

# All Saints Alive

## VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

### ***Your Lent Journey***

Dear Friends,

I still remember the first time I entered All Saints Church. I loved the glass doors, opening out onto a beautiful and generous sacred space, after which one's eyes were drawn to the Reredos behind the altar, seeming to shine down the nave. The Reredos has just been cleaned and restored, as it was becoming fragile, and I am very grateful to all who contributed to the funds needed. I was also struck by the careful, diligent work of the three restorers.

The Reredos portrays the Last Supper, a reminder of the central act of the Church's remembrance and participation in Christ's salvation. Jesus is shown sharing the bread and wine with his disciples, "Do this in remembrance of me", and the scene is now much clearer than before. And, alas, at the edge is a man with a money bag who is about to slip out and betray the Lord.

Today's portrayal of this and other Biblical scenes may take other forms, and I have seen numerous works of art which do not belong to the classical, Renaissance style of portrait. And many which do. However, in this digital generation – all eyes fixed on screens! – I was fascinated to see (on TV) that the Installation Artist Bill Viola, currently showing at the RA, has produced a set of Video Installations which are on permanent display in St Paul's Cathedral. Large screens show specially produced moving images of Martyrs and of Mary as she holds Jesus after the crucifixion.

Martyrs (Earth, Air, Fire, Water) portrays four people as martyrs who, as Bill Viola puts it "exemplify the human capacity to bear



pain, hardship and even death in order to remain faithful to their values, beliefs and principles." The television programme showed how he conceived and produced the amazing images and the deeply spiritual nature of his work. As Lent approaches, what do we believe that is so integrated into our lives that we could not deny it?

Mary is the other Viola installation, and it shows Mary holding her son, just taken down from the cross, holding him like the baby she first knew him as. The tenderness and care is captured so movingly, like a (slowly) moving image of Michelangelo's Pieta. It speaks of human care in the most distressing situations, and suggests the fulfilment of Jesus' purpose of coming among us, to embrace our suffering and death, and martyr-like to sacrifice himself for the higher good of showing the fullness of God's love even in the harshest circumstances.

We begin Lent on 6<sup>th</sup> March, Ash Wednesday. It reminds us powerfully of our own mortality – and of God's call to follow Christ in holiness of life. I recommend taking on your own Lent journey, engaging in something which you find meaningful and probably challenging, staying close to Jesus in his Passion. There are some ideas on page three. I find sharing in communion an essential part of this journey, and when we come to take the bread and wine as Jesus' Body and Blood we come to the High Altar, where above the portrayal of the Last Supper we can now see at the top of the Reredos the words which were previously rather indistinct: "*I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger*". The bread of life, Jesus, was broken for us and we come to share in his

eternal life. Lent is a time for engaging, cleansing, restoring our faith, especially if we risk wandering from faith, confronted by the many uncertainties of modern life. There are many questions about life, purpose, truth: we all have them, but we can come to know and follow Jesus more closely this Lent if we use our time wisely and seek to share the Bread in tasting its brokenness and its strengthening power.

Love, Jo

## **Confirmation 2019**

**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March 6.30pm**

Confirmation is a significant moment in the Christian journey, and I am pleased to say that we have nine people from our parish who have decided to make this commitment. Please come if you possibly can, even if you never normally come to church in the evenings. It will be a huge encouragement to those being confirmed and also remind us of our own Confirmation and perhaps re-frame our ongoing journey.

The Service will be led by the Bishop of Hertford, the Rt Revd Michael Beasley, who is always very engaging and meaningful. Please pray for those who are taking this fresh step in faith, that the ceremony will inspire them for their future journey and help them to know the fullness of God's acceptance, love and salvation.

## **29<sup>th</sup> March**

We have been reminded for many months that this will be the day we leave the European Union. As I write, the situation remains unclear. What is clear is that this is a major change for our nation, and we should continue to pray to the Lord that through all the political manoeuvring he will bring us through to a situation where we can forge appropriate relationships with other nations which will enable our future to be secure. We should also pray and work for an overcoming of the deep divisions in our society which have been exposed by the Brexit process.

## **The Reredos**

Extracts from **Hertford Mercury 4<sup>th</sup> April 1914**



The handsome new reredos which has been so generously erected by the Mayor (Alderman W.F. Andrews) in All Saints Church was dedicated on Friday afternoon by Bishop Morley, of the Diocese of Tinnevely, South India.

In preparation for the new reredos a dais or extra step has been added to the sanctuary floor. This floor is laid with alternate squares of Iona green and white Sicilian marble, the steps being of stone. The new reredos is wholly built of Derbyshire alabaster. It is designed with a moulded and carved retablo, above which is the large central panel depicting, in sculptured relief 'The Last Supper'. The cornice above the canopies has carved roses and a pierced cresting in the form of an inscription 'I am the Bread of Life, he that cometh to Me shall never hunger.' This work has been carried out by Messrs. R Bridgeman and Son of Lichfield to the designs of Messrs Austin and Paley, architects of the church.

Behind the reredos and against the east wall oak panelling has also been provided by the Mayor. The cornice is carved with a vine pattern and the inscription 'As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ye do shew the Lord's death until he come.' This work has been executed by Messrs. James Hatch and Sons, of Lancaster, the firm that carried out the contract for the completion of the west end of the church.