

Diary dates for July and August, 2015

9 th July	10.30 Council Meeting
12 th July	12.00 Friends AGM
30 th August	11.00 Patronal Festival



Prayer of the month

Almighty God,
you have made us for yourself,
and our hearts restless till they find their rest in you:
pour your love into our hearts and draw us to yourself
and so bring us at last to your heavenly city
where we shall see you face to face;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Collect for 17th Sunday after Trinity



Prayer focus

What does it mean to have a real HOLIDAY?



Verse of the Month

Jesus said to him, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.' At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

John 5 v8



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:

 02 99 46 77 00

e-mail : gareth.randall@nordnet.fr

Website : www.stbarts-dinard.org.uk



July, 2015

Notices

Dear Friends,

Bridge-building

A word for priest in Latin is pontifex. I love the sound of the word but I love its meaning even more. Pontifex means bridge builder, and it is derived, I imagine, from a combination of two Latin words - ‘pons’ (bridge) and ‘facio’ (I make).

Now I love the idea that a priest is a bridge-builder i.e. someone who bridges the gap between where folk are and where God, whom they seek, is. Actually, in fact, he is in one sense up-close-and-personal but, in a paradox which I guess must indicate true divinity, he is also distant from, totally apart from us. If a priest be a bridge builder, he needs to help connect his folk with otherness.

Imagine, then, my surprise talking to a member of Father Richard’s church in Colchester, Michael Topple, when he told me there was no mention of the word bridge in the Bible. ‘Really?’ I thought, my mind racing fruitlessly through all the stories I could remember. Here in Dinard, I have a Young’s Concordance, a book that lists all the English words used in the King James Bible and their Greek or Hebrew originals. And, sure enough, the word bridge is not there!

I wonder why. Was there no need for bridge-building at that stage of the history of the Chosen People? Perhaps the rivers the Jews encountered could all be forded? Perhaps there was no need for bridges to span gaps?

Whatever the reason, it remains a great thought that we need a way from where we are to where God waits for us to be. Perhaps the cross metaphorically is that bridge?

Father Gareth

- **BBQ** – big thank you to Diana for hosting and Sharon and her team for masterminding a most successful and enjoyable event on 21st June which raised around 580€ for church funds
- **Deadline** for submission of material for the August edition of the St Bart’s Monthly is ***midday on Thursday 30th July***
- **Church Finances for May**
Income: 6,894€ Expenditure: 4,583€



Readings in church

<i>July 5th</i>	<i>Fifth Sunday after Trinity</i>
2 Samuel 5 v1 – 5, 9 – 10	Psalm 48
2 Corinthians 12 v2 - 10	Mark 6 v1 – 13

<i>July 12th</i>	<i>Sixth Sunday after Trinity</i>
2 Samuel 6 v1 – 5, 12b – 19	Psalm 24
Ephesians 1 v3 – 14	Mark 6 v14 – 29

<i>July 19th</i>	<i>Seventh Sunday after Trinity</i>
2 Samuel 7 v1 – 14a	Psalm 89
Ephesians 2 v11 – 22	Mark 6 v30 – 34, 53 – 56

<i>July 26th</i>	<i>Eighth Sunday after Trinity</i>
2 Samuel 11 v1 – 15	Psalm 14
Ephesians 3 v14 – 21	John 6 v1 – 21



John Davey

Kitchens, bathrooms, bespoke joinery and now tree surgery !

In addition to being able to help you with your latest home improvement project, John now has a commercial relationship with a qualified, registered tree surgeon and is able to offer competitive rates on all aspects of tree and hedge work, from pruning to felling.

Don't hesitate to contact John, who will be able to provide you with references from members of the congregation from a wide range of projects.

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Joan of Arc

Very good programme on BBC2 in late May about Jeanne d'Arc. It really clarified the history (within just one hour!). The filming of "nature", rivers, cathedrals was outstanding.

I thought most of it was a myth but the extraordinary thing was that the transcript of her inquisition is faithfully recorded in amazing detail. Every question, every answer. She recanted because she did not want to be burned . . . and then her unshakable belief would not allow this to go on . . . Burnt as a heretic because her visions came from the devil, not from Christ.

Geoff Scott



Are you a friend of St Bartholomew's ?

We are fortunate here in Dinard to own our own church, the church garden, the chaplaincy flat.

If we hadn't, then, like the other Anglican churches in Dinan, St Malo, St Lunaire, we too would have been closed after the 2WW when there were few British or American families to maintain a chaplain and support the worship here.

St Bart's is a centre of so much that is good and the Friends is just one of the ways we can meet together and at the same time raising valuable funds to pay for the upkeep and maintenance of what we collectively own.

Our new President, Professor Janet Darbyshire, CBE, will shortly be completing her first year in office. One new venture arranged by the Friends has been lunches at Le Lycée Hotelier in Dinard – a mixture of excellent food and drink, good company and conversation, all in a charming ambience.

The Friends' AGM is to be held in church after the service at midday on Sunday 12th July. Why not come along ? But if you want to vote then you do need to be a member. For just **20€/£16** for an individual or **30€/£24** for a couple, you can be - and we will all, at St Bart's, benefit from your annual subscription.

If you want to know more about becoming a Friend, please talk to Janet, Dr David Norris, our Secretary, or myself.

Ian Philips
Treasurer of the Friends

Auschwitz

The item in June's St Bart's about the Holocaust, from Geoff and Janet Scott, prompts a response.

Recently I was in Washington DC, visiting a long-time friend named Walter Laqueur, a German-Jewish historian with a glittering reputation. I first met Walter in London when Liz, my wife, was working as his secretary in his capacity as head of the Wiener Library, a well known Holocaust resource centre, and it was at the library that I first met camp survivors. They were all elderly, Jewish, and working as volunteers.

When the Berlin Wall fell, Liz and I decided to make use of a sabbatical I had from my then employer, the *Financial Times*, to take a swing through Eastern Europe, which, under Soviet hegemony, had been possible, but difficult, to visit. Absent the Wall, Eastern Europe was a lot easier, and we got as far as Kiev.

The route back from Kiev took us to Krakow. Krakow is a beautiful city, probably the most visited in Poland. It is also a little over an hour's drive to Auschwitz. In the circumstances – with Liz still working at the library – it was a must to visit.

Visiting Auschwitz is a grim experience, even on a sunny day with cheerful tourists everywhere.

As you may know, Auschwitz is not one camp but two. Auschwitz-1 was built initially as a slave labour set-up, the inmates – most but not all of them Jewish – being sent out on work detail each day and returned by evening. Only latterly did the SS, who had charge of the camps and of the extermination programme, install a small, experimental gas chamber – it's still there – and the first victims

The sting's in the tail 4/4

These gems are sent to us by Trisha and Tony

19. You're never too old to learn something stupid.
20. To be sure of hitting the target, shoot first and call whatever you hit the target.
21. Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.
22. Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.
23. Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in a garage makes you a car.
24. I'm supposed to respect my elders, but now it's getting harder and harder for me to find one.



Know your Bible - 2/4

*The following little gems by Primary School pupils
are sent to us by our Church Warden, Bill:*

- 1 The Egyptians were all drowned in the dessert after which Moses went up Mount Cyanide to receive the Ten Commandments.
- 2 The first commandment was when Eve told Adam to eat the apple.
- 3 The greatest miracle in the Bible is when Joshua told his son to stand still and he obeyed him.
- 4 David was skilled in playing the liar.

Odd Words 'Inlassablement'

How good is your French ? I like to think my French is good enough but is it ?

I came across the adverb 'inlassablement' in a sentence advertising 'La Tête Haute' which is a film described in the Dinard film leaflet for 27 mai au 2 juin as 'Ouverture Cannes 2015 hors compétition'. The context is this sentence: 'jeune délinquant qu'une juge des enfants et un éducateur tentent inlassablement de sauver,' which was part of the synopsis advertising the film.

Well, the adverb means 'tirelessly' and comes from the adjective 'inlassable' which means 'unflagging', 'inexhaustible', presumably the opposite of the noun 'lassitude' from which the English word derives ! But I must admit I love the word for its sound, its multi-syllables (5) but above all for its meaning – to put real effort into what you do and not to give up until you have succeeded.

Gareth Randall



High tide

In the sea
on the waves
lads are surfing
while on the prom
a crowd watching
the waves crashing
rushing along the tiles

weren't Jews, they were Soviet prisoners of war. Test subjects, simple as that.

The mass exterminations were at Auschwitz-2 – Birkenau – the one where the railway runs in through an archway in a brick building with a guard tower on top. Even today it looks chilling. Through the archway you reach the platform, or ramp, where SS officers including the notorious Dr Josef Mengele (those terrible experiments on twins) "sorted" newly arrived prisoners.

Anyone deemed, at first glance, unfit for work went straight to the gas chambers. The chambers at Birkenau aren't there any more. The SS blew them up in the face of the advancing Red Army before taking those remaining prisoners who could still walk on the Auschwitz Death March in January 1945.

Birkenau occupies an area that must be at least four times that of Auschwitz-1. The land is dead flat, and from the guard tower you can see rank after rank of the barrack blocks where the prisoners were systematically dehumanised: housed in three-tier bunks wide enough for three or four people; sent to the lavatories, long rows of 20 or more holes in a bench with no privacy, and sent at set hours, not when needed. One cross-beam in a barrack hut reads, to this day, "*Eine Laus – dein Tod*" - "One louse and you're dead".

Even to a non-Jew, further description becomes painful to record.

David Boggis



Billboard 8/8

From a church notice-board sent to us by Bill Hughes

Try Jesus

If you don't like him, the devil will always take you back.

Sermons

The following was forwarded to us by Claude François

If you're spiritually alive, you're going to love this ! If you're spiritually dead, you won't want to read it. If you're spiritually curious, there is still hope !

A Church-goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. 'I've gone for 30 years now,' he wrote, 'and in that time, I have heard something like 3,000 sermons but for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them so I think I'm wasting my time and the priests are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all.'

This started a real controversy in the 'Letters to the Editor' column. Much to the delight of the editor, it went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher: 'I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this... They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today !' When you are DOWN to nothing....God is UP to something ! Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible ! Thank God for our physical AND our spiritual nourishment !

BIBLE simply means: **B**asic **I**nstructions **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth !

One liners 2/4

courtesy of my sister-in-law, Lin

I was queuing to use a Cash Machine yesterday when the little old lady in front of me asked if I would check her balance so I pushed her over.

Extra Film Review of the Month 'Noah' - Darren Aronofsky - 2014

Not a good film.

I don't like the computer enhanced graphics (CEGs); for example, the Watchers – graceless, stone, giant, fallen angels. The Ark a cuboid ! The retelling of the legend with extra biblical material. The nice sons of Seth outnumbered by the evil-minded sons of Cain, ecologically unfriendly, about to be wiped from the face of the earth by the Flood. Noah (Russell Crow) not really that sympathetic a hero. The director (Darren Aronofsky), nude-averse, no naked Noah, drunk, glimpsed, not seen, and a glowing Adam and Eve devoid of anatomical detail. And God Almighty, a non-speaking part, strangely absent, silent, exerting His power to destroy that which He created without a word.

Well, all sort of ends well after Noah emerges from a spell of madness and with a rainbow flashing on screen as a last-second thought, unexplained, to end the pic !

Gareth Randall



Blond jokes 2/5

courtesy of my sister-in-law, Lin

A blond man takes his goldfish to the vet.

“I think it's got epilepsy.”

The vet looks at the fish and says, “It seems calm enough to me.”

“Wait a sec – I haven't taken it out of the bowl yet.”

Film Review of the month
‘The Grand Budapest Hotel’ Wes Anderson 2014

‘The Grand Budapest Hotel’ is a charming film I highly recommend. I failed to catch it when it first came out here in Dinard last year and on its subsequent reshowing so, like a lot of the films, I saw the DVD.

Pity, because one of its virtues is the stunning cinematography – the vast landscapes: snow, fields, mountains, bridges across rivers over which a steam train flows.

But the principal backdrop is the vast grand hotel itself and the human story set in and around the lives of those who work and those who stay in the hotel.

Essentially, the film is a flashback from 1968 with the then ageing owner retelling the story of the hotel’s glory days (1930s) somewhere in Eastern Europe. It is a story of ‘love’ and intrigue, murder and inheritance, loyalty and standards.

The cast list is full of class actors: Ralph Fiennes in the lead, Monsieur Gustave, and Tilda Swinton as one of his loves, Madame D, to name but two. But part of its charm is newcomer, Tony Revolori, who plays the new lobby boy, Zero Moustafa.

What is odd is the film’s combination of the real and the unreal. Psychologically, it is spot-on, but there is something of the ‘fairy tale’ about its storyline and some of its action is ‘zany’, almost a spoof, cinema at its celluloid best. I can’t really do justice in words to describe what needs to be seen to be appreciated. You’ll love it ! ‘The Grand Budapest Hotel’ is clearly a MUST-SEE.

Gareth Randall

Listen to Sermons in Comfort

You’ll probably have noticed a difference in church. For several weeks now, I’ve been working in the transept to make cushions for our pews - red velvet stuffed with foam – and thanks to your generosity, they are nearly fully funded.

Most of the work I can do myself but I really do need some help to sew up the ends of the velvet covers. I do appreciate the help I’ve already received – no names but you know you’ve made a difference - but as the work nears the end, it would be good if you would give me a hand to finish off the job.

Our church really looks better and I trust it feels better too when you’re sitting there on a Sunday morning.

Victor

Personal Column

Our congratulations to the following who were married this month:

Christian Deloche de Noyelle and Charlotte Denolle on 6th June at St Bart’s;

Christophe Leveque and Laurence Bouënnec on 13th June at La Ville Bague;

Franck Aubry and Morgane Feuardent on 13th June at St Bart’s;

Ryan Carter and Cyndie Guertier on 20th June at Réminiac;

Vincent Mallinger and Juliette Dorléans on 27th June at St Bart’s.

Paul's meteor

Science is never finished. You get a theory that works fine for donkeys' years – Newton's laws of motion – and then up comes this kid from a patent office in Switzerland with a new way, "relativity", to explain the same things and adds in a few concepts like "mass" and "energy" that Newton wouldn't ever have dreamed of.

Now science is looking at what happened to the Apostle Paul on the Damascus road. And it's drawing analogies with that spectacular meteorite that shattered in broad daylight over Chelyabinsk, Russia, in 2013.

On April 22, 2015, the UK weekly *New Scientist* (*NS*) rehashed the story brought to us in the Acts of the Apostles: "Saul was on the road to Damascus, Syria, when he saw a bright light in the sky, was blinded and heard the voice of Jesus. Changing his name to Paul, he became a major figure in the spread of Christianity."

So far, so faithful to Scripture. Now along comes a guy called William Hartmann, described by *NS* as co-founder of the Planetary Science Institute in Tucson, Arizona, (nice clear skies they get in Tucson, take my word) who checks out three accounts of Paul's progress (Acts 9 v1 - 9; 22 v4 - 16; 26 v9 - 18) and concludes that it's all consistent with the behaviour of a meteorite like the Chelyabinsk one: "Everything they are describing in those three accounts in the book of Acts are exactly the sequence you see with a fireball" (Hartmann).

The most obvious similarity is the bright light in the sky. Then Paul and his companions fall to the ground (Acts 26) – shock wave from the meteorite explosion, says Hartmann, adding that people were knocked off their feet in Chelyabinsk. Now Paul hears the voice of Jesus asking

Questions The Breath of God ?

In the year in which we mark the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, I am again mindful of the horror of the Concentration Camps, the unkindness and mistreatment of so many Jewish folk by the Nazis and the extermination of some six million Jews during this period.

In my March letter in our magazine, I mentioned a book, 'The Naked Now' by Richard Rohr, in which he states in his opening chapter that the name for God, YHVH, is in fact more than a name. Rohr claims it is more a factual description about the nature of God – i.e. He is the breath of life. YHVH, pronounced 'yod he, vav he', is literally any of us inhaling and exhaling air. Literally, by breathing, we could all be reminded of the presence of God with us.

That life-giving character of breath may be found in the second creation story in Genesis 2 v7 where God breathes life into the inanimate dust that is to be Adam.

And then I was struck by the shocking thought that many Jews had been killed in Gas Chambers – the good air we breathe being replaced by foul poison gas. Had the Nazis known what the word God might mean to a righteous Jew, then this form of execution seems particularly malevolent.

Accidental or intentional, I was again struck by the infinite capacity for inhumanity by Man to Man. What do you think ?

Father Gareth

A fine How do you do

Since you ask, Gareth, the last time I greeted someone with ‘How do you do ?’ was a few weeks ago in Georgia, US, not expecting a response and not getting one.

Standard etiquette in many English-speaking countries seems to have morphed. All over the States the accepted initial greeting seems to be “How are you ?” which tends to leave me stumped for an answer. Mind you, in states such as Mississippi, Louisiana, Kentucky or Virginia it tends to be “H’are y’all doin’ ?”, delivered in a tone that seems to invite a candid answer.

In Australia I found myself similarly stumped for a response to the nigh-universal, “How are you ?” It was a relief occasionally to meet one of the few Aussies who still use the traditional, “G’day”. That one’s easy: you just say “G’day” back...

David Boggis



Les Trauchandières

In the top hundred in France – Le Figaro

Our warm congratulations to Agnes and Claude François whose home, Les Trauchandières, a Malouinière near St Jouan des Guérets on the road to St Méloir des Ondes, is currently listed as one of the hundred best B&Bs in France.

If you want to let your family or friends experience the very best that’s on offer by way of holiday accommodation, you can contact Agnes and Claude on 02 99 81 38 30 or acfrancois@aol.co

why Paul, an anti-Christian zealot to begin with, was persecuting him. Chelyabinsk produced a thunderous, explosive sound.

Paul was also blinded, with one account blaming the brightness of the light. A few days later, "something like scales fell from his eye and he regained his sight". Reading that literally, Hartmann suggests that Paul was suffering from photokeratitis, a temporary blindness caused by intense ultra-violet radiation. The UV at Chelyabinsk was strong enough to cause sunburn, skin peeling and temporary blindness.

NS speculates: “If [Paul’s] conversion was indeed as Hartmann explains it, then a random space rock has played a major role in determining the course of history.”

Whatever makes them think it was random?

David Boggis



Sad Fact

What is sadder : -

that in 2015, only June has a Monday that not only starts the working week but is also the first day of the month
or that I know that as a fact ?



Atheist’s funeral

This gem was sent to us by Sharon Wignall

All dressed up with no where to go !



They Worked for St. Bart's (6)
Betty Saville

Maybe this is a name which is not known to many of our current congregation, but if Betty were alive and able to walk in one Sunday morning, quite a lot would think they knew her - it has happened in the past. However, it was not Betty but her twin sister, Heather, they thought they recognised.

Although Betty did come to Dinard with Heather and Donald at times, she also would come alone, usually staying with Elisabeth Hannay. Whenever she was in Dinard, she would help in whatever way she could. Never any need to ask her to take on a task, she was there even though at times some were confused as they thought they were seeing Heather. We recall someone asking us what we thought could be wrong with Heather as she kept changing her dress. There she is serving wine, (it was Patronal Festival day), and in church she wore a different dress. Needless to say, it was Betty serving, and Heather in the different dress and the questioner did not know Heather had a twin.

One of her favourite hymns was 'Yes God is Good', and we would answer the phone and the first words we would hear were, 'Yes God is Good'. We knew who was ringing.

I wonder how much cleaning and polishing was done to those words ?

John Marshall



Schoenberg's prayer ?
Lead me not into tune-tation

My visits to Guernsey 3/4

My second visit to Guernsey was with our former Reader, the late Sybil Fagg, to attend the 100th birthday party for Roger Berry's mother, Ruth.

We stayed with Kate and Roger and everyone enjoyed what proved to be a most pleasant party. It was held in the hall of the church where Kate and Roger worship. It was an open day where friends arrived, had refreshments and wished Ruth a happy birthday. I believe 200+ people were expected whereas in fact, over the course of the day, over 400 came and went ! By about 5.00p.m., unsurprisingly, Ruth herself felt in need of refreshment !

Pat and I are often invited over for a meal with Kate and Roger. A couple of months ago I sat at table next to Roger's mother who was then 104. Now she's a hale and hearty 105 and still very much on the ball living in her own place and still makes jam for her church !

When Sybil and I were on Guernsey, we went on the Sunday morning to St Martin's, an Anglican Church, for Matins. St Martins is quite a large church with a very good congregation who made us feel most welcome.

Bill Hughes



Recipe for happiness

I heard this on Radio 4 at the start of June:

Three things are necessary for happiness:

- ✓ something to do;
- ✓ someone to love;
- ✓ something to look forward to.

So what do you think ?

Restoration of Organ

The estimated total cost of the work is	79,000€
Money raised so far	55,988€
Money to be raised	23,012€



Cushions

The donations received for the work to date amount to 1,700€ but This is probably sufficient to pay for all material for the cushions.



A sign of the Times

The following was sent to Diana Wilson by Sue Barr

On the border in Northern Ireland, Sean is vicar of a Protestant parish while Patrick is priest at the Roman Catholic Church across the road. Near their churches is a newly printed sign warning on-coming traffic that:

THE END IS NEAR.
TURN AROUND NOW,
BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE."

A car slows down, the window wound down as the driver shouts at them, "Religious nutters !?" Then, he accelerates away, disappearing round the bend. Out-of-sight, they hear a screeching of tyres and the sound of a big splash !

Shaking his head sadly, Father Patrick says to the Revd Sean, "Now that is a pity - he's the third one this morning."

"Yes . . . Do you think the sign should just say BRIDGE CLOSED ?"

The Bartholomew Gospel

26 Mary of Nazareth

'The virgin was called Mary.' Luke 1 v27

Mary of Nazareth, the mother of Jesus. Virgin, blessed among women, wife of Joseph the carpenter. Mary, Theotokos – the God-bearer.

My mother was called Alma, the Hebrew word Isaiah uses for virgin in his prophecy: 'Look: the virgin is pregnant and will have a son and they shall give him the name Emmanuel' – which means, in translation, 'God with us.'

I wish Jesus had chosen me, not John, to look after Mary, to take her home and for her to cherish me like a mother does her son. If he had, then things may have been different in the end. But my end is what he intends and I, like Mary, am a servant of his will, whatever that will may be for me, for us.



Mary knew that she had been chosen to bear God's son, to be the mother of the Son of God, Theotokos, the God-bearer. The angel Gabriel, one of the four archangels, had appeared to her to tell her that she had found favour with God. That she would conceive and bear a son, God's son. Now Mary was innocent but not unaware of the facts of life. She knew she had never known a man so she could not become pregnant till she did. But Gabriel explained that she would be overshadowed by the power of the Most High and she would. Her boy would be the Son of God. In all humility, she accepted God's will for her. Mary simply said yes to God.

Her knowledge that her baby was going to be special was confirmed by different, independent sources. Cousin Elizabeth said as much when

Mary came to stay with her. On hearing Mary's voice, Elizabeth's unborn son stirred in her womb. Joseph had a vision of an angel in a dream, confirming who was responsible for Mary's pregnancy. Shepherds, alerted by the appearance of an angel, came to the stable of an inn in Bethlehem on the night of his birth. Wise men, alerted by the appearance of a star, came from the east to present him with gold, frankincense and myrrh. Simeon, alerted by the Holy Spirit, came to the Temple at the same time as Mary and Joseph, held the child in his arms and prophesied. Anna, daughter of Phanuel, a prophetess of great age, who spent all her time in devotion in the Temple, echoed his words.

Mary found the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple, sitting among the teachers, listening and questioning and demonstrating an astonishing understanding of the Law. At thirty, in her presence, Jesus performed his first miracle at a family wedding in Cana of Galilee. Throughout his three-year-ministry, she heard of his work as a teacher and healer.

Mary was hurt by his rejection by her own neighbours in their synagogue in Nazareth. She was hurt by his rejection by the Pharisees and the Sadducees. She was hurt by his arrest, trial and condemnation. She was hurt as she stood there and watched him painfully breathe out his last hours, naked, in public, on a cross.

Mary cradled him lifeless in her arms when his corpse was taken down from the cross. She witnessed the fact of his resurrection. She saw him ascend into heaven. She was present in the Upper Room at the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Mary knew who Jesus was and she loved her son, not only because he was the Son of God but because he was also her son, the first-fruit of her womb.



Whether Mary was sinless, born without sin, and, dying, went straight to heaven is not for me to say. We can speculate about the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, but can we truly know? Perhaps not in this life on earth.

But this I know: the Virgin Mary was a woman in whose womb the zygote, the embryo and the foetus, which was to emerge as the baby Jesus, grew and developed. The Virgin was closer to the Word made Flesh, God made Man, than anyone else can possibly experience. I know we Jews are obsessed with purity, and one expression of it, virginity. But, of late, this revolutionary thought exercises my mind: that it is not our impurity that can taint or alienate us from God but that His purity can cleanse and restore us to Him. Such contact with the Most High would render Mary pure in a way that is inconceivable to a mere man.

Mary deserves our respect because she is the chosen instrument for the Incarnation and the fact that she agreed. In the birth of Jesus, God is embodied, self-evident to our eyes. Mary's virtue, therefore, lies not in herself but in the fact that in her God took on our human form. Mary, then, is uniquely special on account of her most intimate relationship with Jesus, that of a mother to her son.



When John moved to Ephesus, Mary moved with him. There she lived and there she died. But no tomb of hers has there been found.

