

Yearning for Redemption

At Easter we celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus, which makes us think about new life, about hope in death, about the defeat of evil, about the possibility for transformation. But this year at Easter, I have found the theme of 'redemption' particularly powerful. Each Sunday when we come to the communion table, we hear the words of the prayer, "You did redeem us from slavery to sin by giving Jesus to be born of Mary and to die upon the cross". So we hear it often, but what does redemption mean?

Redemption is a term taken from the time when slaves were kept. Before there were any laws forbidding slavery, a slave could still be freed by being 'redeemed' or bought back from their owner. As liberated slaves, they then had all the rights and responsibilities of free citizens and the sense of personal dignity and pride that went with that.

The apostle Paul borrowed this term 'redemption' to explain what the death and resurrection of Jesus means for those who believe. He says that we were all slaves to sin, but we have been redeemed, freed and liberated, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. We are no longer in bondage to sin because through Jesus we have forgiveness and the possibility of new life.

We might believe that some in the world need redeeming, those obviously in bondage to addictive substances or lifestyles, but the Bible tells us that we all need

redeeming. But from what, as free people in a free country? What do we need liberation from?

Paul says that we are slaves to sin and need to be liberated from its power over us. We might be enslaved by wrong attitudes, like a desire to be mean, unforgiving, jealous or fearful. I think we all know when the chains of greediness tighten around us and we are not willing to share what we have. Some who feel they are slaves to no-one but themselves might even find that the self is a pretty tough master. Our own interests can enslave as well and selfishness can damage friendships and take away joy in life.

Easter tells us that we can be liberated from this slavery to sin and selfishness and then freely choose to be a servant of God. We might yearn for liberation, but still wonder whether God will also be a cruel and difficult task-master? Will he be hard on us and demanding?

To answer this, look at what he is like, look at the cross. When we chose to serve God, we serve a master who suffered and went to his death because he loved us so much. Yes, he might be demanding, but surely, he will be merciful and forgiving.

Together, we are the community of the redeemed, the ones bought back from the slavery to sin. Let us remember this Easter to live together in peace as freed citizens of the Kingdom of God!

Beth

Chronicles



From the Registers

Funeral

15 March Bob Poulter

Baptisms

11 March Adrian Yateman

25 March Archie Riordan
 Kaique Cardoso de Jesus

Confirmation

Apologies to Jennifer Carter whom we named as Jennifer Craft in the last chronicle

Parish Spring Dinner

On Saturday 5th May
In St James' Church Centre
6.30 for 7pm
Dinner (3 courses) with wine
£7 per ticket



Tickets from Rosanne Butler or John Shreeve

SAVE OUR GARGOYLES

When you organise an event like our Snowdrop Weekend you never know quite what the outcome might be. On the 17th February a neighbour of mine Les visited me with his wife, Sally, and never having really looked at our lovely old church realised its photogenic qualities. Les has recently bought a posh camera complete with telephoto lens and offered to take some unusual shots of the building to, maybe, turn into interesting postcards. He aimed his lens at the gargoyles on the tower and the resulting prints came as a shock to me. You might feel the same. Only one of the four is recognisable as a gargoyle. The other three have been badly eroded by wind, weather and encroaching moss. Do you feel like me that this is sad and that we, in our generation, should do something about it? Of course to have replacements made would be expensive and some may say, "Who would look at them anyway?"

However our church is a much-loved building and we care greatly for the parts we do see. Is it possible to start a "Save our Gargoyles" campaign, do you think? By the way they may become quite dangerous especially if one fell on a passer-by and with the state they are in that is quite possible.

Rosanne Bulter

Notes from the February PCC meeting.

It should have been a February meeting but it was postponed until March. (Remember the snow?)

Pat Giles has resigned as Treasurer but she is still involved in transferring the Accounts to Joan Coleman who has agreed to take over. Pat was thanked for all her work and Joan was co-opted as a member of the PCC.

St. Francis' Church is due for a Quinquennial Inspection this year and the appointment of an architect was discussed.

Joan presented a financial report which Pat had prepared for us. Members resolved to try and have a better understanding of our financial situation.

St. Francis' Church has cracks in the outside wall and it needs rendering. They are going to bring the old pews down from the upper room to enhance the seating. A choir is being formed. They asked that all loans from parishioners towards the cost of the heating system should be repaid. (£1,300 from the Caribbean evening and the rest from the Florence Park letting income.)

The PCC decided to appoint a building group to prioritise the needs of the Parish.

Gwen gave an encouraging report on the Church Centre. The Fellowship of Reconciliation would like to extend their lease on the upstairs rooms and this was welcomed. A representative from the Diocese had met with the architect to go through the snagging list and items identified are being dealt with. The boiler broke down and was quickly repaired. The fire system and equipment were recently checked. The Parish Dinner raised in excess of £100 for USPG.

Bookings are steady and the garden is blooming.



A painter and decorator thins down his paint to make it go further.

One day, he lands a big job to repaint the outside of the local church. So he erects his scaffolding, then buys the paint and thins it down as usual.

Later he is up on the scaffolding painting, when the rain pours down, washing off the paint, and knocking the painter off the scaffolding to land amongst the gravestones. He is no fool, and knows this is a judgement from the Almighty, so he gets on his knees and cries:

"Oh God! forgive me! What should I do?"

An angry voice from above booms...

"Repaint! repaint! and thin no more!!"

Rosanne Interviews Peter Emms

It says a great deal about a church when someone tells you that you will receive a warm welcome from the people who worship there. Then you decide to try it and find that what you've been told is true. Such was Peter's experience when he first visited St Francis. The services and the atmosphere were just what he needed at a particularly busy time in his life and he told me he values the support it provided very much.

When he and his wife Katerina (Katsie as she is fondly called) lived in East Oxford they attended St Clement's Church and he has fulsome praise for the lovely pre-school and Sunday School offered to their two small daughters there. However, time causes change and they felt the need to move on. Louisa and Olivia were growing up and Peter and Katsie began to look for an alternative church. A working colleague and friend (known to us as Lorne) suggested he try St Francis. He did, and referring back to my opening paragraph, you will

see why he now considers himself fully integrated into the congregation.

Born in Trowbridge in Wiltshire, son of a bank manager, Peter's education began at the local primary school from where he gained a place at Wootton-under-Edge grammar school. However, his parents were keen to secure him an education at the Mon School in Monmouth. He passed the entrance exam and boarded there until he was eighteen. And very happy years they were. It was a school with a strong sporting tradition which suited him down to the ground. He played rugby, sailed and rowed. Although he had a keen interest in natural history (he still has) and did well in biology, his other science subjects did not match up so he turned to modern languages. After A levels in English, French and Spanish he went on to study for a degree in French at Exeter University. His degree course included a year out in Montpellier in France which he thoroughly enjoyed.

After graduation he set off on his travels. First he worked in Laos for Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) teaching English as a foreign language. During his two years there he witnessed the instigation of communism. He told me how the change of regime had a radical effect on the country with much less freedom for its people. The United States cut its aid and trade with Laos and the country became significantly poorer as a result.

After two years there he headed home taking six months to experience a number of countries on the way. Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, northern India, Iran and Afghanistan – these were some of the places through which this young mid-twenties backpacker journeyed. Once back in the UK he took his post-graduate teaching certificate in Swansea and a year later began teaching in an inner London comprehensive school. I must say that teaching French to teenage boys in Hackney sounds pretty daunting to me but Peter did

it.

It was at this point in his life that Katsie featured strongly. The couple had met whilst at university, but, as Peter puts it, they then 'drifted apart'. He was away on his travels in foreign parts when she began her teaching career in London primary schools. However, they were destined to meet again and realised it was love. Pretty soon they were married. They set up home in a small flat in London.

Then Peter saw an advertisement for a teaching post at Stowe school in Buckinghamshire and applied. As he drove to his interview along the beautiful drive leading towards the house he knew he really wanted the job. After he'd been appointed he and Katsie were offered a lovely house and even asked how they would like it to be decorated! A far cry from Hackney Downs and their little flat.

After four happy years at Stowe he applied for a position as head of French at Oxford School. Again he stayed in this post for four years. His next move was to Magdalen School in Oxford

where he teaches a little Spanish alongside his main subject French. He and his wife intend to continue living in Oxford because they really love it. Their two daughters, Olivia (16) and Louisa (14) were born here. By the way, Louisa is known to her Dad as Poppy, which caused a little confusion at our interview.

After living in East Oxford they moved to Crescent Road, found St Francis Church and Peter declares that he really wouldn't want to live anywhere else. The family owns a small property in Brittany which they love to escape to in school holidays. Olivia and Katsie do not always join Peter and 'Poppy' at services in St Francis. They tend to prefer the less structured worship at the Quaker Meeting House in Oxford, but the whole family joins in the social activities of the parish and intends to be part of our church family for years to come.

How would you describe yourself as a small child?

Dreamy, fairly sensitive (a bit over-sensitive perhaps). I read quite a lot of non-fiction, particularly natural history.

Do you have a particular childhood memory you'd like to share?

I remember at Wootton-under-Edge in the holidays I'd been reading a lot of Gerald Durrell and about smoking animals out of trees. Near our house was a famous old tree, people came from all over to see it. It was hollow and when my brother and I lit a fire in it, it acted like a chimney and caught fire. My parents had to call the fire brigade to save the tree. I was mortified but I think my father was secretly quite amused.

Has God been part of your life since you were a child?

Yes, I would say through most of my life. When I was confirmed I felt I was called to be a minister. The idea has come back to me in the last couple of years. I've always enjoyed the classroom but the pastoral side appeals. I feel I need to study the Bible more certainly when I retire.

Is there anything in modern society which disappoints or angers you?

We are over-concerned in our society with materialism. We lost a lot of spiritual val-

ues in Maggie Thatcher's era even though I believe she salvaged the country economically.

Is there anything about the twenty-first century you feel is positive?

You go to ordinary places (like Cowley) and you find simple, spiritual values are still there. The one great hope that I have is that maybe the environmental crisis may help humanity to flip back to basic values such as caring for one another.

Do you have a treasured possession?

I suppose the little house in Brittany (though we may have to let it go). I've also

got two small sailing dinghies and I love sailing.

Do you have a hero or heroine, past or present?

I think I've always focussed on ideas and I look to Bill Clinton as a politician – he was very clever – I could listen to him for hours. And of course our Lord Jesus Christ is so special I can easily believe He is the Son of God.

How do you like to spend your leisure time?

Sailing, I do a lot because I run the sailing club at Magdalen. Travelling. I like to spend lots of time in Italy and France, though this summer we're going back to Katsie's roots in Scandinavia. Reading

– novels – I enjoy reading in Spanish or French, and books on Christianity.

What makes you laugh?

I've a fairly primitive sense of humour – slapstick or silly jokes. I enjoy the English type of humour such as self-deprecation.

What plans do you have for the future?

I hope to survive the next four academic years until retirement and then do some other kind of teaching. I very much want to study theology. I plan to spend a good part of each summer with Katsie but I also want to stay living in Cowley.

Walsingham Pilgrimage

Little Walsingham is a village in Norfolk which is noted for its medieval history and architecture and has been a place of pilgrimage since 1061. The Shrine church and accommodation are in the middle of the village.

A group from Cowley will be joined by friends from Mid Sommer Norton, going on the pilgrimage from Monday 17th September to Friday 21st September. We travel by coach driven by our own coach driver, Jim Mulford, leaving Cowley at midday on Monday and returning mid-afternoon on Friday.

The accommodation is comfortable and excellent food is served in the refectory. Three

cooked meals each day are available, with alternative choices. Special needs are also catered for.

What do we do on this pilgrimage? There are daily services in the morning and evening. In the afternoon we visit places of interest in Norfolk. Around the Shrine buildings is a garden providing a place for relaxation, and lounges in each building to relax and enjoy companionship in the evening. There is a feeling of stillness and peace at Walsingham, and each pilgrim is free to choose how they would like to spend their time during the week.

Would you like to join our pilgrimage this September? For more information please contact Gwen Ranklin on 01865 451417.

Gwen Ranklin



Alpha

Alpha is coming! In case that doesn't mean much to you let me explain. The Alpha course is a worldwide Christian initiative which began in a small way at the Church of Holy Trinity, Brompton Square in London. It has been massively successful and now has spread throughout the world.

And what's it about? Well, it has a simple challenge: to bring all who feel they want to learn more about a God-centred life and to build up a clearer understanding of God's love and care for the world.

There is no pressure to commit oneself to taking part in the course until one has a better understanding of what it entails, so the initial evening is a 'supper party'. Those who are curious to know more can come and ask questions, hear what others who have already done the course have to say, and then if they like the idea can 'sign on'. At any point throughout the course people are free to leave if they want to. However, having done the course myself I can honestly say it's really great.

Would you like to give it a try, or do you know anyone who might enjoy Alpha? Why not invite them to the party and come with them? Please let me know, for catering purposes, if you can come. The supper is on Wednesday 18th April at 7.00 pm in St James Church Centre. Everyone will be very welcome. My telephone number is

Susie
Gardening



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Administrator Needed

The Fellowship of Reconciliation (who are based in the upstairs office of St James Church Centre) are seeking an Office Administrator (20 hours per week) to work in its friendly office.

The person appointed will maintain the database, bank donations, support the small staff-team and undertake some basic book-keeping work.

Hours to suit. Salary in the region of £14,000 (pro-rata).
Closing date: 5th April.

For more details see www.for.org.uk/jobs or contact office@for.org.uk 01865 748796.

Registered Charity No: 207822

Sunday Services

ST JAMES' CHURCH, BEAUCHAMP LANE

8.00 am	Holy Communion
10.00 am	Sung Eucharist (<i>exc 2nd Sunday</i>)
	All Age Eucharist (<i>2nd Sunday</i>)

ST FRANCIS' CHURCH, HOLLOW WAY

10.30 am	Parish Eucharist
	[<i>Family Eucharist – 2nd Sunday of the month</i>]

Mid-Week Services & Meetings

Monday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	10.00 am	Toddler Group – <i>St Francis</i>
	2.30 pm	Parish Mothers' Union – <i>St James (3rd Mon)</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Tuesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	10.00 am	Seashells Toddler Group – <i>Church Centre</i>
	10.00 am	Toddler Service – <i>St Francis</i>
	12.00 pm	Eucharist – <i>St James</i>
	12.30 pm	Tuesday Lunch Club – <i>St James</i>
	2.30 pm	Friends of <i>St Francis</i> – <i>St Francis (2nd & 4th)</i>
5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>	
Wednesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	2.30 pm	Tea Break – <i>St Francis (1st Wed)</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Thursday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	11.00 am	St Francis Prayer Group
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	7.00 pm	Eucharist – <i>St Francis</i>
Friday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Saturday	9.15 am	Morning Prayer & Breakfast – <i>St Francis</i>

Day Off

Lorne and Michael can be contacted in the evenings and at weekends. Beth can be contacted during the day as well.

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