

# All Saints Alive



## VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

### *Oh Happy Day!*

Dear Friends,

There is a classic Gospel song called "Oh Happy Day" which speaks directly of the wonder of believing in Jesus. It isn't new, but it really came to prominence back in 1969, when it went high in the charts. It's hard to imagine such a thing happening now. Except that it is such an exciting and moving piece of music.

The piece was sung by the Edwin Hawkins Singers, and I noticed that Edwin Hawkins died in March this year when my husband returned from leading the service at North Mymms church and said that they had sung Oh Happy Day at the end of the service the week he had died – he had presumed someone was really in touch with this, but in fact it was just a coincidence. Doug recalled hearing the piece on John Peel's "Top Gear" where Peel had begun promoting the song despite not being a believer, and this propelled it into the Top Ten.

I have heard the piece a number of times, and the version of Oh Happy Day which Edwin Hawkins arranged is very different to the one in our hymn books. Basically he extracted the most important words and set them to a very soulful and mystical beat. The soloist begins gently, then she explodes into gospel fervour, with the singers echoing her passionate delivery. It is well worth hearing if you have missed it – or listen again if you already know the piece. It can really make you feel good!

Why a Happy Day? As the song says, because it is when Jesus washed my sins away. This is the joy and wonder of faith, that Jesus has come among us and has

dealt with our human failings, he has washed us from our wrongdoings, and in this season of Easter we rejoice. The day when we take to ourselves the wonder of his dying for us and being raised to new life is when our sins are washed away. That's what baptism is about, but of course we do need to allow ourselves to accept and rejoice that there is a Happy Day when this happens in our lives.

Does that mean that every day is a Happy Day? In a sense it is, just as Good Friday is Good for us, despite being horrendous for Jesus. If sin is washed away and eternal life is offered to us, then this transforms our life into a certainty that whatever happens evil and death have been overcome. Even then we can by no means expect a life of ease, the world still challenges us in so many ways, but ultimately we have the victory. Some days will be unhappy, it would be less than human if we did not feel hurt by illness, tragedy, inhumanity. We need to feel and understand the world's pains, not to indulge in spiritual escapism.

Yet ultimately our lives are transformed by God, working for our salvation through Jesus. We celebrate God's rule in our lives and we pray that his kingdom of justice and love may come in our world. We need to pray and work to this end, and we are invited to share in this especially during this month – please do join us. We all need to share in bringing the happy, joyful experience of God's saving love to the people around us and to this uncertain and unpredictable world in which we live.

Love,  
Jo