2 v1 -7

17th Sunday after Trinity

Psalm 113

Luke 16 v1 – 13

Sept 29

Deuteronomy 26 v1 - 11

Philippians 4 v4 - 9

Harvest Festival

Psalm 100

John 6 v25 - 35

Verse of the Month

I called to you, O God, out of my distress and you answered me;
out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice.

Jonah 2 v2

'Alice in Wongaland'

A contemporary tale of debt and redemption in the UK. Once started can you stop? Outrageously interesting!

Garden Party 2013

So many people put such a lot of effort into the Garden Party, it is impossible to name and thank them all, not least those who erected marquees and tents, set up and manned stalls, provided transport, erected signs, cleared the garden, washed tables and chairs, cut the grass, prepared food and drinks. The list could go on but one person who deserves a special thank you is Diana who by allowing the use of her house and garden, made it all possible.

The day of the event started well with a beautiful sunny morning. With all the pets fed and where necessary doctored, the car was loaded leaving enough space for Olive to squeeze in and Helen and we were ready to leave.

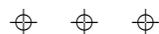
The stalls were similar to those at past garden parties with one addition by Mike and Rhona - a human version of a fruit machine. Rather than a few large floral displays, Victor produced more but smaller ones. Sue who took over the Plant stall, introduced more than just plants with several other things on sale. Christmas cards brought from Guernsey were another innovation on the card stall.

A heavy shower of rain in the middle of the afternoon sent lots of people rushing to the tea tent which had been quiet up to then. By this time it was becoming obvious that parking was rather inadequate for so many visitors. Fortunately the shower did not last and sunshine returned for the rest of the day. The catering in the tea tent proved to be up to the mark with ample food supplies although there was some shortage of cups and plates. Several cakes were sold later in the afternoon.

Financially the day was successful with €4,229 the most successful event held in Diana's Garden. Compared to last year the profit was about €850 lower with the smaller numbers of guests however many

stalls maintained or increased their income. Many commented on the friendly atmosphere and the lovely setting in Diana's garden. All together a very successful day but it is now Monday – time to clear up !

David Morgan



Odd Words Customers

It's Friday 26th April. I'm on the train. The underground from Cockfosters, the Piccadilly Line, has stopped at King's Cross. Over the tannoy, a public announcement warning us of something or other. But it's not what I'm being told but how I'm being addressed that has my attention.

'Customers' – how long has it been that passengers on trains have been referred to as customers ? Aren't we travellers any more, commuters, strap-hanging our way to and fro in the rush hour from home to work and back again ?

Granted the railway company do have my custom and a transaction has taken place re my paying the fare with my Oyster Card (not something that would be recognised in Cancale!)

Necessarily, language is dynamic, ever-changing, but somehow being called a customer when I'm travelling on a train feels wrong.

Am I being too conservative, labouring under the delusion language should always stay the same, illiberal and reactionary, sounding off about the new, linguistic, political correctness ? Over time, will I become accustomed to not being called a passenger ?

Gareth Randall

Quotations of the month

The brain of a pea hen

Academics at Duke University have discovered the evolutionary reason for the large size of a peacock's feathers: apparently the attention span of his intended mate is strictly limited !

*Today Programme
Radio 4 25th July*



Humour à l'école 10/11

*From a dear friend in Potters Bar, Lisa Klein,
a parent of pupils who are/were at Dame Alice Owen's School:*

Maîtresse: Arthur, ta rédaction « mon chien » est exactement la même que celle de ton frère. Tu as copié ?
Arthur : Non maitresse, le chien c'est le même.

(???????)



God's Post-It Notes 18/18

The following was sent to me by Ron Kirk:

You can tell how big a person is by what it takes to discourage him



Court reports 9/12

*The following are a series of what was actually said in American courts
and has been sent to me by Ron Frankel*

ATTORNEY: ALL your responses MUST be oral, OK?
What school did you go to?
WITNESS: Oral...



Church Notice boards 6/11

Nathan Barry Jordan's son sent me this:

How will you spend eternity –
Smoking or Non-smoking?



How Children perceive their Grand parents 3/9

*Another mini-series of humorously sharp observations
sent to me from my friend, Lisa Klein*

After putting her grandchildren to bed, a grandmother changed into old slacks and a droopy blouse and proceeded to wash her hair. As she heard the children getting more and more rambunctious, her patience grew thin. Finally, she threw a towel around her head and stormed into their room, putting them back to bed with a stern warning to behave. As she left the room, she heard the three-year-old say with a trembling voice, "Who was THAT?"

Help the Heroes – the Big Battlefield Bike Ride 2013

Tuesday 28th May – Paris to Compiegne

'Beam me up Scottie' – Captain Kirk, Star Trek

After an 8.30am start from the Paris Hotel, we cycled through the City rush hour in the drizzle, navigating our own way to the official starting point at L'Hotel National des Invalides. The French wished us 'bon courage' en route and somehow we all managed to arrive more or less together. Julian, however, was the first to have problems, splitting his tyre and having a puncture as a result. Wet roads are difficult for cycling at the best of times but if they are not swept clear of debris, including gravel, bits tend to stick to your tyres and start working in until the tyre casing is ruptured. Hard luck on Julian that it happened so soon.

Historical Note : Bearing in mind the purpose of the Ride, the choice of the starting point could not have been more appropriate. Les Invalides was the first, purpose-built, hospital and home for the wounded veterans created in Western Europe. It was the inspiration for our own Royal Hospital, Chelsea. We were guaranteed a 'Grand Depart' as it also the home of Napoleon's Mausoleum. Standing in the Courtyard, there was a statue of him looking down on us in his characteristic pose.

While we stood around waiting for the 11.30am start, we were entertained by a small military band and were able to meet the British Embassy Equerry and have our photograph taken with him. We did not realise that we were to be officially sent on our way by the Duchess of Cornwall, who arrived in an official cortège and came over to shake us by the hand and wish us well. I expected her to concentrate on our wounded participants and took the opportunity to take photographs. To my slight horror, she then decided to move amongst us and so I had to scramble to put the camera away and take off my by now wet cycling glove as she shook hands with us.

The Military Commander to Paris gave an official speech reminding us that Napoleon was looking down on us (met with some amusement). He recalled the tragic events of just a week ago and made it known we were all brothers in arms fighting against barbarity and evil in all its forms.

At last we were on our way and after riding four miles from the hotel, spent the next twenty miles or so winding through the suburbs of Northern Paris, seemingly stopping at every traffic light. It was great to get out onto the open road and at least start putting some miles behind us.

Continuing to rain, the wind made it very cold, despite our rain over-jackets. The first challenge of the day was navigational, as we had caught up with the first bunch off who had taken a wrong turn and we saw were doubling back. Clearly a red arrow sign had gone missing, but quickly we resumed our ride through a village and then down a long steep hill. The next minute the rider in front of me went down and I had to steer round him before breaking and going back to check him out. He had apparently tried to pull into a slip road and didn't see the small lip to the pull-in taking the front wheel from underneath him. We cleaned up the skin rash on his leg, applied some bandages, straightened up his bike and then resumed on our way. Kindly, a French pedestrian and lorry driver also helped out with first-aid.

There were lots of punctures en route, even at this stage, so I was making good progress by just keeping rolling. By lunch-time we were all wet and miserable. Whilst I was looking forward to some hot food and drink, I could only manage the drink and had difficulty taking in any carbohydrates without feeling nauseous. The venue was somewhat surreal, with two camels and a long-horned cow tethered in the ground by us, as the circus had come to the village. Within a few minutes of stopping, we were beginning to shake with the cold and were in danger

Well being ?

Do you feel good about yourself ? Are you in good health ? Are you in good spirits ?

If not and you're feeling down-in-dumps and you need an uplift, then why not come to Dinard, cross the road down from the church, walk along the aptly named Rue de la Paix which runs parallel with and in between Rue Levavasseur and Boulevard President Wilson ? There, at number 26, you'll find the **'Espace Permis de Mieux être'**.

Inside, you'll be welcomed by the friendly croak of a frog and the smiling, reassuring face of Catherine Soum. The range of what is on offer - massage, reflexology, stress management to name but three - is available for men and for women alike.

There is also the possibility for women to join an association - 'Coeur de femme France' – which, at a monthly informal meetings centred on building your self-confidence with mutual self-help, gives you an excellent opportunity to feel good about yourself in the company of others and to practise your French at the same time !

Leaflets outlining what is available, when and a price list of what's on offer can be picked up at the centre – **26 Rue de la Paix**. There's also an internet site at www.coeurdefemmefrance.com and a bi-monthly magazine with engaging articles, authentic personal testimony, humorous quips, cooking tips, and gardening hints.

So if you're interested, why not pop along/in some time Monday to Friday or telephone Catherine on 06 95 72 14 33 ?



Questions

A new occasional series in which a question is posed and you are invited to reflect on a possible answer and, if you want, to let me know what you think

Vain repetition

It's summer, mid July, ideal weather for a BBQ and I'm sitting on the terrace of Bill Hughes home in La Vicomté-sur-Rance. I'm sitting next to a lady who doesn't come to church but who knows I'm the priest at St Bart's.

The conversation turns to her early experience of religion and why, for her, religion fails to attract or excite. And I hear it's all down to the ritual, endlessly repeating the same prayers, week in, week out. I guess the Lord's Prayer would be a good example of the problem since it invariably pops up in every type of service.

So why are familiar polished phrases a turn-off for some but are safe and reassuring to others? What do you think?

Father Gareth



Puzzled 3/5

The following were sent to me by Peter Campbell

What do you think this means :

**cycle
cycle
cycle**

Answer -

of suffering hypothermia, so we cut short the lunch and resumed cycling to get warm again.

If we did not know already, this was going to be no stroll in the park. Our wounded comrades were an inspiration. No moaning, they just stuck to the task. We just had to keep going as we couldn't let them down now.

Nery

Later the weather abated and in time we arrived at Nery, not a particularly well known site but in the view of some historians, the pivotal point when the Germans were prevented from eventually taking Paris in the First World War.

Historical Note: Nery is an ancient village made up of large houses with thick walls which, over time, had formed natural fortresses. It sat on the edge of a deep ravine, on the other side of which was a large plateau. It was here, on this plateau where I now stood, on the morning of 1st September that German Cavalry suddenly appeared out of the morning mist. What happened next became known as 'The Affair at Nery' and led to the award of three VCs to members of 'L' Battery.

Up to this point the Germans were advancing quickly across France and had they been able to maintain their momentum, would have taken Paris. It was here that 'L' Battery, with its capability of firing 15 rounds a minute straight into the advancing charge, and in the face of a very bloody conflict, was able to repel the advancing German troops. This caused the German High Command to reconsider its tactics and in doing so, the French and British were able to reinforce their lines around Amiens and the River Marne.

Tricycle

7

A Captain Bradbury fought valiantly, despite having both his legs blown off when fetching ammunition, and whilst commanding the last three guns to oppose twelve on the other side. Two were quickly knocked out, leaving only one gun under the direction of Captain Bradbury. Private Nelson and Battery Sergeant-Major Dorell resisted the advance for two and half hours before reinforcements arrived. When the fighting subsided, Captain Bradbury had his injuries attended to and then they dragged him into the local cemetery to recover. Unfortunately he died of his wounds, and was buried there, but Sergeant-Major Dorell survived to a ripe old age.

Had it not been for their fierce resistance, the First World War may have taken a different turning. In the Imperial War Museum there is a British Cannon, taken at the time where a German shell had fired into precisely the hole in the barrel, splitting it apart. It is now displayed with a flower protruding where the shell had struck.

After this short breather it was time to continue.

Armistice Clearing

(The Triumph of Barbarity and Evil over Freedom and Liberty?)

From Nery the Ride heads north to a small clearing in the Forêt de Compiègne, not far from our next overnight stop.

Historical Note: In 1918 this clearing witnessed the capitulation of the German forces to the Allies and, in 1940, the equally deliberate humiliation of the French, the site of the capitulation of the French Leadership to Hitler. Whilst General Petain may not have much choice if he was to save the lives of literally millions of Frenchmen, he became detested because of his acceptance of the non-repatriation of French prisoners, and acceptance they were to be executed should they take up arms with the allies. This was regarded by many as unnecessary conditions.

law took centre stage. Another problem here indeed that punctuation in legal reports is not to be encouraged and judgement is spelt judgment and 'v' is not viewed as 'versus', it is read as 'and'.

In my earlier life, French did not assume centre spot but the Spanish language did and with some degree of success. Then my association with France began and so did my attempts (and badly at that) to learn its language. It has taken me some time to get the basics right and I continue to look at 501 French verbs on a daily basis. There have been ups and downs and I well remember Madeleine my neighbour in the Vendée screwing up her face at my debasement of her wonderful language. Still, I persevered believing that integration is a necessity and one's life is richer if you could at least achieve basic command of the language. Part of the on-going process was with M et Mme Le Calve at their bar in Le Minihic-sur-Rance and where I met a very dear friend, Marc Jan, and, with his support, I am informed that my French is now just about ok! Not sure if I can totally rely upon that view.

Indeed, I gave an interview to Rennes 35 TV and which was screened but this was based upon the annual Runner Bean contest at the Bar and which this year takes place on 8th September. The background to this event is and was my attempt at integration with my French friends and 'us' Brits in the village. Runner beans are still available from the Bar so why not join in the fun? At the last count, there were just six Anglo-Saxons in the village! Runner beans remain a very confusing concept for the locals in Minihic but at least many a rose wine has been downed in the process and more than enough 'pour la route' but for reassurance the journey home was always 'à pied.'

My language difficulties continue in Spain but you would be misguided if you were to assume that Spain and its language are to blame! Wish best wishes and more next time.

Ken and Linda Ivin Javea (Alicante)

Language difficulties

School is very much a distant memory although pockets of it still remain, particularly on the sporting front which, at the time, assumed a greater priority. Indeed, earlier in the piece, 'Kenneth could have done better' figured heavily in the annual report. This was viewed by my late Father and who left school at fourteen with displeasure. He, as part of his education, commenced reading and copiously so all the 'Dailies' at the Workingmen's Institute and these indeed were from the far right and the far left. This was his education and I marvelled at his command of the English language and his ability to compose letters to all and sundry. Indeed, he was the village scribe and when friends and also 'unknowns' had problems, they came to the house and out came the Basildon Bond with the backdrop of 'lines' and off he went. My job was then to affix the 2d brown stamps and off to the post box and then for us all to await results.

As part of my education, I became involved in the Workers' Education Association and went on week-end schools as well as one to Bad Homburg in Germany and where I became associated with Becks Beer! The ones at Porthcawl and where the Miners had their Eisteddfod were particularly noticeable for their introduction to Mateus Rose and Liebfraumilch. They have been superseded by wines of the Rhone! You simply cannot change me from my love of France.

So my socialist up-bringing continued and at pace and later my alternative views were always part of my on-going dialogue with my late Father. He was not for moving and I could understand but not totally accept his forthright views. But he was a true Socialist and a believer in fellow man and a committed Christian.

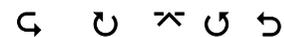
Where, you might ask, is all of this taking us and the answer is communication and that was and is now my chosen career and where

To me, I felt this was the most poignant historical site of all. It brought many factors together on to one physical location. I suppose it demonstrated the linkage between the First and Second World Wars, and the failure of politicians to construct a future policy to avoid potential conflicts.

Given that all the German High Command attended with Hitler the signing, I suppose it also represented a triumph of sorts of barbarity and evil over fellow mankind. The whole of mainland Europe was under the control of the Fascists. It is difficult for me to imagine how decent, free-loving, people must have felt at that precise moment when Europe appeared to be falling into the abyss of a new Dark Age. Nothing seemed to be able to prevent the perceived inevitable happening. The French, in particular, must have been devastated as they lost all they held dear, seemingly forever.

The rain was now incessant and I was glad to get moving, and get a hot shower at the hotel.

Ron Kirk



For Sale

English Mahogany Display Cabinet

- Suitable for glassware, silverware or books
- Good condition inside and out
- Bought from a Paris antique shop circa 1960
- Can be viewed at Avenue George V Dinard
- Price 350€
- Enquiries 06 64 92 02 48
- Buyer must collect

Film Review of the month
'Peter Pan' P J Hogan - 2002

Occasionally, I flick through the TV channels in the hope of finding something worth watching. One night, doing the ironing, I clicked on this version of J M Barrie's story of 'a boy eternal', the evergreen Peter Pan, the Lost Boys, Tinkerbell, a fairy, and his Darling, Wendy.

You probably know the story well so I won't rehearse the plot. Our hero, Peter Pan, is an all-American boy played with a winning smile by thirteen-year-old Jeremy Sumpter. The villain, Captain Hook, is very English, very public school, played by Jeremy Isaacs (you may have seen him as Draco Malfoy's father, Lucius, in the Harry Potter films) and he is delightfully evil and, following tradition, also plays Mr Darling, Wendy's father – what would Freud make of this I wonder ?

There are some delightful cameo parts: the late Richard Briers plays Smee and Lynn Redgrave plays Aunt Millicent, a role created especially for the film. At the end, there is a poignant moment when she adopts Theodore Chester who plays Slightly (short for what the boy believes is his real name, 'Slightly Soiled', taken from the label on his pinafore.

Peter Pan is a fairy story which means they all live happily ever after. But not before the villain, Hook, is defeated, falling into the jaws of the crocodile that has acquired a taste for his flesh, the harsh words of the Lost Boys 'old – alone' bringing him down and ringing in his ears.

David Norris lent me a copy of a book by Bruno Bettelheim, 'The Uses of Enchantment – The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales'. It has much to say which is illuminating about the genre – watch the film then read the book !

Gareth Randall

St Bartholomew's Church, Dinard
Saint Paul - Autumn 2013

Thursdays at 11.00 following Holy Communion at 10.30
and followed by a bring-and-share lunch at 12.00

Session 1 12th September, 2013

Paul on the Damascus Road

Text Acts 9 v 1 - 22

Session 2 3rd October, 2013

Paul, man with a mission

Text Acts 14 v1 – 7; 16 v6 – 10; 17 v22 – 23

Session 3 7th November, 2013

Paul, man of letters

Text Philemon

Session 4 5th December, 2013

Paul, prisoner for Christ

Text 2 Corinthians 11 v21 – 33; Acts 28 v 16 - 30

⊕ ⊕ ⊕

Father Gareth
April 2013

recite scripture, cited scripture they'd learnt by heart, whereas he was a teacher who taught from the heart, going to the heart of the matter. He knew what he was talking about and that was challenging to those who heard him teach. He could speak with authority because he was an authority on what he taught.

When Jesus taught, there was sense of real excitement - that we were listening to someone who was really in-the-know. He had the gift. Was he not Jesus, the Word of God, speaking the word of God to us?



Personal Column

Our congratulations to:

The Revd Simon Barnes on his appointment as CEO (Designate) of 'Send a Cow' – an international Christian relief agency based in Bath;

Olga Pilley whose great grandson, Harry George Pilley, was baptised at St James, South Aston in South Yorkshire on 11th August;

Oliver George Lloyd baptised here on 15th August;

Erwann and Emma-Louise Mauxion married here on 16th August;

Ricky and Natalie Hardy married at Le Grand Val on 24th August;

Paul and Jeanette Foster married at Le Grand Val on 28th August.

Our sympathy to:

The family of the Revd Mervyn Kingston who died on 2nd August;

The family of Olivier Guibert who died on 3rd August;

Mike and Rona Johnson on the death of Mike's father, Ernest, on 27th August.

The Bartholomew Gospel

4 Our teacher

'He went round the villages, teaching.' Mark 6 v6

Jesus at heart was a teacher, our teacher. Rabbi means teacher and well he deserved that title because he came to teach. And we were his pupils, his students, his disciples, literally sometimes we were the ones sat at his feet, ready to listen, eager to be taught. Later, we would be his apostles, the ones sent out to teach.

So what makes for a good teacher? Love of people. Love for the people being taught. If a pupil thinks the teacher knows who he is and likes him, then the teacher has caught the pupil, engaged his attention. Love is a better motivation than fear. I knew he loved me.

So what makes for a good teacher? A sense of audience. For us to know he is aware of us, of where we are at and how we are reacting to what he says, tailoring the message and the medium to us who are meant to hear it. I knew he knew me.

So what makes for a good teacher? Communication. Effective communication. For us to understand what is being said to us, it needs to be expressed in a way that we can grasp. He could do that.

So what makes for a good teacher? Inspiration. To feel that we are in the presence of someone with energy and understanding, a passion for what he shares, whose enthusiasm is genuine, palpable. He had that.



Good teaching is a matter of method, content and tone. Jesus, our Master, had mastered all three.

His method of teaching varied. Stories. Everyone loves and remembers stories and he used story to good effect, embodying eternal truths in daily realities: being mugged, then left on the side of the road; losing a sheep; a coin; or a son. He used parables, drawing parallels between what we knew about already with what he wanted us to understand: sowing seed; weeds; the size of a mustard seed; and yeast making bread rise.

If he used parables, then it was to engage our brains. We had to work at what was being said, to work out the meaning for ourselves, to find the truth that a story contains. There might be a treasure in the field but we had to dig it up for ourselves. There might be a pearl beyond price to acquire but first we had to be looking for it.

And he was patient with us when we just didn't get it. When he told the crowd about the parable of the sower, at the time we hadn't a clue; but when we were on our own, he gently explained the method - and then it clicked. We began to work things out for ourselves. Throw enough time and effort at something and you will end up mastering most things.

He used questions to make us think. When asked a question, he could question the questioner. Very Jewish - answer a question with a question. So when a Lawyer asks what he must do to inherit eternal life, Jesus asks him what the Law says. When asked whether we should pay tax to Rome, Jesus asks for coin and then asks whose head is on it? Jesus was not simply being clever or smart, though he was clearly both, but he wanted us to use our intelligence for ourselves. Why have a brain in the first place if we were not meant to think for ourselves?

His content was essentially the same: the love of God. The love of God for us. Our love for Him. Our love for our neighbour even as we love ourselves. For Jesus, to love was to fulfil the whole of the

Law; for him, to do the loving thing in every situation was what the Law required of us. In truth, the content of his teaching was not so much about the letter of the Law but the spirit underlying the Law – that spirit is love.

He could present us with a paradox – a seeming contradiction. He taught about the need to give away and to give up in order to store up treasure in heaven. He taught about the cost and the benefit of following the way, the truth and the life. He taught about living and dying, about death and new life, about the fate that ultimately awaited him in Jerusalem - necessary to fulfil God's plan.

He spoke of our right relationship with God. For a Jew, to be righteous, 'tsedeq' in Hebrew, was of prime importance. For a Jew, to be righteous, 'dikaios' in Greek, was the guarantee of being right in the sight of God. What Jesus taught was how to live the good life which would enable us to walk with God in a new and living relationship with Him. He taught that God was our Father, Abba, Daddy, who was sending his Son into the world so that through him we might be saved; through him by adoption be brothers of Jesus, and hence be sons of God. He taught us about the Holy Spirit who would come and be with us, who would inspire, inform and encourage us. He taught us about his death and about his rising from the dead on the third day.

On reflection, much of what he said did not always make sense to me at the time. On reflection, it has come to be clearer in the light of my experience.

And lastly, tone.

What surprised folk who heard Jesus teach was his tone – he taught with authority. And that did not necessarily please everyone – especially those in authority who thought they knew best. They could