

During Morning Prayer one day this week we were bidden to read Psalm 84. It begins with those lovely words, "How lovely is your dwelling place, O God of hosts! My soul longs for the courts of the Most High." My thoughts turned to the fact if it were not for the wretched virus I would have been at Chailey on Sunday morning for both the services. As I walked the path to the Church door I would have thought as I often do, "How lovely is this dwelling place." Then I remembered St. Peter's would have been closed due to the work being carried out on its interior. We would have met probably at Chailey Heritage. I went on to think how many times I have heard people say 'it doesn't matter where you worship, God still listens.' To the second part of that I can only agree but as to the first I do think it matters where we worship. I believe that the stones formed into St. Peter's Church do matter. I believe they matter very much indeed. They are the symbol of many years of the Holy people of God in and around Chailey, and indeed beyond. whose toil and talents as well as their hard - earned money have enabled those stones to become a home to those who have worshipped within its walls. It matters because it is where a community gathers in so many differing ways. A place of worship generously shared with all sorts of groups and remains vital in creating a community. A place where babies are baptised and couples married, a place where we bring those who have died to be honoured and celebrated. It is a place full of memories for many and a place where present day worshippers sometimes represent families who have cherished it for generations. So, it does matter.

It matters because as people enter its doors they change from "I" to "We". The holy people of God show by example that we do depend on each other. I am my brother and sister's keeper within that community. That community is the powerhouse that gives me the insight and strength to care for my sisters and brothers beyond its walls. Just as that building is a sign to the world pointing folk heavenward so those who see it as home make real the presence of the Lord. When we hear the story of the washing of the feet before the last supper we realise that our God given vocation is to serve other people. But the wonder is that whilst we wash the feet as servants we also show the face of the Master. Our life within the Church is not some abstract thing; not some emotional crutch to help us through life it is the means by which we engage with God himself.

We are called to enter into a partnership with the Father to make Jesus known to the world. How wonderful a thing it is that he allows us to share in His mission. If you think that implausible here are some reminders of how He needs human cooperation. He needed Mary's 'yes' for the Christ to be born. Jesus (God -with- us) needed Zacchaeus to give him lodging for the night, he needed the Samaritan woman to give him water and Simon of Cyrene to help him carry the cross. He needs each and every one of us to make his name known. He has gifted us our parish church as the family home from which and from whose members we gain the strength to follow him and to serve others. So, the Church building is something that does matter. That's why I will find it hard this Sunday morning not being within its walls sharing with you the joy of being there. I will miss the sound of organ and singing, the readings, the occasional sound of children (aren't they so good) and all the good and lovely things happen there. I have been privileged to have been included in a small way as part of that household. It is a privilege I truly cherish and can't wait until as our Queen assured us us recently and the Dame from Ditchling sang. "We'll meet again." I pray to our generous and loving father that he will keep you all safe. God Bless you all.

Fr. Martin