

Vicars Letter

February 2022

Dear Friend

As I write this, just before Christmas we are on tenterhooks wondering if the progress of the omicron variant will lead to a curtailment of our Christmas and New Year celebrations. By the time you read this in February it will not be speculation. But one phrase I keep hearing is 'it's like Groundhog Day'. Groundhog Day is of course a reference to the to the 1993 in which Bill Murray plays a cynical television weatherman covering the annual Groundhog Day event in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, who becomes trapped in a time loop forcing him to relive the day repeatedly. The film is responsible for giving the English Language the term Groundhog Day meaning a monotonous, unpleasant, and repetitive situation. Significantly for this letter Groundhog Day is the 2nd February.

In the church 2nd February is the feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, also known as Candlemas. The presentation celebrates the day 40 days after Christmas when Mary and Joseph, in fulfilment of the Jewish law, to present Jesus to the Lord and offer the sacrifice of a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons (Luke 2:22ff) There they met the ancient Simeon who declare Jesus as *'a light to lighten the gentile'* and the *'glory of God's people Israel'*. Simeon's prophetic words don't stop there as he tells Mary *'This Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign to be spoken against (and a sword will pierce your own soul'*. As he holds the 40 day old child the words of Simeon turn our focus from Jesus' birth towards the suffering of the crucifixion, the sword that will pierce Mary's soul. It is, though, through the suffering of the Crucifixion that we reach the joy of the resurrection and for us the promise of eternal life. This is the story we retell each year. And have done for nearly 2000 years.

In the film groundhog day Bill Murray's character eventually chooses to use the reiterations of 2nd February to change himself and others and eventually breaks the loop when acknowledges his love for the Andie MacDowell character. For us each year following the path through Lent to Holy Week and Easter we can use the reiteration to improve ourselves, deepen our faith and look to how we can move our world more towards the Kingdom of God.

How we will be celebrating Lent, Holy Week and Easter this year I'm not sure at this time. You'll find the list of expected services elsewhere, but I suspect I can hear God laughing. However we worship let it not be monotonous, unpleasant, and repetitive, but, a source of growth and development.

Love and prayers

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