

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Freedom to be ourselves



Dear Friends,

The poster on the wall read "*This is the first day of the rest of your life*" and as I glanced down at the mug in my hand it read "*Life is not just a rehearsal*". I sat in silence, eating my breakfast, in the retreat house, feeling the enormous pressure of those two statements!

Most of our lives are spent busily, almost feverishly, doing all sorts of things at home, at work and even at church and on holiday which we believe to be valuable, yet we do not stop and spend a great deal of time thinking about Life. After my initial concern about those statements on life, I became slightly annoyed by their banality.

It was rather like picking up those greetings cards in a shop and reading the sentimental statements in them, made up by anonymous people for people who may or may not have read them before they send them (Oh yes, we'll read the joke cards, laugh out loud and carefully choose those, trying to ensure that the joke does not go too far and will not cause great offence but match the person!).

Were my feelings caused by my determination to get things right, and what should I be doing? Should I read books or should I look around at others and follow what they are doing?

The story is told about an acrobat who became tired of life as a roving entertainer (this was a long time ago!), so he joined the monastery at Clairvaux to have stability. There he found that the words of the prayers the monks used did not seem to mean anything to him so he went around in silence, ashamed that he did not seem to know how to pray.

He became quite desperate, thinking that he must be the only one who did not know what he was doing and did not know how to pray. He felt that he was useless there and not worth the habit that they had given him.

One day, on hearing the bell summoning the brothers to prayer, he was so distressed that he ran to a deserted chapel and ripped off his habit and exclaimed "If I can't pray, I'll at least do what I can" and stood there in his acrobat's costume, which he had retained under his habit, and began to dance, walk on his hands and juggle. With all his heart and soul, he danced the most extravagant and acrobatic way he knew how. Another monk had followed him out of concern and saw him through the window.



A few days later the Abbot summoned him and the acrobat was terrified that he was in trouble for missing the office. He threw himself down at the abbot's feet saying that he was sorry and would leave at once, but to his astonishment the abbot raised him up and asked the acrobat to intercede for them all as "in your dancing you have praised God with your body and soul. That is your prayer, for it comes from the depths of your heart. May God forgive all of us the easy words that

cross our lips but are not echoed in our hearts." (Halbfas)

We live life to the full when we are able to serve God with our whole heart and offer ourselves and who we really are in freedom and truth. We need not exercise ourselves about what we have to do or offer because God has made us in his image, creating us as the unique people that we are.

Freedom in life is hard to grasp when we are socialised to want "to get it right". Being set free to find God, as God uniquely calls us, can feel terrifying. It is easier to follow others, follow rules, and hold on to the comfort that in following them we must be doing the right thing in life and so on the way to God.

It can be a great relief to discover that, like the acrobat, we can each do and offer what we are, and like children we have to be open to accepting what we have been given, and to all that comes to us in love and joy, in wonder and openness.

Love,
Jo

'Team Meeting'

As you may be aware, there is a proposal to create a Team Ministry here in Hertford, led by Jo.

Following an initial consultation last autumn, the legal process has been commenced and we expect the proposals to take a more concrete form in the near future as part of this.

In the meantime, Jo and her colleagues have been thinking about what a team could do for Hertford, how it might operate and what should be left well alone.

They will be presenting their ideas to a joint meeting of all four PCC's on **Monday 12th May at 8.00 pm**, preceded by a joint Communion at 7.30 pm, both held here in All Saints.

Everyone is most welcome to come along, listen and join in the discussions.

Ascension Day

This year Ascension Day falls on **Thursday 1st May**. To mark this all the Anglican Churches in the town agreed to come together and hold one act of worship.

It was hoped to hold this in St Leonard's but it is felt that it may well be rather cold this early in the year and therefore perhaps discourage people from coming. So we have offered to hold a town-wide Choral Communion here at All Saints' at 8.00 p.m.

Please join us in marking this important day in the Church year.

Talents Competition



On Sunday, 2nd March (Mothering Sunday), All Saints Talents Competition was launched. Those wishing to take part were issued with a £1 coin with a challenge to increase this by their own ingenuity and endeavours to raise funds for the Christmas Tree Festival to be held at All Saints on 5th, 6th and 7th December in aid of the Isabel Hospice and All Saints Church.

Lots of people have been busy thinking up innovative ideas for increasing their £1 and we have seen plenty of evidence of their efforts over the past couple of months.

During the 10.00am service on **Sunday 11th May**, (Pentecost), all money raised will be collected. If you have taken part in the competition, please bring the money you have raised to Church in a sealed envelope marked "Talents Competition". The envelope should also contain your name, address and age and a note to say how you have raised the money. There will be a small prize for the person raising the most money and also for the most enterprising.