

July/August

From the Vicar

I've been sitting at my computer for ages trying to write this month's letter - it's now 8 minutes past 1 in the morning and I am only just finding the words to put on the page. The reason is that I've a bit of writers block, well more than that really, more of a message block. What bit of pearly wisdom do you need to hear this month? Which biblical gem will speak to you in just the right way? And I realised that I've never asked you. Not in the whole 6 and a half years that I have been writing in this magazine have I ever asked the people of my parish what it is that you want to know about God?

But there's a problem: A while ago, while on holiday, I visited a place of worship of another faith and was introduced to one of the young enthusiastic leaders who, knowing I was a priest, began to criticise the Christian faith. "None of it makes sense, look at the Trinity - the Christian God is three people and yet one person - How can that work, it is ridiculous!" We talked, we laughed and we bantered a bit more. But perhaps I should have said, as my brother did when I told him of my experience, "Who wants a God that even I can fully understand? I want a God who is so massive that I will never get to the bottom of his mighty and unfathomable ways."

Trouble is that I want to know all I can about God, we all have questions: "Why does that person I love have cancer?" "Why did I not get into the school I wanted?" "Why are my kids going off the rails?" "Why am I going off the rails?" "Why did that happen?" "Why did that not get fixed?"

All those questions about life, in the end, find themselves stacking up in God's hands. Like the child who asks "Why?" to every answer so we eventually have nowhere to go but to God and ask "Why God? I don't understand you, I don't get it? I thought you were like this or that. I thought you were just but the bible talks of hell, I thought you were powerful but the bible tells of your death on the cross, I thought you brought freedom but you have so many rules?"

To make matters worse we have, from somewhere, picked up the idea that we should never turn to God and ask "Why?". It seems to be that we feel it would be impertinent or pathetic to cry out "Why ME!?" or "Where are you God?!" or even "What do you think you're playing at, Lord?"

What is it that you want to know about God? What should I have addressed in this letter that might have tried to play some part in answering your questions?

"When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." From the 13th Chapter of a book in the second half of the Bible called I Corinthians.

I must warn you, though, I know so few of the answers myself. What I understand of God is just a poor reflection as in a mirror. At times it frustrates me that I cannot get a crystal clear image of Him and at times it makes me weep as I need to understand "WHY?!" And so I maintain my scrutiny of the image

before me, I polish the mirror, I ask “What’s this bit?” as I peer into the poor reflection. It was St. Paul who wrote these words and with them he is encouraging us to ask and explore and develop our understanding about God and not to be satisfied with the small amount we think we know. He knows that God is too magnificent and too awesome to comprehend in this life time but that should not mean that we do not do everything we can to further develop our relationship and our understanding of God.

“In the end,” says St. Paul, “all will be made clear when we meet God face to face.” If we have asked our questions and listened and responded to his answers with love and acceptance deep in our hearts then that meeting will be like the lifting of a bridal veil or the uncovering of a master piece. There we will see God in all his glory and the parts of our understanding that were always fuzzy or dimly lit will sharpen and brighten. Until then we keep asking, “Who are you, Lord? Why this way, Lord? When will you, Lord? What’s next, Lord?”

With Love in Christ Jesus our Saviour Rev. Rob Hinton, Vicar of All Saints