

## Diary dates for January and February, 2014

20 <sup>th</sup> January	20.30 Service at St Bartholomew's during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
23 <sup>rd</sup> January	10.30 Council Meeting 20.30 Service at St Jean L'Evangeliste, St Malo during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



### Prayer of the month

Almighty God,  
who wonderfully created us in your own image  
and yet more wonderfully restored us  
through your Son Jesus Christ:  
grant that, as he came to share in our humanity  
so we may share the life of his divinity;  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.  
*Common Worship Collect for the First Sunday of Christmas*



### Prayer focus

To reflect on how to be new, renewed, this New Year, to be the new  
person that God knows we are meant to be and can truly be.



### Verse of the Month

Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice  
*Philippians 4 v4*

## St Bart's Monthly



January, 2014

### 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](mailto:gareth.randall@nordnet.fr)

Website : [www.stbarts-dinard.org.uk](http://www.stbarts-dinard.org.uk)



January, 2014

Dear Friends,

### *Our God – He; She; It ?*

A New Year and possibly a new idea ? Is the God we worship masculine, feminine or of no gender at all ?

Unarguably, Jesus was masculine. He was born a boy and died a man. In the second chapter of the gospel according to St Luke, we can read that, like all Jewish boys, Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day and then, just 40 days after his birth, he was presented to God in the Temple as Mary and Joseph's first-born son.

But is it possible to think of God our Father as God our Mother in heaven ? Can we happily use She when referring to the Holy Spirit ? He, she and it are all pronouns standing in for the noun – in this case God. In French, there are only masculine and feminine forms, il et elle but English being a Teutonic language has a third pronoun without gender.

History and tradition have usually referred to God by using the third person singular masculine form of the pronoun and use masculine terms to denominate Him like 'Adonai' or Lord. But theology and philosophy understand God as wholly different from His Creation – being genderless. He is a being without sex although interestingly enough, He created us men and women, boys and girls in His image. Not so much a question of accident or appearance but of essence, our moral and spiritual rather than our physical characteristics reflecting what is for God to be God.

So you can, if you want, use She or even It to refer to God if you so choose. But the problem for me at 64 is that it is the masculine not the feminine form of the pronoun that has content, resonance and weight.

*Father Gareth*

### Notices

- **Christmas Decorations** – our thanks to all who helped make St Bart's look so beautiful for Christmas especially to Victor and his team - Corrie, Dee, Diana and Sheila - and to Eric and David who 'helped with the setting up'.
- **Banque Alimentaire** – heartfelt thanks for all who contribute: 14<sup>th</sup> Nov - 8 boxes; 2<sup>nd</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Dec - 7 boxes and 16 bottles of UHT Milk were given to them from us.
- **Deadline** for submission of material for the February edition of the St Bart's Monthly is *midday on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> January*
- **Church Finances for November**  
Income: 2,751€ Expenditure: 4,476€



### Readings in church

#### *January 5<sup>th</sup>*

Isaiah 60 v1 - 6  
Ephesians 3 v1 - 12

#### *Epiphany*

Psalm 72 v10 - 15  
Matthew 2 v1 - 12

#### *January 12<sup>th</sup>,*

Isaiah 42 v1 - 9  
Acts 10 v34 – 43

#### *Baptism of Christ*

Psalm 29  
Matthew 3 v13 - end

#### *January 19<sup>th</sup>*

Isaiah 49 v1 - 7  
1 Corinthians 1 v1 - 9

#### *2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Epiphany*

Psalm 40 v1 - 12  
John 1 v29 - 42

#### *January 26<sup>th</sup>*

Isaiah 9 v1 - 4  
1 Corinthians 1 v10 - 18

#### *3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Epiphany*

Psalm 27 v4 - 12  
Matthew 4 v12 – 23

### Diary dates for 2014

20 <sup>th</sup> January	20.30 Service at St Bartholomew's during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
23 <sup>rd</sup> January	10.30 Council Meeting 20.30 Service at St Jean L'Evangeliste, St Malo during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
5 <sup>th</sup> March	10.00 Ash Wednesday
20 <sup>th</sup> March	11.00 Start of Lent Bible Study
29 <sup>th</sup> March	10.30 Council Meeting
13 <sup>th</sup> April	12.00 Church AGM
17 <sup>th</sup> April	10.30 Maundy Thursday
18 <sup>th</sup> April	11.00 Good Friday
20 <sup>th</sup> April	11.00 Easter Day
24 <sup>th</sup> April	10.30 Council Meeting
30 <sup>th</sup> April -	Archdeaconry Synod
3 <sup>rd</sup> May	St Jacut de la Mer
29 <sup>th</sup> May	10.00 Ascension Day
8 <sup>th</sup> June	11.00 Pentecost
10 <sup>th</sup> July	10.30 Council Meeting
13 <sup>th</sup> July	12.00 Friends AGM
2 <sup>nd</sup> August	14.00 Garden Party
24 <sup>th</sup> August	11.00 Patronal Festival
5 <sup>th</sup> September	10.30 Council Meeting
28 <sup>th</sup> September	11.00 Harvest Festival
6 <sup>th</sup> November	10.00 All Souls Service of Remembrance
9 <sup>th</sup> November	11.00 Remembrance Sunday
27 <sup>th</sup> November	10.30 Council Meeting
20 <sup>th</sup> December	17.00 Carol Service
24 <sup>th</sup> December	17.00 Crib Service
25 <sup>th</sup> December	11.00 Christmas Day

### Personal Column

Congratulations to Ann and Pierre Payan on the occasion of their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary last November.

### 2013 Christmas Message

*And the Word was made flesh and lived among us John 1 v14*

These awesome words will soon echo around the world as the Christmas Gospel is proclaimed in churches everywhere. They announce that the ancient promise to God's people is fulfilled in a surprising way, when the Eternal Word of God enters into time and becomes Emmanuel, God with us. The infinite, invisible, mysterious God becomes known and accessible to us in the life of a human being, Jesus Christ.

The original Greek of this text is more nuanced than our translations reveal. "Lived among us" is actually more like "pitched his tent with us". We are drawn back to the Exodus story of the tent or tabernacle in the desert, where God dwelt during the wanderings of God's people following their flight from Egypt. God comes to us and dwells with us in a way that is humble and earthy – close to the soil, like in a tent.

From the doctrine of the Incarnation we know that the mission of the Church is not about bringing God's presence to the world, for the Incarnate One has already done this by "pitching his tent" with us. The mission of the Church and the task of her members is to find out where God's presence, God's Spirit, is active in the world and *pitch our tents* alongside and work alongside that active presence. Thus throughout the Advent Season, the Church prays each morning: "*As we look for your coming among us this day, open our eyes to behold your presence and our hands to do your work.*" (*Morning Prayer in Advent, Common Worship*)

It is a task of discernment to open our eyes to see where God's presence is at work. The Gospel teaches us that the very sign of the Incarnation was so humble that very few, except for the poor shepherds, even took notice of it. A little baby, wrapped in swathing bands and laid in a manger is a sign that is so easily overlooked. It is a

sign that is far from triumphant; it is not magnificent in splendour, but lowly, gentle and even fragile and vulnerable. At Christmas we celebrate what no other religion teaches, that God, the Creator of heaven and earth, pitched his tent with us, and lived among us. His manner of coming was as a vulnerable child, born among animals in a stable, to a humble family. This is the nature of God's saving presence with us.

We are in an episcopal interregnum. Those who will make a decision about the next Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe are reflecting on our profile as a diocese. Many of us in the diocese are sojourners, outside our homeland, for a variety of reasons. Many of our congregations have no home of their own. We have no historic endowment or inherited wealth, and we do not have the privileges that come with being an established Church in the countries where we serve. We are accustomed to pitching our tent in borrowed or rented buildings. Whatever else might be discerned about us in this process to appoint the next diocesan bishop, let it also reveal that we are Christians who, remembering the manner of Jesus' birth, seek God's light and love around us, revealed in simple and humble ways. May our communities be a place of welcome for sojourners, even strangers. May we be known as a people, fed by God who comes to us in Word and Sacrament, who then seek God's presence in the world, especially among those, like the shepherds, who do not count for much and survive on the margins. We remember that Jesus teaches us that it is the poor in spirit, those who are peacemakers, who have mercy, who hunger and thirst for righteousness and justice, who will be able to see God.

This Christmas may you rediscover the Incarnate One, the Christ Child, who comes to us in humble form, and be blessed, with your family, your friends and your community, with deep peace and joy, as you serve Him.

*Bishop David*

## Quotations of the month

'Freedom is the right to tell people what they do not want to hear'

*George Orwell*

Chinese unmanned lunar probe – What on earth do they hope to find ?

*BBC Radio 4*



## Definition ?

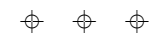
Is someone who leaves their Christmas cards, tree and decorations up beyond Twelfth Night indecorous ?



*The following poem for Epiphany was sent to us by John Marshall*

## *Three Wise Ones*

The three wise men  
Travelled for days before reaching Bethlehem  
And arrived after the birth  
They stood and viewed the scene in awe  
And knelt reverently in the lords presence  
Then gave their gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh  
The three wise women  
Would have stopped to ask directions  
And arrived before the birth  
They would have delivered the baby  
Then they would have cleaned the stable and cooked a meal  
Before giving the baby really useful gifts.



### **Excellence**

*Olive Browne sent in the following piece of wisdom  
that was pinned to her office wall as a nurse*

**Excellence can be attained if you :**

#### **Care**

more than you think wise

#### **Risk**

more than others think safe

#### **Dream**

more than others think practical

#### **Expect**

more than others think possible



### **How Children perceive their Grand parents 7/9**

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

I didn't know if my granddaughter had learned her colours yet, so I decided to test her. I pointed to something then asked what colour it was. She then told me and invariably was right. Then she said to me, "Grandma, I think you should try to work out some of these colours for yourself!"

### **Pauline Eyre**

Shortly before Christmas, I was talking to Pauline on the telephone and she sends all at St Bart's her very best wishes for 2014 and told me this joke, told to her by a lady of 102. *Why have milking stools just three legs ? Because the cow has the UDDER one.* Humour, I guess, is ageless !!!

### **Meeting your Guardian Angel**

Guardian Angels are not the normal topic of conversation, certainly not in my social and work environment. It was, however, during a sermon given by Gareth that I was prompted to think again on the subject of 'Guardian Angels'.

It is not very often they are talked about even in polite conversation or indeed at school or in a Church. We all I suppose refer to our Guardian Angel but normally not without any real thought, almost in a casual flippant reference. Until some years ago I was no different to most people. When on the rare occasions you have experienced a very serious situation I too have casually said 'my Guardian Angel must have been looking after me that day'. My attitude was fundamentally changed, however, when I believe I came face to face with my Guardian Angel but never in a way could I have imagined.

Living through six decades of life, I suppose we all at some stages encounter life threatening situations. In my case not only were they becoming too frequent but many were almost bizarre. Some you could perhaps say were fairly predictable: falling of a slide at the age of 5 and cracking my skull (my wife Sue happened to do the same thing at the same age); sliding into a river as the bank gave way when fishing as an 11-year-old; car accidents (both drivers drove into me, one while texting!), waking up after just going to sleep realising you are seriously ill and need to get medical help quickly.

Then there were also the bizarre when I either had to find an escape route or had changed my plans at the last minute. These included twice avoiding being blown up by the IRA (one colleague was caught in the blast of one but was fortunately OK); nearly drowning in quicksand; escaping the underground fire at Kings Cross Station (my colleague was in the last five out); physically threatened by two foreign

armies, a drug taking gang or an individual on a bus. Be it predictable or bizarre each could have gone horribly wrong but my 'Guardian Angel must have been looking after me that day'.

Sometimes I either had avoided the potential danger by changing my route or timing at the last minute or in many cases when a clear exit route suddenly would appear out of nowhere. It began to dawn on me that my deliverance can't be just coincidence I really must have a 'Guardian Angel'.

Twenty years ago I became convinced that I came to face-to-face with mine but oddly when I was not under any threat or danger. In early 1994, my life was going through a bit of a turmoil having sold two of my businesses and then my mother died unexpectedly in March 1994. I was exhausted and devastated. My mind was in a bad place. Suffering from grief and trying to put my life back onto a normal track again, Sue suggested I did what I always wanted to do and go to one of the Motorcycle Grand Prix's on my BMW motorbike. The next one was in early May in Jerez right at the very tip of Southern Spain some 1500 miles away by road. The race was to be on the Saturday and I left on the Monday before with just a passport and wallet with no hotel reservations or a clue exactly where the race track was.

Having travelled about 1350 miles with just 150 miles to go I had an 'experience' I will never forget. Riding along at around 50-60 mph suddenly I was overcome with deep black thoughts. I hadn't realised how fragile I had become both mentally and physically over the last few months. Dark questions entered my head 'Had I bitten off more than I can chew, it maybe only another 150 miles but I have still got to go 300 miles to get back to where I was then'. The road was deserted just rocks, sand, a few cork trees, a very dry and arid landscape. 'If I breakdown here, or worse still fall off the bike, it is going to take hours before anyone can help me. You don't even know if you can find a

**Film Review of the month**  
***Jimmy P' - the Psychotherapy of a Plain's Indian***  
***Arnaud Desplechin 2013***

It's the end of September. Dinard is enjoying a late burst of summer with bright blue sky and soaring temperatures. In the cool of a balmy evening, I go to see 'Jimmy P', a Franco-American joint production with the dialogue in English and subtitles in French.

What was it about 2013 that brought psychotherapy sharply to my attention? Krishna had lent me a book, 'What is madness?'; David Norris another, a psychotherapist's analysis of fairy tales; I'd bought a third entitled 'The Examined Life'. And then there was this film.

I loved it. It was fascinating. Honest and frank, set in 1948, it explores a true story of a native American GI discharged after WW2 suffering from blinding, crippling headaches.

It traces the growing relationship between Jimmy Picard (Benico Del Toro), a Blackfoot, and Georges Devereux, (Mathieu Amalric) a Jewish doctor out of France. The relationship between the two men is the bridge that allows Jimmy to find himself, understand himself, accept himself, and then move on. It is a celebration of what two people of good will can achieve given the necessary time and effort and structure.

You would be hard of heart not to sympathise with these two men but 'Jimmy P' challenges us to reflect on mental unease, in Jimmy's case what might be termed a 'psychotic trauma' or if you prefer a 'wounding of his soul', and how he comes to be at ease with and in himself.

*Gareth Randall*



**Odd Words**  
**Duty =**  
**a four letter word**

If I say duty to you, what do you think? Is duty something you have to do? Is duty something that is right for you to do? Duty? Is duty a nice word for you, a good word to you or is it a word that is loaded with unfortunate associations?

In the old service of Holy Communion, the words of the prayer leading up the actual act of consecration, begin with the sentence, 'It is not only meet and right but it is our bounden duty that we should at all times and in all places give thanks . . .'. The modern rewording is, 'It is indeed right, it is our duty and our joy, at all times and in all places to give you thanks and praise . . .'. 'Bounden duty' sounds really heavy, arduous, a real burden whereas 'our duty and our joy' suggests that doing what is right is good in all senses of the word good – good for me and good for others for whom I work.

So when on Radio 4 (8 8 13) it is suggested that in 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the word duty is a four letter word (obviously someone can count!) then it speaks volumes about changing social attitudes. Apparently, we may no longer want to be compelled to do what is right for others; rather, we may prefer to do what we want that is good for us. Perhaps our attitude to the word duty tells you that times are changing and not necessarily for the better.

But if you buy into the idea that if we have rights then we have consequential responsibilities, then duty may be the price we pay for belonging to a something that's more than ourselves: our family, our land, our faith in God.

*Gareth Randall*

hotel for the nights you need. Why are you putting yourself through this, give yourself a break, shouldn't you just have gone on a plane to some foreign beach'. As these negative thoughts were swirling around my mind I slowed down to about 25 - 30mph wondering what to do next. Just as I did this and with no other, so I thought, living soul or animal around me there appeared a massive bird resembling a stork majestically flying about 10 feet off the ground and about the same distance away tracking my same route down the road. As I looked across I saw it was looking straight back at me. At first I was trying to make sense of it and occasionally looking back at the bird as I, and it, continued along the road. The bird was giving me a fixed stare, and apart from the rhythmic beat of my bike, in the silence between us it appeared it was trying to communicate with me. 'Don't worry, it's going to be ok, you are fine, just keep going a little longer and you will see all will turn out for the best'.

If this had been momentarily situation I may have dismissed it, but this bird seemed to stick with me for the next several minutes and miles. There was just me and this bird. Gradually my whole mind set changed during this crazy and ludicrous happening. My anxieties that were in danger of overwhelming me began to subside and then disappeared. A total feeling of calm and serenity seemed to pass right through me. I also felt a very powerful emotion which is difficult to describe. The closest I can describe it as is the feeling holding your first grandchild in the first few days of life. What was happening to me, was it my fragile state of mind, fatigue or was I just hallucinating? Just at the point I decided I must carry on, the bird immediately swooped away into the distance. I did stop at the next village for a cup of coffee and noticed I couldn't stop my hand shaking.

Well I did arrive at the hotel in Punta Santa Maria and to my dismay it was fully booked with lots of bikers booking in at reception including the racing teams who had decided to stay there. As I looked on, a

leader of a Portuguese Group came over to speak to me and asked if I had booked in, to which I responded I hadn't even booked a reservation. He informed me that I would be lucky to get somewhere within 30 miles as there would be nearly 200,000 Latin bikers descending on Jerez for the weekend. He then said "leave it to me".

Taking advantage of the renowned Spanish inefficiency, he made out that I was part of his group and he had weeks ago telexed ahead for them to add me to their list. Scrambling around in all their paperwork and with a long queue forming they gave up trying to resolve the paperwork and managed to find me an attic bedroom. The leader gave me the keys to my room and asked what I intended to do next. I said I was absolutely shattered from the ride and was just going to get a quick snack and then off to bed. "Oh no", he said "you can't do that, freshen up, change into your casual gear and just walk half a mile to the centre of town because it is all happening there and you mustn't miss it".

How right he was all the town was closed off to motor cars except motorbikes and all the Spanish people from babies to grandparents from all around the region had come into town to welcome the bikers. The streets were floodlight; music was playing, there were food stalls and copious drinks of gin and tonic seemingly coming out of every ground floor window for you to sample. Although I was on my own I was greeted like a long lost son by the town's people and bikers alike. I eventually went to bed at 2.00am. The racing happened to be magnificent and the 500cc class was won by an Australian Mike Doohan with an Italian second. There was a veteran Spanish rider, who should have come in at 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup>, but realising the King of Spain was watching managed a podium finish in third. On presenting the trophies and his congratulations to the riders the King shook the hands of the first two but when he came to the third he picked him up in his arms, swung him around to the delight of 200,00 ecstatic spectators. Now I was OK again and ready to carry on.

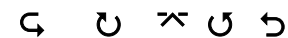
After the formal ceremonies, we heard the sound of a Merlin engine and then appearing over the cliff was a Spitfire swooping over our heads and conducting a victory roll. He made several passes, to our excited delight, before it was back on the bikes again for our destination to Chatham.

Fortunately, the last few miles into Chatham are downhill as one passes over the escarpment and descends down to river level. The only problem is knowing it's necessary to go back up it again the next day.

### **Dinner at Gillingham Football Club**

That evening we had a great dinner in the function room of Gillingham Football Club. The food was excellent, the band and singer terrific and the company wonderful. Everybody at this stage was letting their hair down dancing around the tables to the music. We even had the band play 'Take me Home Country Road to West Virginia' just the US State Julian had travelled from.

*Ron Kirk*



### **Methodist humour**

*The following was sent to me by David and Helen*

When the Revd Charles Wesley died, the Bursar of the Wesleyan College posted this message on their notice board:  
"The Revd Charles Wesley departed for Heaven at 9:15 this morning".  
By evening someone had posted underneath:  
"Wesley not arrived yet. Beginning to worry. Peter"





**Help the Heroes – the Big Battlefield Bike Ride 2013  
Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> June - Calais/Dover) to Chatham  
(Coming Home)**

Leaving the hotel, we had a few miles to the ferry and then, thankfully, within a short while we were off, with all our bikes stacked at one end of the ship. Clearly, everyone was getting excited that we were getting nearer to finishing, and as we came within sight of the White Cliffs of Dover, there was an impromptu sing-along on the aft deck with a number of photographs taken. As we left the ferry, the Customs and Police formed a Guard of Honour and applauded us off the boat, giving many of us a 'high five' to send us on our way.

I thought this would be the toughest part of the Ride. I anticipated we would be very fatigued by now and I already knew there was a long hill to take us out of Dover towards Folkestone. As it turned out it didn't feel too bad. I don't know whether it was having a breakfast at last, or the growing elation that the finishing line was approaching.

**Battle of Britain Capel le Ferne**

The first stop was literally at the top of the hill where we commemorated those Battle of Britain pilots, many of whom would be limping home on literally a wing and a prayer to land safely if they could on land. At the centre of the site there is a statue of a pilot wearing his flying jacket, sitting on his haunches looking skywards as though searching for his fellow pilots to return. Again, I remembered Paul and the times we used to fly over the English Channel, calculating that if we had engine trouble we had sufficient height to glide into land. Paul would often say, despite the checks, including if we had to ditch, to make sure it was near a ferry making the crossing, remembering that the engine didn't know we were flying across water !

Now whenever I can, I thank my Guardian Angel for taking good care of me and protecting those around me for all these years.

*R.L J Kirk  
Saint Malo  
October 2013*



**Social Club ?**

I think Paddy's article on church being a social club is excellently written, but I do also think that a lot of people go to church just to 'belong' to a clan of like-minded souls, to be with others who understand them (the level of French speaking amongst the majority of Brits I've met here, is appalling) and from that, an incredible fan of friendship has evolved, with social activities galore, and that's fine, what the wider meaning of 'church' is all about, fellowship, and through it I'm sure many find an inner peace and lots of comfort they'd otherwise not have. He works in 'mysterious ways' !

*Lynette Jarvis*



**Church Notice boards 10/11**

*Nathan, Barry Jordan's son, sent me this:*

Free to ticket to Heaven - details inside.



## Empathy is the answer

Maurice Maeterlinck, who received the literature Nobel Prize in 1911, is particularly well known for his amazing description of the nuptial flight of bees during which the drone, at the climax of his pursuit of the queen bee, literally explodes and dies in the air while performing the act of insemination.

Besides the thrill of this whole operation and the link between life, love and death that our Creator has exemplified in his design, Maeterlinck has also studied in great detail the life of ants and of termites. The key to the social order of the termite society - which is brilliant in spite of the numerous physical handicaps with which termites are born (they are blind, yet they have to travel a long way to get their food, and they are not being able to digest it without the mushrooms that they have to intelligently cultivate) - is their natural generosity towards each other and their consciousness of the superior interest of the group versus that of their own individual benefit.

While our own life is certainly more fun and more interesting as we independently behave as individuals, another author, Jeremy Rifkin has extensively written about the need in our society to control “entropy” and to base our future on “empathy”. In his review of the history and of the fundamentals of our society, Rifkin shows us how, time after time, we have based our development on a systematic use of our resources – both physical and social - and as those are to a very large extent scarce and not renewable, the world is bound to implode unless we become aware of the need to empathize and to preserve not only the Earth’s natural resources but also our neighbours’ own assets, whether physical, mental or emotional.

This approach, which proceeds from both love and respect, is not only logical but also the Christian response to the world’s problems.

*(Anonymous)*

to the original policy intention, the Government intends to bring in an eligibility criterion, effective from winter 2015/16, based on country of residence with Winter Fuel Payments going only to eligible people living in EEA countries with colder climates.” This e-petition remains open to signatures and will be considered for debate by the Backbench Business Committee should it pass the 100 000 signature threshold.

If this was true they would continue to make residents of France eligible! If you receive a response after signing the petition you can tell the government this.

*David Morgan*



## Capital pun

An item on South Korea, the pressure on children to excel as students and the consequential high suicide rate, has led to a degree of ‘soul searching’.

*BBC1 News at 18.00 on 2nd December*



## Double entendre 1/8

*The following was sent to me by Ron Kirk*

A mate of mine recently admitted to being addicted to brake fluid. When I quizzed him on it he reckoned he could stop any time....



## Petition to retain winter fuel payments

You may know that the British Government has proposed to remove from British pensioners in certain European countries the right to Winter Fuel Payments on the grounds that the country in which they live is "warmer" than SW Britain in winter months. The Department of Work and Pensions commissioned a study which it has now admitted calculated average winter temperatures for France and Spain which included in their calculations **overseas tropical and semi tropical departments "as they were in the same administrative areas"**.

If you are an expat or you know expats who may be affected you may support the petition which can be accessed by the link below!

<http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/52121>

So far over 13,000 signatures have been obtained – 10,000 require the government take notice while 100,000 requires a vote in the House of Commons. They will accept 2 signatures from the same computer and e-mail address despite what the rules say allowing a couple to use the same address.

The petition is open until 28/6/14. The Government has responded as follows:

The Government remains committed to protecting key support for older people for the life of this Parliament, in line with Coalition Agreement. Winter Fuel Payments are non-contributory and were originally introduced to give older people in the UK the reassurance they can keep warm during cold weather. However, following a European Court judgment, Winter Fuel Payments are now also made to eligible people living outside the UK in another European Economic Area (EEA) Member State and Switzerland. To help return

## The Bartholomew Gospel

### 8 We have a problem

*What's all the fuss about?' Mark 9 v16*

Now I'm not a jealous man. The 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is not the one I break first. But I felt miffed Jesus had taken Peter, James and John up the mountain with him to pray, leaving us down here below to deal with the people.

Later, on the quiet, the three told us what had happened on Mount Hermon. I just wish I'd been there for myself - to have seen Moses and Elijah with my own eyes! I just wish I'd seen Jesus transfigured like an angel in robes of shining white! I just wish I'd heard the voice of God from the cloud declaring to them, 'This is my son, the one I love. Listen to him!' Just my luck. But honestly, I don't envy them – much!



To begin with, we'd been there on our own. Left alone, it felt like a holiday. But we weren't left alone that long. Word got round that Jesus was here – which he wasn't. But they didn't know that and they wanted to see him; they wanted to hear him; they wanted him to heal them.

It didn't help that not everyone who'd come was on our side. For a start, there were some 'experts' in the Law who'd come to check us out. What was I just saying about the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment – how some people view other people's success?

It didn't help that there were too many people for us to handle. Now, if there'd been just one person to heal and we'd been on our own in a quiet place, then we might have managed. Now, if they'd just come

just one at a time, then we might have had space and time to sort out their problems. But they were crowding round us, wanting, needing, demanding and we simply couldn't cope – we were overwhelmed.

It didn't help that there was a father who was clearly losing the plot. Who could blame him? His son, his only boy, was an epileptic – he regularly suffered fits. His father was distraught as he told us his boy had been like it from birth and he was lucky to have survived till now. It seemed he had some kind of demon. Demon-possession was part of how we made sense of our world. And here was a nasty case. In a fit, the child became speechless and deaf, unable to articulate a word, his teeth clenched together, his tongue in danger of being bitten off. He'd fall down to the ground writhing, foaming at the mouth. With no care for the boy's safety in such a fit, his demon might try to throw him into the fire or water if any were near-at-hand. Not good! No wonder the father was upset. He was at his wit's end.

So when we couldn't deliver, it was the father's turn to throw a fit. He completely lost it and started shouting at us. Transferred guilt or what? Making us feel guilty that he felt guilty that he couldn't help his son, the boy he loved.

And didn't those legal eagles love it? It was just what they'd come to find out – that we were useless, frauds, intent on conning people.

Then Jesus came down from the mountain.



As soon as the crowd caught sight of him coming towards us, they left us and ran to him, the boy's father in the lead.

What was all the fuss about Jesus wanted to know. And the man told him. We were useless. We couldn't help his boy. And the father told Jesus what was what.

What was odd was the pained expression on Jesus' face. As we later heard, he had been on a real high and now he had come down-to-earth with a bump. And the crowd fell quiet under the weight of his exasperation. 'How long am I still going to be with such a faithless generation? Don't you people realise that if you have the faith then nothing is impossible?'

The father blushed. He was upset but he knew that he was in the wrong. And when Jesus asks him the direct question, 'Do you believe I can heal your son?', his answer almost made me want to hug him. 'I want to but I need your help to.'

So Jesus commands the demon to come out of the boy. And now it's the demon's turn to be upset. He throws the boy down on the ground in a fit and leaves him there for dead. But he isn't - though he really looks like it, lying motionless on the floor.

And like the best stories, this one has a happy ending. For the first time in his life, the boy is normal, his father's prayers are answered and faith is rewarded. The crowd is impressed. Our reputation restored. Our critics silent.



But when at last we're on our own, we ask Jesus why we couldn't exorcise the boy's demon. And he says simply this sort can only be done by prayer.

So we'd got it wrong again - but in the circumstances, understandable perhaps?