



November 2020

Revd John writes:



‘A Christ-like Community’

The month of November sees the beginning of darker nights now that the clocks have gone back and we are in the midst of autumn – that time beautifully described by Keats as the ‘season of mists and mellow fruitfulness’. I think mellow is a lovely word, don’t you? It rolls softly off the tongue, a rich, ripe sound. One of the definitions of the word is – ‘softened by maturity’. In the church this is a month of remembrance, beginning as it does with the celebration of ‘All Saints’ and the memory of ‘All Souls’, then moving on through ‘Remembrance Sunday’ and then culminating in the feast of ‘Christ the King’. This is a season for looking back and looking forward. We look back as we celebrate the great and lesser saints of old, call to mind the precious memory of our own dear loved ones departed, and commemorate the sacrifice of those who gave their lives in war and conflict. Then we are reminded to look forward as we remind ourselves that as the church year reaches its maturity we celebrate the glory of Christ the King.

November has also been the time when I have taken a retreat – usually heading off to a quiet retreat house on the coast or in the country, places where hills and water reveal the glory of God’s creation in ways that speak to my soul. Places where come rain or shine it is good to be able to walk, sit, look, pray, read and think as I explore with God the journey I have made over the past year, and the journey I may be called on in the year to come. Time to remember all that God has done for me, to consider all he might do through me, and to prayerfully ponder priorities for the year ahead. This is a ‘mellow’ time too; another definition being to be relaxed and in good humour. There is nothing I like better at the end of the day than to curl up in a comfortable chair in



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front of a log fire or cosy wood-burner with a good book and a ‘wee dram’ (that’s milk if Janet’s reading this!) before bedtime.

This year with many retreat houses closed and the various restrictions imposed by the Coronavirus – it will not be possible to go away on retreat. As groups cannot easily meet together either, there are no plans for an Advent study course at St Martin’s this year. So I thought I might have a retreat at home this year – perhaps setting aside one day per week between now and Christmas to reflect on my ministry as it nears its end as a parish priest. Perhaps you might find time to do something similar as you reflect and pray about the future of St Martin’s and your own faith journey in the post-Covid, new benefice that will emerge some time next year.

Much is being written about the potential ‘cancellation’ of Christmas this year. The usual retail roller coaster of excess seems a little more muted this year as many folk are worried about the cost of what is to come both financially and in terms of health and wellbeing. There is a real fear for the future as we face the danger of a Covid dominated winter - when times are hard enough already.

But in the church we can confidently look forward to the beginning of Advent, when the cycle of events that will lead us from the lowly incarnation, through the pain of the cross and the joy of the empty tomb, to the November celebration of the reign of Jesus, our King, begins again. This never-ending story of God’s love which we have remembered and which has sustained us through the ages still does so today, if only we are able to hear it. It’s good to remember that we are all part of this wonderful story as members of the communion of saints – the Christ-like community to which all saints belong.

Yours in Christ,

Reverend John.