

# End the Week with CME - April 3, 2009

3rd Apr 2009

Welcome to End the Week with CME! This weekly email is sent automatically to Clergy and Readers in the diocese (if you don't want to receive it, please send an email to [CovEW-unsubscribe@lists.covlec.org](mailto:CovEW-unsubscribe@lists.covlec.org)) but anyone is welcome to subscribe to the list, and we are especially keen to pass it on to any interested lay people, especially those who may have responsibility for preaching. To subscribe they simply need to email [CovEW-subscribe@lists.covlec.org](mailto:CovEW-subscribe@lists.covlec.org).

*This is the last ETW for a couple of weeks - we're 'off-air' until 24 April.*

## Diocesan CME Events Coming Up

### May 18, 2009 - The Meaning of Mark

A Bible Reflection evening with Paula Gooder and Richard Cooke. Monday 18 May at Red Hill Christian Centre, 7.30 - 9.30pm. Cost: £15 (including tea/coffee and cakes). Grants of half the cost are available for clergy and Readers. Book through [cme@covcofe.org](mailto:cme@covcofe.org).

### June 18, 2009 - Under the Wings of Refuge - Exploring the book of Ruth

A Ministry Reflection Day with David Runcorn, Thursday 18 June at Offa House, 10am-3pm with an abbreviated repeat from 7.30-9.30pm. Cost: £30 (including lunch) for the daytime course, £12.50 (including coffee and cakes) for the evening. Grants of half the cost are available for clergy and Readers. Book through [cme@covcofe.org](mailto:cme@covcofe.org).

## Other Events Coming Up

### DBE Courses

The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) runs a number of courses which will be useful for clergy colleagues, and also for teachers and governors in your congregations. Do pass the relevant information onto those concerned, and maybe suggest that you attend the courses together. Clergy are charged at CME rates. More details can be found on the Diocesan website at <http://www.covdioc.org.uk/courses%20and%20conferences.htm>.

Booking is through Joanne Evans at the DBE via [joanne.evans@covcofe.org](mailto:joanne.evans@covcofe.org)

06/05/09 4.00-5.30pm Berkswell CofE Primary School, Church Lane, Berkswell Coventry CV7 7BJ

**Introducing "Bible Explorer"**

19/05/09 9.30am-3.30pm Nettle Hill Training and Conference Centre, Brinklow Road, Ansty, Coventry CV7 9JL

**Face to Face and Side by Side. Church schools as agents for Community Cohesion**

03/06/09 9.30am-1.00pm Foleshill CofE Primary School, Old Church Road, Coventry CV6 7ED

**Raising Your Game – Moving your school from 'Good' to 'Outstanding'**

04/06/09 4-6pm Wilmcote CofE Primary School, Church Road, Wilmcote, Stratford upon Avon CV37 9XD

10/06/09 4-6pm Queens CofE Primary School, Bentley Road, Nuneaton CV11 5LR

**Gospel Workshop – come and experience being part of a Choir!**

18/06/09 9.30am-3.30pm Red Hill Christian Centre, Snitterfield, Stratford upon Avon CV37 0PQ

**Space for Worship – Creating and using areas for worship, outside in the school grounds and inside the classroom**

## **God: Some Conversations - How do you speak about God?**

5 - 15 October 2009 at St George's House, Windsor Castle.

A ten day Clergy Consultation, reflecting on how we speak about God in the modern context. We will examine some of the issues facing our world with a view to discovering the underlying theological perspectives. Each day we will select a particular issue and, stimulated by expert speakers, we will examine this through Bible study, literature, discussion and debate.

The normal cost for this Consultation is £500. However, we are pleased to offer diocesan clergy a special rate of £250. This includes attendance at the ten day Consultation, full board and accommodation.

For further information, please email Vivki Whiteside at [vicki.whiteside@stgeorges-windsor.org](mailto:vicki.whiteside@stgeorges-windsor.org) or telephone 01753 848848.

# Notes on the Gospel Readings for Sunday 12 April (Easter Day)

## Mark 16. 1-8

### 'He is not here'

Mark's story of the resurrection of Jesus is one of absence, not presence. 'He is not here' says the young man who meets the terrified women on a spring dawn in Jerusalem.

True, the mysterious young man has told them in the breath before, 'He has been raised' but what would they have made of that? In ordinary use the phrase meant roused or woken from sleep. Would they have caught the meaning that he had been raised to life? Perhaps. But we can't count on them doing so. Instead it seems to me that what confronted them was the lack of a body, absence, an empty space where Jesus should have been. The experience of loss would surely have driven all thought of explanation from their heads.

The signs are that, just as Matthew softened the bleak sense of abandonment in his revision of Mark's narrative of the crucifixion by adding a kind of 'flash-forward' to the resurrection (Matt.27.52-53), so he also tried to tidy up the resurrection scene by moving quickly to the appearance of Jesus (Matt. 27.9-10). Perhaps Mark did so too, and the end of his gospel has been lost – yet it seems to me that his gospel makes perfect sense ending at 16.8, even if it does appear to be in mid-sentence.

Mark seems to want to leave us in suspense, dwelling on the absence of Jesus. This is in keeping with his gospel as a whole, which has offered more questions than answers and has emphasised the failure of the disciples and our need to distrust ourselves almost more than pointing to the power of God. Mark seems to subscribe to William Temple's claim that 'sinners have nothing to contribute to their own salvation – except the sin from which they need to be saved'. Only by truly confronting our failures and helplessness can we really plumb the utter depths into which God graciously reaches out to us. And to do that we have to face the experience of God's absence which Mark so frighteningly evoked in his story of the crucifixion, as the Temple in the curtain is torn and the presence of God is gone (Mark 15.38). The moment when, in W.B.Yeats' words, 'Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,/The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere/The ceremony of innocence is drowned' ('The Second Coming'). No wonder the women run, mute, in terror (Mark 16.8).

In John's version of the empty tomb story two angels sit at either end of the stone on which the body of Jesus has lain (John 20.12). This may be a reminder of the two cherubim who sat at either end of the Ark of the Covenant, which occupied the Holy of Holies in the Temple (see Ex. 20.25-26). They face each other and, says Rowan Williams, 'define a space where God would be if God were anywhere...but there is no image between the cherubim. If you want to see the God of Judah, this is where he is and is not'. ('Between the

Cherubim: The Empty Tomb and the Empty Throne' in G.D'Costa (ed.) Resurrection Reconsidered Oneworld 1996, p.90). Was Israel's God present in the absence at the heart of the Temple? If so could the risen Jesus be somehow similarly present in the absence at the heart of the empty tomb? Maybe the point of Mark's story is that the women don't stay long enough to find out. In John's gospel it is Mary's grief-stricken loitering at the tomb, dwelling on the absence of Jesus, which leads to his unexpected and at first unrecognised presence (see also John 20.11-16).

The experience of the women, as it has often also been of Jesus' disciples in the centuries between them and us, is of the absence of Jesus. Mark's challenge is to find the presence of Jesus in his absence; to discover, as the Jews had done centuries before in the exile, that when the curtain of the Temple is torn and even when the sanctuary lies in ruins, the presence of God remains; to discover, in the vacuum of the empty tomb, that God is still there.

I sometimes wonder whether Mark's gospel, short as it is, was meant to be the prelude to a Eucharist. I imagine an early congregation hearing the story again, perhaps sharing the terror of the women as they themselves experienced the threat of persecution. And then the softly spoken words, 'The Lord is here' and the almost whispered response as they realise what they are saying, 'His Spirit is with us'. In Jesus' absence they would find his presence, just as Mark hoped that they would, yet not because they found Jesus but because he found them, returned from the dead, filling the world's vacuum with the new life of God.

## And Finally...

First of all a joke about the end of Mark's gospel, and as a bonus the advice which John Fenton, the New Testament scholar who died recently, wrote for canons of Christ Church Oxford. It applies to most forms of ministry!

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A preacher concludes his service by saying, "Next Sunday I am going to preach on the subject of liars. And in preparation for my discourse, I would like you all to read the 17th chapter of Mark."

The following Sunday, the preacher says, "Now, all of you who have done as I requested and read the 17th chapter of Mark, please raise your hands."

Nearly every hand in the congregation goes up.

The preacher continues, "You are the people I want to talk to. There is no 17th chapter of Mark."

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## Advice for Residentiary Canons of Cathedrals

- Keep on the right side of the *Dean*  
*e.g. know something about him he doesn't want other people to know and make sure he knows you know*
- Keep on the right side of the *Vergers*  
*e.g. send them slightly improper postcards when you are on holiday and give them Christmas presents, possibly bottles of drink*
- Preach sermons that make the *Congregation* laugh  
and are slightly over the top
- Pretend you know who *Everybody* is  
and greet them from as far away as possible
- Always be *There*  
*and make sure everybody knows you are there and that you know that everybody knows you are there and that they know that you know that they know . . . .*
- Tell the other *Canons* that they are wonderful  
whatever
- Chat up *Everyone*  
*Bishop, Dean, Canons, Vergers, Visitors, Organist, Choir, Assistant Organist, Chapter Clerk, Chapter Clerk's Secretary, Bishop's Secretary, Dean's Secretary, Clerk of Works, Clerk of Works's Secretary, Secretary of the Three Choirs Festival, Cleaners, Gardeners, Security Officers, Security Officers' Secretary, Friends of Hereford Cathedral Secretary, Tourist Office, all Public Houses within one mile, all shops that sell postcards, Cathedral Shop Assistants, Cathedral Shop Assistants' Secretary*
- Love them *All*  
*They are all longing to be loved*

**That's all, folks!**

**Richard**

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