

A note from the Rectory.....

Dear Friends,

The quiet, sleepy month of August is upon us. Schools are closed, clubs and societies close down and so many things seem at a standstill. If you're lucky, you might take a holiday either at home or in foreign lands but, whatever, life seems calmer and quieter. It's good to use August as a month of 'taking stock' and thinking about what is really important in life. For most of us, at the top of the list will be our families, whether young children at home or those who have grown up and 'flown the nest' but still remain as important as ever they were. Thinking about all of them and taking care of them remains a priority and they are never very far from our thoughts. Those who are working, often use this month to think about their careers and what the next move might be; some think of slowing down and begin to look forward to retirement. For others, it might be the thought of upsizing or downsizing the home – just in time for Christmas!

In this curious job which I do, my family – the Parish, is never far from my thoughts. Like any family, we have our 'ups and downs' and different points of view readily surface but it's my job to try and smooth out any wrinkles and to keep going forward. It's true to say that in the 36 years since I became a priest, the Church in England has changed dramatically and the church dynamic is so very different from my early days. I well remember doing at least four weddings on a Saturday and, in the course of a year, some 150 Christenings! Congregations were fairly large and people used to vie for the chance to be a churchwarden, a treasurer or church secretary. The choir was always full and there were at least two teams of Altar servers. All so very different from today. Sunday trading and the proliferation of sports activities have certainly made an impact on church attendance; not to mention the whole range of things that children are expected to do on a Sunday!

So this quiet, sleepy month of August is giving me some homework. How do we get a village like Balcombe to re-engage with its beautiful church? How do we encourage people to join in our worship and re-engage with God? New people always find a very warm welcome and are soon made to feel 'at home. True, the coffee after the Service is 'lousy' but we're doing something about that! We really would like to 'grow' our Choir, expand our numbers, create new activities and care more fully for our community but without the people, none of this is possible. It's sad to report that our finances are perilous and very shortly, we won't be able to 'pay our way'.

If you value St. Mary's and see it as integral in the life of the community, why not come and get involved? Come and try us out and see what it's all about! It is your Church in your village. Like it or not, you are my family and you're never very far from my thoughts – but as we all know, it seems very strange when we don't see the family very often!

During August, I'm in and around the village. If you would like to come and have a coffee and a talk about St Mary's, just give me a call. If you'd prefer a chat over a 'pint' then we can always meet at the 'Half Moon.' We really need to get this Church moving again but it won't happen without you.... So come on.... What do you say? Give it a go!!

Fr Keith

