

Diary dates for January and February 2015

20 th January	20.00 Service at Temple Protestant, St Servan during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
21 st January	20.00 Service at St Bartholomew's during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
22 nd January	10.30 Council Meeting
18 th February	10.00 Ash Wednesday
26 th February	11.00 Start of Lent Bible Study



Prayer of the month

Almighty and all powerful God, creator of the world and the nations, we bring before you all those affected by the conflict in Syria. We pray for an end to violence against all civilians. We pray for those forced to flee their homes and who are now refugees: we pray that we may not ignore their pleas for help. We pray for those in positions of power who have the means to make a difference to these lives; guide those whose actions might bring about a just peace in their homeland. Amen.



Prayer focus

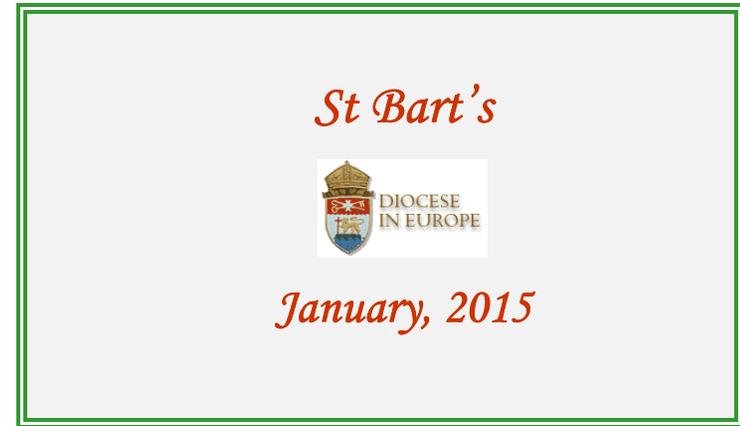
Our organ restoration appeal



Verse of the Month

Jesus said, 'you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free'.

John 8 v32



Services

Sunday 11.00 Holy Communion (with hymns)

Thursday 10.00 Holy Communion (said)

A warm welcome to all who worship with us.
During the service there is a Sunday School.
After the service coffee is served.

Priest-in-charge: The Revd Gareth Randall

For further information concerning baptisms, marriages or funerals:

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January, 2015

Dear Friends,

Do you feel truly wealthy ?

Sunday night is when I regularly telephone my brother, Les. Our conversations are rich and varied and often take a spiritual turn so it was no surprise that earlier last year, we should talk about a survey that asked folk the question whether or not they felt they were wealthy.

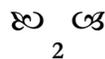
It is the beginning of the New Year so let me, in turn, ask you to reflect on this question – ‘Do you truly feel wealthy?’

When Les and I were talking about the results of the survey, he said that many folk saw what it meant to be wealthy purely in material terms – how much money did they have at their fingertips to use and to spend on what they fancied. But, of course, there is more to being wealthy than just money. One shouldn’t, however, be rude or dismissive about money – it takes too long to earn it ! Nevertheless, Scripture is quite clear that ‘the love of money is the root of all evil’ – to make money an end rather than a means to an end is simply foolish for there is no true or lasting satisfaction in cuddling up to money in whatever form it manifests.

So what makes us truly wealthy ? Good health ? A good heart ? A listening ear ? Being connected with the people, the place and the time in which we live ? Having a sense of Otherness which for us as Christians is a recognition of God who loves us as a father loves his children and wants us to come home to Him.

Now, at this start of 2015, what would it mean to you to consider yourself ‘truly wealthy’ ?

Father Gareth



Notices

- **Christmas Carol Service** – 300+ in church and 1320€ in the collection in aid of our Organ Restoration.
- **Our Organ Appeal** To date, we have raised £26,042 towards the £70,000 we need – a third down; two thirds to go. Please give what you can.
- **Lunch at Lycée Hotelier, Dinard** – The Friends’ lunch on 16th December was so successful, we’re minded to repeat the occasion bi-monthly. Why not join us ?
- **Deadline** for submission of material for the February edition of the St Bart’s Monthly is ***midday on Thursday 29th January***
- **Church Finances for November**
Income: 3295€ Expenditure 4,604€



Readings in church

January 4th

Isaiah 60 v1 – 6
Ephesians 3 v1 – 12

Epiphany

Psalm 72 v10 – 15
Matthew 2 v1 – 12

January 11th,

Genesis 3 v1 - 5
Acts 19 v1 – 7

Baptism of Christ

Psalm 29
Mark1 v4 – 11

January 18th,

1 Samuel 3 v1 - 10
Revelation 5 v 1 – 10

2nd Sunday of Epiphany

Psalm 139 v1 – 9
John 1 v43 – end

January 25th

Jeremiah 1 v 4 – 10
Acts 9 v 1 – 22

Conversion of St Paul

Psalm 67
Matthew 19 v27 – end

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26 th February	11.00 Start of Lent Bible Study
28 th March	10.30 Council Meeting
2 nd April	10.30 Maundy Thursday
3 rd April	11.00 Good Friday
5 th April	11.00 Easter Day
12 th April	12.00 Church AGM
15 th April -	Archdeaconry Synod
18 th April	St Jacut de la Mer
7 th May	10.30 Council Meeting
14 th May	10.00 Ascension Day
24 th May	11.00 Pentecost
9 th July	10.30 Council Meeting
12 th July	12.00 Friends AGM
30 th August	11.00 Patronal Festival
3 rd September	10.30 Council Meeting
27 th September	11.00 Harvest Festival
5 th November	10.00 All Souls Service of Remembrance
8 th November	11.00 Remembrance Sunday
26 th November	10.30 Council Meeting
19 th December	17.00 Carol Service
24 th December	17.00 Crib Service
25 th December	11.00 Christmas Day



Christmas Message from Bishop Robert

The nine lessons and carols service from King's College Cambridge is listened to by millions of people all over the world. It is one of England's most distinctive and successful religious exports ! For me, the service has especial resonance, because this was the college where I studied as an undergraduate and so the distinctive sound of the treble voices and fulsome reed organ stops brings back happy memories of student life.

Eric Milner-White introduced the nine lessons and carol service in 1918. He had been appointed as Dean of King's at the age of 34. He developed the carol service because his experience as an army chaplain during the war had convinced him that the Church of England needed to introduce more imaginative worship. The nine lessons and carols format quickly became popular (indeed – how quickly do innovations become 'traditions!') and is today widely copied and imitated. In our European chaplaincies 'the carol service' is now one of the best loved services in the whole year and delighted in by people of many different nationalities.

The beauty of our Christmas music has the ability to touch and soften the hearts of those who would not respond to a more prosaic declaration of Christian truth. But offering a delightful aesthetic experience is not enough. We long that people would encounter God ! And if Milner-White were alive today, I am sure he would again be urging us always to be vigilant to the need imaginatively to portray the extraordinary story of the birth of the Saviour in a way that would impress upon its sceptical 21st century hearers the incomparable meekness and majesty, suffering and glory of the first Christmas.

We need again to feel the shocking reality of God becoming incarnate in conditions of extreme vulnerability and deprivation. For, as the

evangelists tell us, God's Son was born in a feeding trough far from home as the first child of an unmarried, and presumably very scared young mother. From his birth he was hunted down by a mad and bad tyrant. Whilst still small, he and his parents were forced to migrate into neighbouring Egypt, where I suppose they lived as refugees. I always find it striking that in Matthew's account of Christmas, the first half of chapter 2 which relates the adoration of new-born King by the magi, is counter-balanced by the second half, which graphically relates the attempts by the hostile powers of his day to end this would-be King's young life before it has scarcely begun.

2014 has been marked for many of us by commemorations of the outbreak of World War 1. It may be significant that Milner-White composed his carol service after war-time service both in Italy and on the Western Front. He certainly knew how to reclaim beauty from brokenness.

In our own time, we are massively aware of the tragedy of war. It is reckoned that about 14 million people have been displaced by the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. In Lebanon, one in four of the population is now a refugee. We Christians, whose Saviour began life as a refugee, have particular responsibilities to do what we can to help and to urge our governments to act together to provide aid. And we pray earnestly for those many men, women and children who face a winter without adequate food or shelter.

It is in this sobering international context that this Christmas we celebrate in word and in song the great and wonderful mystery of the incarnation, the enfleshment, of God's Son.

I am very aware that the Christmas season puts particular opportunities and pressures in the way of our chaplaincies. We are typically receiving lots of visitors who don't normally darken the doors of our churches.

Personal Column

Congratulations to:

Solange Goffinet Dayre who on 4th December in Paris received the Le Prix Théophile Gautier from L'Académie Française for her volume of poetry, 'Pille le Soleil';

Tarann-Gabriel Peron who was baptised in church on 21st December.



Flyer for 'They Worked for St. Bart's'

When the votive stand was dedicated on Good Friday last year, I lit seven candles in memory of seven ladies I remembered as 'mothering' the church through its difficult period after WW2 to the later 1990s. Just as a reminder, the stand was because I had celebrated my 80th, which happened to be on Mothering Sunday so I thought of the mothering link for the initial candles which I would light.

Recently, Gareth said that he knew most of those mentioned but not all, as although he had been involved with St. Bartholomew's for a long time, Wendy and I had a longer link and so maybe many of those mentioned were not familiar names to many of the current congregation. As many will already know, Gareth's comments can often lead to the question, 'could you write something about it for the newsletter?'

John Marshall

(They'll be published monthly from February to August)

**Odd Words
'No-brainer'**

Radio 4 is a great way to listen to spoken English. Contemporary largely, accurate mostly, it is a way I keep up-to-date with what is going on in the world. It's a Thursday afternoon. I'm collating an edition of our monthly church magazine, 'St Bart's'. Because the task is mechanical, repetitive, my brain is not fully engaged so I'm also listening to a science programme featuring among other items the new Longitude prize and the speaker describes an idea as a 'no-brainer'.

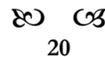
Immediately, my brain is engaged. What on earth does the phrase 'no-brainer' mean? She's lost my attention as I run through possible meanings: no brain required; no thought necessary; something that's so obvious you don't have to spend any time working out in your mind what you need to do beforehand.

Then, because I'm a thoughtful person, I do what I always do - go and check it out in a dictionary. Unsurprisingly, it's not in my centenary edition of 'Brewers Dictionary of Phrase and Fable'. Surprisingly, it is in my ten-year-old copy of 'Collins English Dictionary': there I read: 'slang, something that requires little or no mental effort'.

I smile. Of course. What else could it mean? But given where I've come from, the high regard instilled in me for thinking and thought, there is something not quite nice about the phrase which touches on a world where our brains are disengaged.

Mmm – so what do you think?

Gareth Randall



At the same time, many regular church members are away at Christmas itself, visiting family or friends. So those that remain have to work especially hard to keep everything running and to provide a cheerful welcome. Whether we have the resources of a great church or cathedral or something far more modest, it is the authenticity of what we do and the warmth of our welcome that makes the biggest impact. So to all those who sustain and enable our worship over Christmas I give my warm and sincere thanks: to our clergy, lay readers and leaders, musicians, welcomers, wardens, caterers and cleaners.

And may the God whose message of peace was sung by the angels to herald the birth of his Son, bring his peace to our hearts, our homes, our families and our world over this Christmas time.

+ Robert Gibraltar in Europe



Stop Press

Patricia Brunt, who celebrated her 92nd birthday last month, told me that Dinard is now the place in France which has the most elderly population! Curiously, it used to be Menton on the Côte d'Azur – both places having C19 Anglican churches!



How do we know there were men from Yorkshire at the Nativity?

From the Bible, we learn that three wise men came from the East Riding on camels.

John Marshall

Cwtch, Llwynypia and the Route de Rhum

Father Gareth's memories of 'cwtch' reminded me of when I was a little girl in Cardiff during the War – I was the only child as my one and only sister was away at College in Cambridge. But I had innumerable aunts who never got married or who never had children; because of the Great War no doubt. When all my aunts came to tea, as they did regularly (Auntie Dot made delicious cakes), I would find them all sitting round the fire when I came home from school. My Auntie Daisy, who was from Carmarthen, would call me over and say 'Come and cwtch down by me dear' either on the corner of the settee or on the floor by the fireplace. My mother used to use the word 'cwpi' for squatting down, looking for things fallen under the table or armchair.

Ron Kirk's mention of his birthplace in Llwynypia brought back fond memories of my best friend in College, Jean Davis, who had been to Porth Grammar School and was reading French with me at Cardiff. After her finals she came to Dinan as an 'assistante' and there met her future husband, Jean de la Croix, who was reading law at Rennes but as he was an orphan, he was working as a 'pion' (prefect) at the Cordeliers School in Dinan and had sleeping accommodation in the centre of Dinan by St Sauveur's Church. When Jean came back to Cardiff to finish her Honours Degree, I had already married Pierre and was living in Paris. One day to my great surprise and joy, she rang me up saying she was also married to Jean and living in Paris but was very lonely as Jean was doing his military service. Of course we met up again and remained the best of friends. Her husband, Jean, whose Aunt and Uncle were very snobbish, refused to accept a little obscure Welsh girl into the family so in fact they had 'eloped' to Llwynypia to get married. When Jean had her two babies, she also went home to have them so that they would have British nationality. Jean told me that she felt very sorry for her children as in France you always have to fill in your date and place of birth and how would the French cope with 'Llwynypia'. At least Cardiff is very well known.

Answers to Christmas Carol Anagrams

1	A WINEY ANAGRAM AWAY IN A MANGER
2	COMMITTEE HUNG TIRED CHAPLAIN IT CAME UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR
3	FILLS WORN TEETH THE FIRST NOWELL
4	FOOL I AM THE CLUE A FLY O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL
5	HOT JOWLED TORY JOY TO THE WORLD
6	IN BED AT WHITE KREMLIN IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER
7	SWEET GHERKIN WE THREE KINGS
8	THE TINY HILL SONG THING SILENT NIGHT HOLY NIGHT
9	I'M THE FELLOW ON THE BOTTLE O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
10	WAS IT A NICE SHARK CHRISTIANS AWAKE
11	WICKEDNESS LONG AGO GOOD KING WENCESLAS
12	WITHDREW CASH HELD SHEEP WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED
13	RUINOUS NOSY ABBOT UNTO US A BOY IS BORN
14	IS BARTHOLOMEW THE THIEF? HOW FAR IS IT TO BETHLEHEM
15	CHARM THIRTY NINE BLIND HOGS BORN IN THE NIGHT MARY'S CHILD

The following was sent to us by Chris and Pam Rowlands:

**A New Year's Prayer
by Charlotte Anselmo**

Thank You Lord For Giving Me
The Brand New Year Ahead.
Help Me Live The Way I Should,
As Each New Day I Tread.

Give Me Gentle Wisdom,
That I Might Help A Friend.
Give Me Strength And Courage,
So A Shoulder I Might Lend.

The Year Ahead Is Empty,
Help Me Fill It With Good Things.
Each New Day Filled With Joy,
And The Happiness It Brings.

Please Give The Leaders Of Our World,
A Courage Born Of Peace.
That They Might Lead Us Gently,
And All The Fighting Cease.

Please Give To All Upon This Earth,
A Heart That's Filled With Love.
A Gentle Happy Way To Live,
With Your Blessing From Above.

The New Year Lies Before Us,
Like A Spotless Track Of Snow.
Be Careful How You Tread On It,
For Every Mark Will Show.

The end of my story is very sad – Jean (my friend) did not believe in going to the doctor to have check-ups regularly and she died of cancer 25 years ago. Jean (her husband) came to stay with us every year especially when we moved to Dinard permanently in 1998. He asked us to take him to Dinan and showed us where he was lodging when he first met Jean in 1953. His son, Jocelyn, got married in St Malo at St Ideuc – his girlfriend's parents had a holiday home in Rothéneuf and the reception was held at Montmarin – it was September 8th and the rain poured down non-stop – such a shame as it was such a lovely setting. His sister, Isabel, was living in Corsica where she was teaching English. I had not seen her since she was a baby girl and when she arrived late, coming in at the back of the church, my heart turned over – I thought I was seeing a ghost – she looked so like her mother as I remembered Jean in college all those years ago. She married a boy from Corsica who ran his own family business there but he also died of cancer at the age of 40. Isabel stayed on living and teaching in Corsica as she said her husband's family had adopted her and she felt very much at home there.

Then 12 years ago, her father, Jean, rang up to say he had booked a restaurant at the point of Rothéneuf where you had a superb view of the sea. He wanted to see the start of the Route de Rhum race. He had worked all his life for an insurance company called Groupama and they had sponsored a boat in the race that year and he wanted to see it. So of course he came here to stay and a few days before we went to see all the boats in the harbour at St Malo – it poured with rain every day that year (2002) and the day of the race was so wet and misty that even from the restaurant you could hardly distinguish one boat from another, but at least we had a good meal. Jean was what the French call 'un bon vivant' – he enjoyed his food and his wine and he died of cancer of the stomach 6 months later so I always have fond memories of the two of them when the Route de Rhum comes to St Malo every four years.

Visitors to the Holy Land (5) Masada

In the mountains near to the Dead Sea is the Masada National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site which includes the Fortress of Masada. This was constructed by Herod the Great in 43BC and was the last bastion of Jewish freedom against the Romans; its fall signalled the violent destruction of the kingdom of Judea at the end of the second Temple period. In spite of its remote location on a plateau 650m long and 300m wide, which is 450m above the Dead Sea, Herod tried to impress the Romans by building it with all “mod cons”. Rain water was collected each year during the short winter flash floods and automatically siphoned into vast caverns below the living quarters to enable crops and vines to be grown. Pigeons were bred in specially built lofts to provide food and eggs and to supplement the meat from the ibex found on the mountain there. Marble statues grace the halls (the marble had to be brought more than 800 miles from Italy) and beautiful mosaics cover the walls and floors of the main rooms. Roman-style heated bath houses were constructed even though the temperature for most of the year is between 25 and 35 C and after all this Herod visited Masada only twice for short vacations, even though his extended family lived there.

Masada is made famous due to the siege by the Ancient Romans which lasted 4 or 7 years depending on which account is read. The Romans used 8000 troops and built eight camps, a siege wall and a huge ramp, all of which can still be seen, and are some of the most famous remains of the area. When the 960 occupants of the fortress finally ran out of resources they made a pact and committed suicide rather than submit to captivity and torture. Two women and five children hid in the cisterns on the mountaintop and told the story of what happened on that night on the 15th of Nissan, the first night of the Passover.

The modern approach to the fortress is by cable car and as we ascended we could see the mile after mile of the snake path which is

Questions Marriage ?

The Easter St Bart’s Monthly was already put to bed when I heard on Radio 4 that in England and Wales the first same-sex marriages would be legal from midnight (00.01 - March 29th).

And I reflected once again on how the definition of words can change, that their meaning, unlike the laws of the Medes and the Persians, is not immutable, set in stone.

There is now a real debate about what constitutes a marriage. Certainly, here in the West, we are monogamous, one man and one woman hitherto, but now, according to Parliament, still two regardless of gender. In the past, a marriage was characterised by reproduction, the birth of children. Indeed, if sexual intercourse had not taken place between the couple, then this was the grounds for divorce and the annulment of a union for without sexual union there was de facto no legal union.

I’m sure you have your own views and ideas about what is right in the eyes of God and what is desirable for society as a whole but certainly even if our Church will not at present sanction a public marriage ceremony for people of the same-sex, there is - after sensitive pastoral discussion - the possibility of a private blessing for a same sex union.

The practice of homosexuality was illegal when I was a boy; now it is legal to be gay and married in the sight of the law. What do you think ?

Father Gareth



Film Review of the month
'Departures' – Yojiro Motoki 2008

Gladys Dunnell not only gifts us with marmalade but in December gave me a DVD of 'Departures' which now I pass on to you.

Extraordinary in the ordinary. Japan, a cellist, unemployed, Daigo Kobayashi (Mashahiro Matoki) returns with his wife (Ryoko Hirose) to his home town, to his unoccupied family home and makes a new life for himself by becoming of all things a 'Nokanshi' ! If your Japanese is as good as mine, then you won't have a clue what a 'Nokanshi' is but there is a clue in the title of the film – 'Departures'. Daigo answers an ad in a local paper inaccurately labelled 'Departures' – a misprint in the Japanese character which should have spelt out 'Departed' since a 'Nokanshi' is someone who prepares the dead body for the funeral by washing and clothing him or her, a dignified process that ritually prepares the corpse in the presence of family and friends to say good-bye to those they love and who love them.

Not a career for the faint-hearted or the insensitive. Daigo's friends and his wife are horrified at his choice of work which, they believe, renders him unclean, impure, in Jewish terms not 'kosher'. But his employer (Tutomu Yamazaki) sees in Daigo someone gifted with the art of laying the dead to rest and helping those who mourn positively to express their grief.

The story has different strands, several levels: it is about relationships, right values, life-affirming in the face of death, suggesting that death is, in itself, a gateway to the life to come.

'Departures' is a beautiful film set in Japan, in Japanese with English sub-titles, a film that helps us get death into perspective from the point of view of the living and the loving.

Gareth Randall

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open each day one hour before sunrise for the less faint-hearted visitors. We saw the ramp built by the Romans in their vain attempt to breach the walls. They used slaves to carry water daily the 15 miles from the Jordan and they had to import all of their food as nothing could be grown on the rocky terrain outside the fortress walls. With the thermometer nearing 40C we followed our guide around the stony paths of the ruins having been warned to take with us lots of water and protection from the sun. The remote location and natural defences of this fortress not only enabled the siege to go on for such a long period against all odds but also have contributed to the remarkable state of its preservation over so many centuries. How the slaves and soldiers survived working in such hot conditions, moving stone to build the ramp and having limited water and food supplies, it is difficult to understand but is testimony to the Roman command and fortitude that they stayed their ground.

Wearily we boarded the coach to be taken to the comfort of our hotel, to swim in cool water and enjoy good food.

Geoff Carter 1st Sept 2014



Extra Film Review of the month
'The Hobbit - La bataille des 5 armées' Peter Jackson - 2014

Breathtakingly silly on scale to match Smaug himself.
Sadly not the Christmas treat I'd hope it would be.
And no, I won't be buying the third DVD.



Billboard 2/8

From a church notice-board sent to us by Bill Hughes
Where will you be sitting in eternity -
smoking or non-smoking ?

9

8th December in Monaco
The Feast of the Immaculate Conception

I was reminded how much ecumenical convergence has been made with regard to this particular feast of the Virgin. When the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed an article of the (Roman Catholic) faith by Pope Pius IX in 1854, an ecumenical problem was created for Anglicans and other Christians. Anglicans were concerned about the teaching authority of the bishop of Rome, independent of an ecumenical council of the whole Church, to proclaim a dogma binding on all the faithful.

However, leaving apart the particular act of Pius IX in 1854, the Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue (ARCIC) has revealed much that Anglicans and Roman Catholics can teach together about the biblical pattern of grace which underlies this feast of Mary.

Fundamentally this feast proclaims nothing other than Mary's own redemption by Christ. Mary is human, like us. So, the emphasis should not be so much that she *lacks* something that other human beings have, namely sin. Like us, she is redeemed and set free from sin by grace alone. But that glorious grace of God filled her life *from the beginning* to prepare her for her great role to be the mother of the Holy One. The feast is a witness, then, to the absolutely radical and thorough nature of the saving grace of Christ. Mary is justified from the first moment of her existence. Her redemption therefore could only be completely independent of anything she could have done!

The Church of England celebrates 8 December as the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Bishop David



Le Violoniste

L'histoire se passe lors d'un congrès de violonistes français.

Au cours du repas, un violoniste corse raconte son histoire : Il y a un mois, j'ai donné un concert dans la cathédrale d'Ajaccio, c'était magnifique, il ne restait plus une place assise, l'acoustique était excellente, je me sentais en pleine forme, c'était merveilleux. J'ai admirablement bien joué du violon...

Le public était heureux, en admiration devant mes prouesses. En regardant la statue de la vierge, je me suis aperçu que des larmes coulaient sur son visage. J'en garderai toujours un souvenir inoubliable !

Alors un autre violoniste, breton celui-là, prend la parole : Moi aussi, il m'est arrivé une histoire extraordinaire, c'était dans la cathédrale de Quimper la semaine dernière. J'étais seul, je commençais à répéter pour mon concert du lendemain, je jouais quelques notes et tout à coup j'ai entendu : « Hé ! »

J'ai regardé autour de moi, personne. J'ai repris mon violon et après quelques secondes, à nouveau : « Hé ! Hé ! » ?

Toujours personne dans la cathédrale, je regarde autour de moi et à nouveau : « Hé ! Hé ! Le violoniste, viens, approche-toi ! »

C'était le Christ qui m'appelait. Alors, je me suis approché du crucifix et il m'a dit : « Toi, tu as l'air de bien jouer du violon ! Ça a fait plaisir, parce que le mois dernier, à Ajaccio, le violoniste était tellement mauvais qu'il a fait pleurer ma mère ! »

Bruno Deslandes

President of the Lord Russell Association

In a garden, long ago, a woman had disobeyed God by choosing to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil forbidden to her. In a garden, here and now, a woman had obeyed the Son of God by choosing to do as she was told and to go and to be a witness to him.

Mary of Magdala, the first but not the last to be a witness of and to our risen Lord.



Ever present

What's nice about a gift
is each time you see it
it could well remind you
of the love which gave it



Quotations of the month

Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree it will live its whole life believing it is stupid.

Albert Einstein



Questions 6/8

This mini-series was forwarded to me by Ian Phillips

If lawyers are disbarred and clergymen defrocked,
then doesn't it follow that electricians can be delighted,
musicians denoted, cowboys deranged, models deposed,
tree surgeons debarked, and dry cleaners depressed ?

The Bartholomew Gospel

20 Mary of Magdala

'Very early, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb while it was still dark.'

John 20 v1

On the first day of the week, we discovered that Jesus' tomb was empty. The rock had been rolled away. The only sign Jesus had been laid to rest in that place were his grave-clothes, outlining the shape of his body left lying there, and the neatly folded cloth that had covered his face.

Some of our women had gone early that morning to his tomb to anoint his body. Whether there were one, two or three depends on who you read who they were. The one who is common to all four gospels is Mary Magdalene, The Magdalen, Mary of Magdala.



Like many of us, Mary was from Galilee. She was one of our women followers who supported Jesus' ministry with money, food and shelter. Before she joined us, Mary was demon-possessed. Now some are possessed by one spirit; others by many. The epileptic boy had one; the Gerasene demoniac a whole host of them. Mary had seven.

Jesus healed Mary, exorcised her demons and restored her to wholeness. In gratitude, she followed us and she was useful to us.

It was Mary who was one of the women who stood at the foot of the cross, holding Jesus in prayer as he suffered hanging there, being with him in his last hours so that he should not die bereft of those who loved and cherished him.

Now Mary comes to the tomb to pay her last respects to the man we loved.



Moving through the streets of the darkened city, Mary reaches the garden tomb as the first light of dawn is breaking. What she sees turns her grief to panic. The stone has been rolled away from the entrance to the tomb.

She turns and rushes back to tell the disciples. The first people she meets are Peter and John. To them she blurts out what she fears she's seen: 'They've taken the master out of the tomb! We don't know where they've put him!' The three of them set off at a run to verify the truth. Peter is soon outdistanced by the fitter, younger man but out of fear or diffidence, John does not go into the tomb but waits for Peter to take the lead. Mary, exhausted, comes a poor third. The two of them go in and confirm what Mary told them. The shroud, in which his body had been laid to rest, lay there, the folds of linen shaping his body as if he'd simply slipped away. What could it mean? Jesus had talked to them of rising from the dead on the third day. Could this be a sign of the truth of his resurrection?

The two men go back, leaving Mary alone, desolate, distressed, crying for the man she loves who is dead and now his body has been stolen. Even this last, fading, physical link with him has been snatched from her.

Mary is drawn back to the tomb where she finds two radiant, young men in white, sitting at the head and the foot of where Jesus had been laid to rest. In her confusion, she does not ask them who they are or what they're doing. Instead, they speak to her to ask, 'Why are you crying?'

'They've taken my master away and I don't know where they put him!' Turning round, she is aware of another man standing there. Whether her eyes are filled with tears; or whether it's the difference between the light in the tomb and the light outside; or whether it's simply modesty that makes her lower her eyes - fact is Mary does not see this man is Jesus.

She fails to recognise him either when he too asks, 'Why are you crying? Who are you looking for?'

Guessing him to be the gardener, she asks, 'Sir, if you've carried him off somewhere, tell me where you've put him and I will take him away.'

Jesus replies with just one word, her name, 'Mary!' Hearing Jesus' voice shape her name in just the way she's heard him say a thousand times before, she knows exactly who's standing here before her.

She, too, manages one word, 'Teacher!' as she flings her arms around him, hugging him to her, feeling the warmth, the familiar smell, of the living body of the man she thought was dead and gone from her forever.

Gently, firmly, Jesus untangles her enfolding arms, saying, 'Don't cling to me. I haven't yet gone up to the father. But go to my brothers and say to them, "I'm going up to my father and your father - to my God and your God."'"

Reluctantly, Mary lets Jesus go and joyfully goes off to tell the disciples the good news - 'I've seen the master'. Then she tells them all she knows.

