



St Mark's Church, Reigate

November 2024

Letter from the Vicar, Father Martin Colton

Dear Friends,

"Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations." (Deuteronomy 32.7)

At the Taizé service in October, this verse was part of the First Reading. During the silence in this service, my thoughts hovered around the concept of "memory" and how key this is to human development. From infancy we learn the consequences of our actions by experience – for example when we touch something hot and it causes us pain we know not to do it again. It is the memory of the pain associated with the action that deters us from repeating it. When we find something that brings us joy, we want more of it.

Of all the gifts God has blessed humanity with, undoubtedly, our memory is the most precious. Remembering connects humanity with its past and the past is the key to the future. Inventors build on proven knowledge and understanding to imagine new possibilities. Ecologists study observed phenomenon to predict future patterns. Historians document events, for better or worse, and sociologists interpret their impact on society. Learning from the past helps us to shape a more informed future, even if life throws up new challenges.

In these autumn months the Christian church joins in with wider national and international commemorations. Black History Month in October and Remembrance Day in November offer occasions to recognise the contribution of specific groups of people who have changed the course of people's lives by their sacrifice, to acknowledge the human propensity for transgression and to ensure that our current and future actions build on the thoughts etched in our memories towards making a better world.

Remembering is a key theme in any major religion. Did you know that the word "remember" occurs 240 times in the Bible? In the Old Testament as the Israelites, God's chosen people, wander the wilderness in search of the promised land, they are continuously urged to remember God's faithfulness. Remembering helps to connect them with who they are and to redefine their purpose, that they may be sustained as they travel on. In the New Testament, Jesus commands those who would follow him, "Do this in remembrance of me." (1 Cor. 11.24-25). As Christians gather for Holy Communion, we remember who God created us to be and are re-membered into Christ's body, one with Christ and one with each other. Wherever in the world we are by our remembrance, we become stronger in our faith.

With every blessing,