

Sunday 20th June 202112th Sunday in Ordinary Time***Knowing, loving and following Jesus*****In this The Link:**

- Worship at St Richard's
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- Family Mass next Sunday
- Foodbank donations
- Fr Chris' sermon – 20 June

Worship this week at St Richard's

All Masses this week will be celebrated in church those in bold will also be streamed live on Facebook.

Tuesday 22nd June	Mass	11:00
Wednesday 23rd	Mass	19:00
Thursday 24th (John the Baptist)	Mass	11:00
Saturday 26 th	Family Mass	16:30
Sunday 27th	Mass	10:00

Solemnity of Ss Peter & Paul

Family Mass – Saturday 26th June @ 4:30pm

Our next family Mass will be next Saturday at 4:30pm, aimed at both the young, and the young at heart! The service will include a craft activity or two and will be as interactive as possible.

*Family Mass – Saturday 15th May*

Why not join us and escape the football for a bit!
(NB England are not playing on that day!).

Foodbank donations

The church will be open to take donations for the Foodbank on Tuesday at 10:00 – 12:00 and Friday 14:00 – 16:00.

FSW – Open Gardens

The Family Support Work 'Open Garden' events are now running. In addition to providing vital funds for FSW, they offer a great trip out! For dates and details visit: www.familysupportwork.org/get-involved/events

Parish Church of St Richard

Vicar: Fr Christopher Brading SSC

t) 01444 413621

e) father.brading@gmail.com

Hon Assistant Priest: Fr Gordon Bond SSC

Deacon: Revd Canon Rebecca Swyer

www.strichards.co.uk***Of your charity, please pray for, those in need:***

Mimi Palmer, Hannah Hales, Paul Moore, Christopher Grimwood, Linda Miller, Sheila Jobson, Doreen Sparks, Fr John Edwards, Adrian Taylor, Pamela Waugh, Una Wade, Jean McCarthy, Pat Longhurst, Michael Langford-Jackson, Fr Michael Gudgeon, Stella Law, Margaret Trafford, Tony Dawson, David Wallis, Hilary Fowler, Jean Padgham, Richard Parker, Gillian Smith, Shirley Swyer, Alex Leaney, Halcyon Clarke, Tony Heald, Mary Hart, Geoffrey Billington, Fr Peter Yates, Eileen Phillips and Becky.

Those who have died recently: Mary Hart,

Betty Tester, Albert Exton, Rodney Pratt **and those whose anniversary falls around this time of year:**

21st) Margaret Field, Charles King,
22nd) Mabel Steer, Betty Hollands,
St John Fancourt-Bell, 24th) Charles Roberts,
Raymond Dilks, 25th) Marjorie Ashley,
26th) Frank Hughes, Rufus Mainwaring,
Doreen Wilkins,

If you would like anyone added to the prayer list, or would like someone prayed for, but not added to the list, please submit your prayer details using the form on the website www.strichards.co.uk/prayer.

Fr Chris' Sermon – 20 June

Based on the storms of last week, it was quite an appropriate gospel reading this morning, wasn't it! As we resume our Sunday journey through Mark's gospel, Jesus and his disciples are on the move again! This morning we are presented with a familiar and graphic story. It's the sort of Bible story that is popular in Sunday Schools and also well suited to Ignatian-type spiritual reflection.

It's a short story of a discreet, tangible event that is easy to imagine, and quite straightforward to interpret into our own lives today.

But if we look at it in the broader narrative of Mark's gospel, it plays an important role in revealing who Jesus is.

Throughout Mark's gospel the question of who Jesus is, keeps coming up in various ways, and the evangelist gradually reveals different aspects of who Jesus is. So, for example, in chapter one we hear the rhetorical question: '*What is this, a new teaching!*' And towards the end of the gospel, Mark gives us the last piece of the puzzle, so to speak, when the centurion at the cross says:

"Truly this man was the son of God".

These little glimpses throughout Mark of who Jesus is, need to be regarded as a whole. If we put blinkers on, and look at Jesus in this story. There he is fast asleep, un-perturbed by the storm and kerfuffle around him. When he is woken, he utters a few words, the storm is gone, and he chastises his disciples. Based solely on this view of Jesus, we might conclude that he is some kind of unfeeling superhuman with divine powers! Which, by the way, would be the heresy of Arianism.

It's certainly a massive contrast to the portrait we get of Jesus at his passion, where we see his humanity so painfully demonstrated.

This morning's reading gives the answer to a different question about who Jesus is.

In the boat on the Sea of Galilee, we hear the disciples saying to each other: "*Who can this be? Even the wind and the sea obey him*".

What they witness is more than another of Jesus's miracles, in which he heals someone or feeds a multitude. This miracle is to do with controlling nature and the elements.

To understand this more fully, we should take a step back to first century Judea, because the use of wind and sea in this way contains some profound symbolism, which would have been familiar to the first hearers of the gospel, and indeed by the disciples in the boat.

Today, when we consider water in connection with God, we would probably think of the life-giving nature of the waters of baptism. But in Jesus' time, water was more likely to have had negative connotations. Apart from those who fished for their living, Jesus's Jewish contemporaries were not natural seafarers, they had no great affinity for the sea, which is reflected in the Hebrew scriptures.

In the Book of Jonah, the sea is presented as violent, tossing a boat about as though it were a toy; and with a monster fish within the watery deep.

The Red Sea consumed the Egyptians chasing after the Israelites in their exodus from slavery in Egypt. And God punished humanity by covering the earth with a great flood, leaving only Noah, his family, and the creatures in the ark.

So, the waters are largely presented as menacing, powerful, and destructive. But, they are also understood as being under the power of God. In the reading from Job we heard how, God speaks from the heart of a tempest.

But, as Jonah's fellow passengers discovered, not only can God unleash a great sea storm he can also, just as quickly, bring it to an end. Several psalms speak of this power that God has over the waters, the one Louise sang earlier contains these words:

they cried to the Lord in their need
and he rescued them from their distress.
He stilled the storm to a whisper:
all the waves of the sea were hushed.

They rejoiced because of the calm.

Compare that to this morning's gospel passage, it's almost as if Mark is paraphrasing the words of this psalm. The point is, that it is only God who can control the sea, and here we have Jesus doing – only, what God can do.

We get a further glimpse of who Jesus is. I mentioned at the beginning, how this passage is also relatively straightforward to interpret into our own lives. It's quite commonplace to speak of our lives as being turbulent and full of sudden storms, like the one that we hear of in the gospel. And when those storms come along, we should not fear them, because Jesus is right there in the boat with us and, if we have faith in him, then he will help us through the storm, and make things calm.

I would wager that some of you have heard sermons along the lines of that. While this may be comforting at one level, it is, in a number of ways, problematic.

Firstly, the storms that come up in our lives, seldom disappear as quickly as they came: the sudden news of a serious illness, the unexpected death of someone we love, the loss of a job, the breakdown of a relationship, etc.

Secondly, it implies that if the storm does not subside, it is somehow because we do not have enough faith.

After all Jesus says as much to his disciples in the boat: '*Why are you so frightened?*
How is it that you have no faith?'

A much more convincing interpretation for me, is that all our lives are full of highs and lows, ups and downs, all sorts of storms, whether Jesus is by our side (or in our boat) or not! Nowhere in the New Testament does it say that believing and trusting in God, or giving our lives to Jesus, will take earthly trials and tribulations away.

Even though we trust in God, we can (and will) still feel the acute pain and fear, that comes from what life serves up to us.

But, having an implacable friend at our side, who is not phased by any storm or tragedy, who has experienced the breadth of human emotions, and who can assure us through his life and death, that eventually everything will be OK, must surely count for something.

This morning's gospel shows us something about what it is to have faith in the midst of great difficulties. And perhaps even some of the calm that Jesus demonstrates in the boat, will rub off on us. So that, in the midst of it all, a small part of us can be like Jesus, sleeping untroubled in the boat during the storm: with the underlying consolation of knowing that we are ultimately in God's hands.