

Our Vicar writes

Easter

A LOT OF people have noticed that Easter is 'late' this year and ask the question why? Well one answer is that it is based on the Lunar calendar and it falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Vernal Equinox. This means that it can move by up to 28 days from 22nd March to 25th April - so it can be even later than this year!

NOW I LOVE the fact that Easter is a truly 'moveable feast'. It reminds us that we are not in control. Some would argue, even within the church, that Easter should be fixed like Christmas. But I would counter by saying look what has happened to Christmas once the church thought they had controlled it. I feel we have lost a battle with Christmas, that the secular world has taken such a hold on it. The war is not lost but a battle has been lost. Where is the interest in the celebration of our Saviour's birth?

At Easter, when the secular world doesn't take so much interest, how many people send cards compared to Christmas cards, then I think we as a church can revel in the celebration of our Lord's resurrection. Pilate and Herod thought they were in charge when Jesus was sentenced to death but they were wrong. They had no control over events. And we should also be careful thinking that we have control over Easter either for we have no more control than they. And we mustn't have control or try and take control. For God is in charge; it is His plan and His purpose that are played out at Easter. It is the Holy Spirit's power that filled the disciples at Pentecost and sent them out into the streets. So let us celebrate and be glad that God is in charge of Easter, past, present and future.

As the secular world celebrates Christmas so we as a church should celebrate Easter. Easter is our most holy time of year, our most profound festival. But Easter is more than just a service on Easter morning, great as that is, Alleluia! Lent is the long build up to Easter and with the coming of Palm Sunday we enter into the most holy of weeks, known simply as Holy Week. Here as followers of Jesus we walk with Him His last days on earth, so we can celebrate in His resurrection. Here in Holy week we are called to special observances of our faith, and most churches put on extra special services. Here at St. Mary's we are no different. On Palm Sunday we take our palm crosses and process from the church hall to the church. Then during the week, as well as the regular Morning Prayer, we have our evening prayer of Compline at 7.30 pm which is a quiet reflective time with a short homily for the day.

On Maundy Thursday we have our Communion remembering the last meal Jesus shared with his disciples. At the end of the service, we take the decorations out of the chancel signifying the emptiness of the deserted Christ, the meal finished and cleared away. The church empty and barren as the disciples felt. For those who want, you can then stay in prayer and vigil, remembering Jesus going to the garden of Gethsemane.

On Good Friday at 2.00 pm we are invited to come and spend some time reflecting on what Jesus suffered for us and the generosity of his grace given to us.

Then we have Holy Saturday to prepare the church for the Easter celebrations. In some churches an Easter Eve service is held when it is dark and the paschal candle is brought into church for the first Communion of Easter. It is often at this service that people would have been confirmed or baptised so that they received their first communion on Easter Day.

I invite you this year to come with me and others on this fantastic great journey of faith and witness. To put our plans on hold and let God get hold of us with his plans. Not only for Easter but for the coming days, weeks and years.

Happy Easter

Christ is Risen-He is Risen indeed-Alleluia!

Simon