

THE OLD CHURCH NEWS

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D

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VICAR'S VOICE

This morning, I heard an interview on Radio 4 about the late fashion designer, Alexander McQueen. The interviewee was talking about the exhibition of his work which is about to take place at the Victoria & Albert museum in London. The exhibition is called 'Savage Beauty' and, as the title suggests, it reflects the paradoxical themes that ran through the designer's work.

This is an extremely evocative title. Of course McQueen is not the first artist, and I'm sure he won't be the last artist, to be influenced by the relationship between apparent polar opposites such as life and death, lightness and darkness, melancholy and beauty. Not least, because 'Savage beauty' encapsulates something of life experience and the rich tapestry that is our faith story.

As well as being the title given to this exhibition, it might also be the title given to the week that, this year, straddles the end of March and the beginning of April, the week the Christian church calls Holy Week. The week that starts with a palm procession and ends with betrayal and violent death; the week that reveals all that is harsh and savage and

violent; yet the week, also, when we catch a glimpse of true beauty, love and light.

It would be a mistake, I think, for us to celebrate Easter as if it was set apart from Holy Week; to keep the darkness of Good Friday and the light of Easter Day as polar opposites. They are not. As sure as the promise of spring sits beneath the hard, cold wintery earth, so the promise of the resurrection runs through the dark events of holy week, like a vibrant golden thread.

It is during this bleak week that we learn, once again, that the parched wilderness of the cross becomes, for us, a flowing stream; we learn that, whatever is going on in our lives in this week, or any other, there is light in the darkness or as George MacLeod puts it, there is 'glory in the grey'.

The beauty, and the promise, of the Easter story runs through all that our lives have, and will, encounter. So as we move into the Easter season, which stretches all the way to Pentecost, I pray that we will all know this more fully as we make that challenging, yet precious, journey together this year.

LAST MONTH'S NEWS

The usual Tuesday morning services of Holy Communion were moved to 12 noon and each service was followed by a simple lunch. Bread and homemade soup, using a variety of interesting recipes, was followed by tea or coffee each week. Donations for these lunches will be forwarded to Christian Aid.

The Smethwick CAN and Churches Together Lent Course, was hosted by Holy Trinity and centred on Desmond and Mpho Tutu's Book of Forgiving. Many attending the sessions found them to be a very thought provoking and challenging experience.

The One World Cafe "Fair Necessities Appeal" event held at the Vicarage gave an opportunity to explore the wide variety of products available from Traidcraft. Cakes and other delicacies, made with Fair Trade products, were available for sampling and raised monies for the appeal.

The Women's World Day of Prayer was based on the issues that concern the women of The Bahamas. The Christian women of The Bahamas wrote the service for the celebration on the theme of 'Jesus said to them: "Do you know what I have done to you?"'. (John 13)

THE GLORY IN THE GREY

Almighty God, Creator:

In these last days storm has assailed us.
Greyness has enveloped and mist surrounded
our going out and our coming in.
Now again Thy glory clarifies,
Thy light lifts up our hearts to Thee,
and night falls in peace.
But through mist and storm and sunshine,
the crops have ripened here
and vines of Spain have grown.
Thy constant care in all and everywhere is manifest.

Almighty God, Redeemer:

Even as with our bodies, so also with our souls.
Redeemer, Christ:
Sunshine and storm, mist and greyness
eddy round our inner lives.
But as we trace the pattern, looking back,
we know that both darkness and light
have been of Thine ordaining
for our own soul's health.
Thy constant care in all, and everywhere,
is manifest.

Almighty God, Sustainer:

Sun behind all suns,
Soul behind all souls,
everlasting reconciler of our whole beings:
Show to us in everything we touch and in everyone
we meet the continued assurance of Thy presence
round us:
lest ever we should think Thee absent.
In all created things Thou art there.
In every friend we have
the sunshine of Thy presence is shown forth.
In every enemy that seems to cross our path,
Thou art there within the cloud
to challenge us to love.
Show to us the glory in the grey.
Awake for us Thy presence in the very storm
till all our joys are seen as Thee
and all our trivial tasks emerge as priestly
sacraments
in the universal temple of Thy love.

Of ourselves we cannot see this. Sure physician
give us sight.

Of ourselves we cannot act. Patient lover give us
love:

till every shower of rain speaks of Thy forgiveness:
till every storm assures us that we company with
Thee:

and every move of light and shadow speaks of
grave and resurrection:

to assure us that we cannot die:

Thou creating, redeeming and sustaining God.

George MacLeod



APRIL

- 12th 12 noon The **Annual Meeting** of the Parish Council at the Dorothy Parkes' Centre
- 15th 7.30 pm **Lay Pastoral Ministry** team meeting at the vicarage
- 19th '**Sunday Stroll**' to the Waseley Hills (for more information see the information at the back of church or speak to Paul Martin)
- 29th 6 pm – 8pm '**Soul Space**' ending with Night Prayer at 7.45 pm
- 30th 2.30 pm meet for **Prayers** in The Old Church (see Rosemary for details)

Holy Week and Easter Services

March/April

- 30th 6.00 pm - 7.00 pm '**Soul Space**'
7.00 pm **Holy Week reflection with Compline** (Night prayer)
- 31st 6.00 pm - 7.00 pm '**Soul Space**'
7.00 pm **Holy Week reflection with Compline** (Night prayer)
- 1st 6.00 pm - 7.00 pm '**Soul Space**'
7.00 pm **Holy Week reflection with Compline** (Night prayer)
- 2nd **Maunder Thursday**
8 pm A service of **Holy Communion**, with **Foot Washing**, followed by a prayer vigil until 10.00 pm
- 3rd **Good Friday**
10.00 am Churches Together **March of Witness** beginning at Regent Street Baptist Church.
12 noon '**At the Foot of the Cross**': a service of prayer and reflection at The Old Church
2.00 pm **Meditations on the Cross** at St Matthews'
- 5th **Easter Day**
6.00 am **Service of Light** followed by breakfast at the Vicarage
10.15 am Service of **Holy Communion**
12.15 pm The **Baptism** of Claire and Craig's daughter **Franceska**