

Daily Bulletin for Sunday, 3rd June, 2018

Getting the shorts out

Summer is here and it's now time to open the 'shorts' drawer at home and to enter into that usual Mallorca tradition for some of us Brits, start burning the bottom half of my legs! 'Delicate skin' my mother would have said but of course actually it's just a lack of the proper application of sun cream in truth! Still that's the price of fashion I suppose!

At this time of year two things happen to me workwise. One is that the wedding season is now underway and I'm enjoying going to some lovely finca's and churches to conduct services. The other is that I get to attend the Diocesan Synod in Cologne. I know, deeply exciting stuff eh! The Diocesan Synod is one of the nearly democratic institutions for our Diocese where representatives from all over the continent, from the different chaplaincies, meet up to work through an agenda which affects us all here at ground level so to speak.

So you get people from places from Moscow to Madera, Copenhagen to Casablanca and all stops in between! Quite a mix of cultural experiences! I say 'nearly democratic' because I'm not sure that there any of our institutions are totally democratic as it will depend upon how you define that term in the first place. For the Church of England, well, we are led by our Bishops who in turn have to take note in the policies they set of the deliberations of our Synods. Crystal clear then! So a few days in a conference centre in Germany for me.

The other thing I started with was that the wedding season has kicked off and I've had the pleasure in leading several of these services already with lots more to come as the summer unfolds. I have to say this is a great part of my job as a chaplain and I very much enjoy meeting up with couples beforehand, either in person or via Skype, to plan out what they want and to try to tailor the service to their needs.

If I have to be honest (and that's always a good policy!) and speaking in general terms here the weddings vary. There are those who take what we're doing seriously and others where sometimes I wonder if I'm rather talking to myself as people tend to chat to each other throughout the service. It's as if that often subtle change occurs when a congregation turns into an audience. People watch what is happening but sometimes don't feel that they are taking part despite my best efforts. It's all about society's view of official religion I guess!

Then there are one or two weddings every year, and call me an old softy here if you like, where the quiet interaction between the couple as they make their vows is a privilege to watch. Two people for whom this moment is the right one as they make vows promising to love each other for life. There is just an atmosphere created where the genuineness and integrity of what the couple are saying is there for all to see. And I'm of course less than a foot away from them as they look at each other, embracing life's destiny – a great privilege!

The other nice piece of news that has crossed my radar recently is that one of the members of the congregation here at Palma has been awarded the honour of being named a European Person of the Year. I'm going to spare her blushes by not mentioning her name here but suffice to say this is a person who is involved in supporting the work of many charities based in the western part of the island and she has done this for several years now. She is also a regular member of the congregation here in Palma and can often be seen undertaking voluntary tasks here too. You know who you are – well done!

Lastly just to say that occasionally we have visiting choirs coming out here to Mallorca to perform. You may recall that a male voice choir from Bridgend was here last year for a concert in the cathedral which went down very well. Well, the choir of St. Mary's College, Durham University are coming out here for a few days singing in the sun and will help lead our Sunday service on 24th June. So it will be their singing integrated with the normal Sunday service of holy communion. Please do feel free to turn up if you wish, listen to the singing, the stunning sermon (!), join in with the hymns, receive communion. All are welcome and I hope that we will have a small 'cava based' event on the terrace outside afterwards!