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## FROM THE PRIEST-IN-CHARGE

*'And the curate that ministereth in every Parish-Church or Chapel, being at home, and not being otherwise reasonably hindered, shall say the same in the Parish-Church or Chapel where he ministereth, and shall cause a Bell to be tolled thereunto a convenient time before he begin, that the people may come to hear God's Word, and to pray with him.'*

*The Book of Common Prayer*



It is now two years since Carol and I arrived at St. Martins and I took up my office as your priest, two wonderful years. As this edition of the Pilgrim is the double summer edition I thought that I would take the opportunity to reflect, not upon the last two years but the office and work of the Parish Church.

The parish church and the parochial system of the Church of England is its glory. Cathedrals exist to cover the Altar of God and the Throne, the Cathedra, of the Bishop of the Diocese, but by their very nature can only be one church. The evangelisation of the country is done in the parish churches. The parish church is the building that covers the

Altar of God around which the priest and people gather to offer the Holy Eucharist. The building is therefore significant, because it signals the presence of God in the local place. Our Church of St. Martins has stood here in one form or another for almost a thousand years, signalling to all who pass by that God in Christ is alive and active in this place. And in this place is offered the Liturgy, the Worship of God in proper form Sunday by Sunday, day by day. This regular round of worship is often called the 'Opus Dei', the work of God. This explains why I began this article with the long quotation from the BCP. We are not to hide the light of the Gospel under a tub; rather we are instructed by Our Lord

to be a Light that shines on a hilltop. Archbishop Cranmer, when he was compiling the first BCP understood this and so he included this instruction, for the worship of God is the work of the Church. Those who live near St. Martin will hear twice a day '*a Bell .. being tolled thereunto a convenient time before he begin*' which signals that the priest is in the Church at the work of prayer and praise. In the 16th century it might have been possible for '*the people to come to hear God's Word, and to pray with him*' but now it is not so. But the work of the Church in prayer and praise continues. Morning and Evening Prayer is offered daily to Almighty God. These Offices consist of hymns

and psalms that sing the praise of God, and intercession that asks for His aid. In St. Martins I go over to church for 9:00am and 6:30pm and recite, out loud, the two Daily Offices of the Church. Also, three times in the week, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, the Holy Eucharist is offered at the Altar of God in our Church. I would like this to be a daily offering as is Morning and Evening Prayer, but circumstances seem to militate against this. Nevertheless, the distinctive nature of our Church and our Tradition is such that we are given to the 'Opus Dei'. If the people cannot be in Church the priest can be and he can carry the people on his heart as he offers prayer and praise to Almighty God.

The last two years have truly been wonderful for both of us, and for me a reaffirmation of my life as a priest. That we at St. Martins can keep our doors open to welcome the stranger, to welcome the seeker, to sing the praise of Almighty God is that reaffirmation and is both our glory and the proclamation of the Gospel which evangelises the world.



God Bless you all for your support and prayers for both Carol and myself, and God willing long may we all together sing the praises of God.

*Fr. David*