

Diary dates for January and February 2017

23 rd January	20.00 Service at St Bartholomew's during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
26 th January	10.30 Council Meeting



Prayer of the month

Meditation on baptism by St Cyril of Jerusalem (313 – 386)

When you went down into water, it was as dark as the night, and you could see nothing; but when you came up out of the water, it was like coming up into the day. That moment was both your death and your birth; that saving water was both your grave and your mother.



Prayer focus

A new year; new beginnings; a fresh start.



Verse of the Month

Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.
Deuteronomy 31:6



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, 2017

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year

A new year – me beginning my eleventh year here as your Priest-in-charge and, this month, I'd like to focus on one word – respect – as a keynote for the coming year.

Respect is at the heart of our Gospel. We worship God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which is to respect the mystery of the Trinity. We honour our parents, which is to respect them. We love God as we love our neighbour even as we love ourselves, which is to respect God, other folk and ourselves.

When I was a boy; respect for our teachers, the police, adults in general was a given. A priest, a minister of religion, a clergyman were worthy of respect because they served God. Those in authority were respected because they were in positions of authority, exercising authority for the good of the community, for our country, for those they served.

But what saddened me last year was the particular way experts were dissed (slang for 'to disrespect'). A range of expertise was binned because what was being expressed did not fit with the world-view (prejudice ?) adopted by those who chose to ignore their judgement. Then, at the start of November, three judges in the Court of Appeal were vilified for a legal ruling in favour of Parliament needing to authorise the setting in motion of Article 50 for our projected exit from the European Union.

Clearly, to respect reflects a right-ordered society. That's not to say we should not be thinking for ourselves, but clear thinking does not necessarily mean diminishing the value of those with whom we disagree.

Father Gareth

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Notices

- **Xmas Fayre** raised 1,400€ for church funds. Our thanks to all who contributed to make it such a success and to Carolyn Hewitt for masterminding the event.
- **Sponsored sermons for Advent** raised 200€ for church funds.
- **Advent Appeal** raised 500€ for Les Petites Sœurs des Pauvres
- **Poppy Appeal in Brittany** as a whole raised 14,147€
- **Deadline** for submission of material for the February edition of St Bart's is *midday on Thursday 26th January*
- **Church Finances for November**
Income: 2,696€ Expenditure: 5,286€



Readings in church

January 1st

Numbers 6 v22 - end
Galatians 4 v4 - 7

The naming and circumcision of Jesus

Psalm 8
Luke 2 v15 - 21

January 8th

Isaiah 60 v1 - 6
Ephesians 3 v1 - 12

Epiphany

Psalm 72 v10 - 15
Matthew 2 v1 - 12

January 15th,

Isaiah 49 v1 - 7
1 Corinthians 1 v1 - 9

2nd Sunday of Epiphany

Psalm 40 v1 - 12
John 1 v29 - 42

January 22nd

Isaiah 9 v1 - 4
1 Corinthians 1 v10 - 18

3rd Sunday of Epiphany

Psalm 27 v4 - 12
Matthew 4 v12 - 23

January 29th

Malachi 3 v 1 -5
Hebrews 2 v14 - end

Candlemas

Psalm 24 v7 - end
Luke 2 v22 - 40
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Diary dates for 2017

23 rd January	20.00 Service at St Bartholomew's during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
26 th January	10.30 Council Meeting
1 st March	10.00 Ash Wednesday
23 rd March	11.00 Start of Lent Bible Study
25 th March	10.30 Council Meeting
9 th April	12.00 Church AGM
13 th April	10.30 Maundy Thursday
14 th April	11.00 Good Friday
12 th April	11.00 Easter Day
4 th May	10.30 Council Meeting
17 th May -	Archdeaconry Synod
20 th May	St Jacut de la Mer
25 th May	10.00 Ascension Day
4 th June	11.00 Pentecost
20 th July	10.30 Council Meeting
23 rd July	12.00 Friends AGM
20 th August	11.00 Patronal Festival
7 th September	10.30 Council Meeting
24 th September	11.00 Harvest Festival
2 nd November	10.00 All Souls Service of Remembrance
12 th November	10.50 Remembrance Sunday
23 rd November	10.30 Council Meeting
23 rd December	17.00 Carol Service
24 th December	11.00 Holy Communion with Crib Service
25 th December	11.00 Christmas Day



Quotation of the Month

Sat on my window ledge looking at the stars, which looked brighter than ever. Said a prayer for Gecko – hope God heard it and gets to work immediately.

'Spud' p379

Personal Reflections 6/6

By Ron Kirk

Help for Heroes

2016 Big Battlefield Bike Ride

Commemorating the 1916 Great Western Front – Ypres to Verdun

*(Dedicated to My Two Mates:
Chris Downton and Andrew Burnett)*



The Ride to Reims was a gentle ride in the most glorious terrain of the Champagne country. We passed Cerny-en-Laonnois on top of the impressive Chemin des Dames ridge along the river Aisne. The large French and German cemeteries are a testament to the ferocity of the battles that took place there. We also encountered the Californian Plateau, originally a place for our forces to enjoy rest and recuperation, only to be chosen by the Germans as the point for their attempt in 1918 to break the Allies and form a spearhead for a massive German offensive.

Something I had not been aware of before was the construction of the 'Paris gun' designed to shell Paris some 70 miles away; This was the first time a projectile had been launched 27 miles briefly into the stratosphere, becoming the precursor of space technology and the Iraq Supergun. Mr. Gadaffi tried to emulate the same until he was informed what would happen if he proceeded with his project !

At last, the final day had arrived and the finishing line was in site at the bottom of the hill before the Verdun Ossuary. The sites were beginning to peter out although Verdun actually marked the beginning

of the major battles a century ago. Verdun was a battle that continued for 10 months and the French suffered very badly as the lines continually engaged one another.

Shortly before the finish, I waited for Robert as I took a water break. Sure enough, in just a few minutes, he was still happily cycling along with a big grin on his face. I beckoned him to carry on for me to gather in the huge scale of the experience and to finally officially finish.

At the bottom of the hill, we all gathered for a ‘Grand Départ’ up a three kilometre steep hill for our final formal ceremony, someone in H4H has a great sense of humour ! As we climbed the hill, a rider in front on each pedal stroke called out a name. When I asked someone what he was doing he said: “He is reciting the names of his dead comrades”.



Historical Point

The Battle of Verdun, fought from 21st February to 18th December 1916, was one of the largest battles of the First World War on the Western Front between the German and French armies. The battle took place on the hills north of Verdun-sur-Meuse in north-eastern France. The German 5th Army attacked the defences of the Région Fortifiée de Verdun (RFV) and those of the Second Army garrisons on the right bank of the Meuse, intending to rapidly capture the Côtes de Meuse (Meuse Heights), from which Verdun could be overlooked and bombarded with observed artillery fire. The German strategy aimed to provoke the French into attacking to drive the Germans off the heights. The Germans captured ground early in the battle but the French quickly contained the German advance and were able to recapture much of the lost territory towards the end of the year, despite the demands of the Battle of the Somme (1st July – 18th November) in Picardy to the north-west.

Let us hope and pray that the USA will maintain the principles the Statue of Liberty projects to the world.

David Bargioni



Questions

‘Cleanliness is next to Godliness ?’

If you’re like me, then being clean, keeping things clean, is an important principle that informs how best to live but is the saying ‘Cleanliness is next to godliness’ true ?

Well, it certainly isn’t true of a dictionary ! But a big thank you to Corrie Stein for organising the Spring Clean of St Bart’s on 6th December, the feast of St Nicholas, Ron Kirk’s birthday, on which 12 of our members came to church to spend the morning cleaning, hoovering, sweeping, dusting, polishing to make our church ready for Christmas and I’m confident the same will happen again before Easter.

So is cleanliness in any sense of the word next to godliness ? Well, I think it is. God is pure, wholly without sin. Sin is wrong-doing, falling short of the mark and often depicted as being unclean, dirty, soiled. It is no coincidence that the principal rite of Christian initiation, baptism, involves water. As Anglicans we normally practise the rite symbolically with just a sprinkling of water on the head but Baptists go in for total immersion, a much more graphic expression of a mikvah, a Jewish ritual bath to cleanse the believer of their sin.

So I guess the answer to the question must be yes and that’s why we try to keep our church spick and span.

Gareth Randall

Liberty

As we enter a new year, the uncertainties of the world seem as great as ever. The United States is about to inaugurate a new President. My daughter lives in the USA and there is some trepidation amongst many Americans about what the future holds. Having visited that great country for Christmas, I have been reminded of the gift by France to the USA of the Statue of Liberty.

"**The New Colossus**" is a sonnet that American poet, Emma Lazarus, (1849–1887) wrote in 1883 to raise money for the construction of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. In 1903, the poem was engraved on a bronze plaque and mounted inside the pedestal's lower level.

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.*

*"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

The poem has entered the political realm. It was quoted in John F. Kennedy's book *A Nation of Immigrants* (1958) as well as a 2010 political speech by President Obama advocating immigration policy reform.

The German strategy assumed that the French would attempt to hold on to the east bank of the Meuse and then commit the French strategic reserve to recapture it. The French would suffer catastrophic losses from German artillery fire and the German infantry held positions that were easy to defend and suffer fewer losses. The German plan was based on the experience of the Second Battle of Champagne (Herbstschlacht from September and October 1915), when after early success the French offensive was defeated with more French than German casualties. Poor weather delayed the beginning of the German Verdun offensive until 21st February. French construction of defensive lines and the arrival of reinforcements before the opening attack delayed the German advance despite many French losses. By 6th March, 20½ French divisions were in the RFV and a more extensive defence in depth had been constructed. Pétain ordered that no withdrawals were to be made and that counter-attacks were to be conducted, despite exposing French infantry to fire from the German artillery. By 29th March, French artillery on the west bank had begun a constant bombardment of German positions on the east bank, which caused many German infantry casualties.

In March, the German offensive was extended to the left (west) bank of the Meuse, to gain observation of the ground from which French artillery had been firing over the river, into the flank of the German infantry on the east bank. The German troops were able to advance at first but French reinforcements contained the attacks short of their objectives. In early May, the Germans changed tactics and made local attacks and counter-attacks, which gave the French an opportunity to begin an attack against Fort Douaumont. Part of the fort was occupied, until a German counter-attack recaptured the fort and took numerous prisoners. The Germans changed tactics again, alternating their attacks on both banks of the Meuse and in June captured Fort Vaux. The Germans continued the offensive beyond Vaux, towards the last

geographical objectives of the original plan, at Fleury-devant-Douaumont and Fort Souville. German attacks drove a salient into the French defences, captured Fleury and came within 4 km (2.5 mi) of the Verdun citadel.

In July 1916, the German offensive was reduced to provide artillery and infantry reinforcements for the Somme front and during local operations, the village of Fleury changed hands sixteen times from 23rd June to 17th August and a German attempt to capture Fort Souville in early July, was repulsed by artillery and small-arms fire. To supply reinforcements for the Somme front, the German offensive was reduced further and attempts were made to deceive the French into expecting more attacks, to keep French reinforcements away from the Somme. In August and December, French counter-offensives recaptured much of the ground lost on the east bank and recovered Fort Douaumont and Fort Vaux. An estimate in 2000 found a total of 714,231 casualties, 377,231 French and 337,000 German, an average of 70,000 casualties a month; other recent estimates increase the number of casualties to 976,000, with 1,250,000 suffered at Verdun during the war. The Battle of Verdun lasted for 303 days and became the longest and one of the most costly land battles in human history.

In Conclusion

At the close of the formal dinner at the hotel overlooking the river at the main gateway into Verdun, featured on many newsreels a century ago, it is difficult to imagine how it might have been a century ago.

I did manage to sneak to a quiet balcony, watching everyone enjoying themselves and relaxing in the hotel grounds while I reflected on the total experience while I sipped on my large cool ‘panaché’.

It is one thing to attempt such a ride with a body intact but to attempt such a feat with the disabilities of some riders was truly inspiring to us

Extra Film Review of the Month ‘the golden dream’ – Diego Quermada-Diez 2013

Given the ever-present migrant crisis, this film in Spanish with English sub-titles shares valuable insights into the issues.

In its very title, ‘the golden dream’, you see the motivation – a better life elsewhere. Curious its lack of capital letters, suggests to my mind that the dream is personal, individual to the life that is being sought, the goal that they want to achieve.

Their migrant trail is up from Guatemala, through Mexico, then across the border into the United States. On foot, by boat, on top of freight trains, the journey is fraught with serious danger from anyone who wants to prey on them.

In ‘the golden dream’, the them are four teenagers: Juan (Brandon Lopez) the leader of his friends: Sara (Karen Martinez), a girl dressed as a boy for reasons of safety; and Samuel (Carlos Chajon). Then, the fourth, an outsider, Chauk (Rodolfo Dominguy) a native American Indian who attaches himself to the friends despite Juan’s initial hostility towards him.

Okay, it’s a road movie, a journey, about what it means to be a friend and the lengths one goes to express being part of a group, ‘family’. A good sound track, visually effective, not without humour but sadly ‘the golden dream’ is a film that pulls no punches about how unkind, unfair, unpleasant other folk can be.

In the end, only Juan reaches his dream – and the irony of his working as a cleaner in the cold in a meat processing plant might not be wasted on the viewer. But then, are you up for watching it ?

Gareth Randall

Film Review of the Month
'Departure' – Andrew Steggall 2015

A preset from David Norris, 'Departure' is, as the title implies, a film about ending, leaving, leaving behind. The present, informed by the past, predicts an uncertain future. An English couple, serial house-buyers, are selling their present desirable property in Languedoc, but initially only the mum and her son are there to pack up their belongings, to get rid of what they no longer have need in the local déchèterie.

Beatrice (Juliet Stevenson) is clearly unhappy and her son, 15-year-old Elliot (Alex Lawther), is not at ease in himself - an intelligent observer of the family drama unfolding before his eyes. A writer, poet, in Clément (Phénix Brossard) Elliott sees a potential friend.

Clément helps to tackle the packing up and it becomes clear that he, too, is a troubled youth. A slightly older teenager from Paris, Clément is staying with his aunt while his own mother is in hospital back in Paris, dying of cancer.

The whole is played out over six days with the tension increasing with the arrival of the father (Finbar Lynch) two thirds of the way through. He is no more at ease than the other three and it is clear that selling the house is an end to more than just their holiday home in France.

It's an intense drama, beautifully filmed, with an effective soundtrack. It's about knowing who you are, accepting what you are and trying to express the truth however uncomfortable, unwelcome, unpalatable it might be to yourself and to those with whom one is then involved.

Not an easy view, a smattering of French, but challengingly thought-provoking for expats here in France.

Gareth Randall

all. At least two riders completed the course on arm power alone. It is totally humbling to witness these heroes in action.

It's difficult to summarise in a few words the experience of the week but I did conclude the combination of commemorating our noble warriors past and present, involvement of our wounded, reliving the events of the past through excellent guides and the brilliant support of the H4H Support Team and Discovery Adventures looking after our every need made it such a memorable week.

Above all was the comradeship of others supporting each other every step of the way, be it a kind word of support or sharing something to help take away the tiredness. If only this was replicated fully in day-to-day life, what a wonderful world we all would be sharing and counting our great blessings.

Our pedalling padre, Roger a Jesuit Priest, had as a theme for his services that in life we will all encounter five aspects irrespective of our station: Love; Beauty; Responsibility; Loneliness; Pain and Suffering. Little did I know I would encounter four in one week, apart from the loneliness!

It makes you proud you are a Brit. Working in close partnership with our longstanding allies from France, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India and Portugal, we achieved so much in adversity. Our freedoms, liberty and democracy all stem from the sacrifices a century ago.

I sit writing these recollections waiting for the outcome of Brexit vote. I could not help reflect on what our predecessors would have made of it. Have we fully honoured their sacrifices on our behalf? Did our leaders eloquently, honestly and constructively help us make the judgement call we are being asked to make?

Whatever the outcome, either way, we had better make it work for all our citizens and be positive partners for our allies, old and new.

Maybe the UK has to assume the role of leadership again to lead all nations out of the morass we seem to be locked in at the moment.

*Ron Kirk
Saint Malo, France
23rd June 2016*



It happened in St Bart's 7/8

None by name, but memories of some of our locum chaplains.

A family was level with our pew as they went forward for communion, a youngster of about five was heard to inform a younger sibling that they were going for the body of Christ.

As another family was returning from the altar where children had been blessed by laying on of hands, one little girl was complaining to her father that that man had given her a headache. Better watch out now that Health and Safety are so prominent !

John Marshall



What more ?

I'm sure there's more
I'm just not sure
What that more is

Anyway, all believers of the third level do believe in the duty and effectiveness of prayers, which is a way to elevate oneself towards the divine realm, praising the Lord and asking for Grace (strength) and forgiveness.

Food is recognized as a gift from God which is appreciated and taken with praise and moderation. Christians follow the ritual of communion, in which through the taking of the bread, they in fact receive the "Bread of life" that nourishes their soul. Some Christians consider that gluttony is a sin: they refrain from eating meat on Fridays and are supposed to follow strict rules of eating during Lent. Muslims (like Jews) do not eat pork and they observe Ramadan. Good Hindus are vegetarians.

All religions tend to encourage sharing of part of one's income, the church itself withholding its share in priority, but alms giving to the needy is a must with Christians, Jews, Muslims and Hindus alike. Finally, each religion has its meetings in the "house of god", and all have compulsory or recommended pilgrimages to holy sites.

It is interesting to see that the main elements of the difference between these various levels of faith follow the five pillars of Islam, i.e. the existence of God (Shahada), prayer (Salat), alms giving (Zakat), fasting food (Ramadan), pilgrimage to Mecca (Hadj).

Most people in our civilisation place themselves at least in the second category. Belonging to it does not imply dogma, it offers guidance but fails to provide the strength to surpass oneself, to gain access to spiritual strength and to give sense to one's life. This is the key challenge of the XXI century, i.e. to find a set of values and spirituality that elevates us beyond the pure human level without generating spite for non-believers, a sense of superiority over those who do not have the same belief as us, or the drive to bring those non-believers to adopt our faith.

concepts, like families, land and buildings, fatherland, leaders, systems, values.

Eating food - or fasting - can be submitted to strict rules that follow tastes, dietetic observations, originally in the name of health but often reaching the form of rituals. The human being seems to find comfort in such practice without necessarily at that stage reaching a religious connotation.

Except in egalitarian societies, private property and personal income are largely respected as personal belonging, although feelings of empathy for the needy, or guilt associated with an undue advantage naturally generates generosity, charity and alms.

Finally, such emotional sensitivity to what is not directly material induces people to visit certain places that have a meaning for them, like cemeteries, historical sites or just places prone to generate a "special feeling" (breathtaking vistas, mountain, sea and soothing landscapes, inspiring cathedrals. . .).

The third level of faith involves dogma which has been historically established and that normally covers extraordinary events and people, as well as rules of conduct, whether moralistic or ritualistic. At the centre of it all is the creation and the ruling of the world we live in. Religious believers base their faith on the existence of a God who is the creator of all, and whose existence and person has been revealed to mankind. Unlike monotheists, polytheists believe that several gods coexist, each one having a specific role in the pantheon. This was the case in the Greek mythology, Jupiter being the king of all gods. In Hinduism, we find a trinity is composed of Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver), Shiva (the destroyer) while in Christianity there is only one God. Still, some Muslims are bothered by the fact that Christians are not "real" monotheists because of what they call the "holy trinity" composed of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

'Book of Common Prayer Quotation of the month' – 9/20

Wilt thou have this Woman to thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?

Solemnization of Matrimony



Wise Words

Quotations and quips, submitted by the late Donald Soum.

If you asked me why I loved him, I can only say because it was him because it was me.

Montaigne

Everybody hates the way they look but no one complains about their brain.

Old Jewish saying

Success is going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.

Winston Churchill



Personal Column

Our sympathy to Alain Goffinet on the death of his wife, Solange, on Christmas morning. Her funeral was in church on 28th December.



Licensed to preach

Well it sounds a lot better than James Bond's licence to kill.

Father Gareth asked if I could write something for the St Bart's magazine about being licensed as a Lay Reader or Licensed Lay Minister, in the diocese of Canterbury. I have been in training as a Lay Reader for the past two years and so far the various academic modules I've covered have dealt with things like Church History, Biblical studies, Worship and Doctrine. In addition, at the beginning of this year, I did a three-month placement in a neighbouring parish. But the high spot of the year was undoubtedly the Licensing service in Canterbury cathedral on Sunday, 25th September.

I was one of five trainees being licensed this year. We gathered in the Cathedral Lodge on the 24th and spent time with the Co-Wardens of Readers (trust Canterbury to be different from other dioceses), reflecting on aspects of our calling. In the evening, the Bishop of Dover arrived and we did the legal paperwork. The Sunday was a quiet day. We attended the Cathedral Eucharist at 11.00 and I was surprised at the large size of the congregation. The afternoon passed quietly, allowing us time to reflect on what we were about to do. Then, it was over to the cathedral at 5pm for rehearsals. At 6pm we moved to the Chapter House to robe. I was starting to feel a bit self-conscious as clergy and fellow readers were arriving for the service, where the focus was primarily on the five of us. Then it was time to form the procession with the five of us right at the back. I was actually 'Tail End Charlie' and it was quite daunting looking along the line of the procession. Then it was into the Choir at the cathedral, trying not to trip up in our new robes.

The service was a great joy and delight and all of us were well supported by family and friends. Two of my fellow trainees read the lessons, the other two led the prayers and I was interviewed about my

Non-believers, therefore, do not waste their time praying to a god which, according to them, does not exist. They bear the full responsibility for their actions and leave the rest to the laws of nature at play, or random phenomena.

Food for them is available and every human being should take care of getting his/her share, everyone can decide what to eat and when, in view of availability and health.

Non-believers may believe that they should not do to others what they would not want others to do to them, although strict non-believers may want to act according to their own self-interest, as long as there is no side consequence for them, especially if they can get away with hurting others without getting caught.

Non-believers would never imagine going out of their way to a specific place - except maybe to be seen in the expectation of some return later on, for instance through building up their image and reputation.

At the **second level of faith**, there is a recognition of another dimension, a higher level of consciousness, beyond what is visible from the outside. This superior order is recognized in the form of one "supreme being", the existence of which is evidenced by material observations or just by the rules of nature at play to shape our world according to a magnificent order.

It is also recognized that a higher level of consciousness can be achieved through practising personal or group meditation, rituals, sports, or art - especially music. We are not necessarily talking about "prayer" at this stage but such higher consciousness can have an impact on the body and the mind, but also on the spirit in a way that is not merely physical. Love is recognized as something that goes beyond the individual, reaching other human beings and also things and

The three levels of faith.

Faith is what one believes in, what he or she thinks does exist, whether proven by evidence or not, and it can exist because one trusts the person who says it or because one is convinced by reason or feeling that it does exist.

The first level is for non-believers, for people who stick to the proven material evidence. Whenever they act in the area of the unknown, they strictly deal in a risk-taking mode, assessing probabilities of occurrence.

At the second level, people recognize a certain level of "spirituality", they may accept the existence of a higher order, not only because of the laws of Nature, and even an "intelligent design" with purpose, that they recognize, respect, and even venerate through meditation, morality, generosity, rules of conduct, ceremonies and travel to emblematic places (cemeteries, historical sites . . .).

The third level is the realm of the believers. Faith at this level may become irrational, it is highly spiritual and can lead to passion. Believers will spend enormous energy attempting to prove to themselves and to others that what they believe in is real, that non-believers are doomed or dishonest when they reject the evidence. Within a specific group of people who have common beliefs, a phenomenon of communion often takes place, people gather to pray, worship or celebrate together, while from the outside others may challenge, deny or combat their items of faith, or make fun of them.

In the **first level**, non-believers reject the mere existence of God: the world has been forged through evolution, which started with the big bang, and we are only just a little speck in the universe with no God, no grand architect or set of gods having created it or steering the process.

calling to become a Reader. While there was a good deal of formality to the service nevertheless one felt very much that we were celebrating an important milestone in our ministry. When the blue scarf was put round my neck, it was the seal on two years' hard work. Then it was photographs with the bishop, a swift drink and off home.

No time to dwell on things, as the next Sunday I was leading and preaching at the family service ! In case you're wondering, I still have two more years of training to undergo.

Bob White



Plage de L'Ecluse

Early morning
in early January,
first light, high tide:
the prom, the beach,
the roar of the waves
are mine alone.



Quickies 2 - 4/5

A further series from our Church Warden, Bill:

On a furniture shop window

We promise
the lowest prices
and workmanship

‘Judas Iscariot – Redeemed ?’

Listening to Radio 4 last April, I heard a snippet on a book about Judas. I ordered ‘Judas’ written by Peter Stanford, a Catholic writer, and was shocked by how, over time, Judas has been made a scapegoat, an excuse for Anti-Semitism. I was challenged to rethink my attitude to the disciple who had betrayed our Saviour.

In May, I wrote the 12 monologues which will appear monthly in our magazine this year. They are written in the what I imagine might be the character and voice of Judas, trying to see things through his eyes, why he became a disciple of Jesus; how he was touched by his presence and by what he taught; how he became disillusioned; why he might have acted as he did. David Norris then read them as part of an Ecumenical Meeting on Judas that I led in church in November.

The question at the heart of the monologues is: ‘Could Judas ever be forgiven?’ Instead of being an example of the ultimate sin, could he be a measure of God’s forgiveness of those who seek to be forgiven ?

Enjoy - and let me know what you think.

Father Gareth



Prologue

My name is Judas,
Judas Iscariot,
son of Simon,
a Jew from Judea,
from Kerioth
outside Jerusalem.

Disciple of Jesus,
one of his Twelve,
the last on the list,
named as the one
who betrayed our Lord.

This is my story.
Judge for yourself
how far I fell short,
failed the man we loved,
the man I served.

Was I seduced
by the Adversary ?

Or was I
part of God’s plan,
necessary to help
what had to be,
opening the way

to the cross,
handing him over
to be arrested,
tried and killed ?

At fault, guilty,
was what I did
unforgiveable ?

Or just
a measure
of His grace ?



Wisdom on Radio 4

Smoking – a dying market.