



**St Mark's Church, Reigate**

July 2024

**Letter from the Vicar, Father Martin Colton**

Dear Friends,

Who doesn't like a celebration? Each year we spend many thousands of pounds celebrating – a birthday, a wedding, a new baby, a life well-lived, Christmas, Easter and a myriad other occasions. And why not?

Celebrations have been part of the Judeo-Christian heritage since God created the world and are an integral part of human existence. They are a natural expression of our gratitude and praise for God's goodness. He created the world and all that is in it in six days. People interpret the Creation stories in different ways, but however we might interpret them, what is important is that God then created the Sabbath – a day to stop, reflect and rejoice in his finished creation. A day to celebrate.

God's intention for his people is to "have life and have it abundantly." It is not his will that we should live dry, uninteresting, joyless lives. Jesus' celebrations give a glimpse of God's kingdom, where everyone is welcome especially the outsider, the poor, the needy, the weak and despised (Luke 14.12-14). He fed five thousand; he helped out at a poor family's wedding celebration; he celebrated and ate with sinners and tax collectors. He taught about welcoming the prodigal and banqueting with the uninvited.

Jesus has set the example that we are now called to follow. The church has set aside and commands a range of Feast days marked for celebration, for gathering together as a community, joyfully singing songs of thanksgiving and praise and, of course, always with food and drink. Many weekdays mark a Saint's day or a key biblical event, and every Sunday offers a gathering for the community, including the Eucharistic feast of bread and wine, a remembrance of Christ's saving act of death on a cross.

Celebration is an essential part of our spiritual practice. Welcome, hospitality and generosity – all key elements of celebration must inform our understanding of how we are to respond to the two commandments, "Love God and Love your neighbour". Having celebrated Easter, not so long ago and Pentecost more recently, we are now in a season of what is called "Ordinary Time" when significant Christian festivals are few and far between, but let that not be a reason for us not to celebrate.

May we continue to thank God for his goodness in our regular worship. May we spend time looking around us as the trees and woods are re clothed in splendour, and let us find reasons to rejoice and thank God and to celebrate his goodness.

With every blessing,