



**St Mark's Church, Reigate**

July 2019

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

Dear Friends,

I am writing this on St Barnabas' Day (11th June). Who was he and what is he renowned for? One of our lesser celebrated Saints, but perhaps this year he should have a higher place in our memory bank of revering.

Barnabas was (according to the Acts of the Apostles in the Bible) a man from Cyprus called Joseph, but when the apostles met him, they renamed him Barnabas, which means "Son of encouragement". Why did they do this? Because he sold a field and gave the money to the apostles to use for their cause of sharing and helping those less advantaged than themselves. As the Bible puts it – the widows and orphans. Women and children were dependent on the eldest man of the house ensuring that the whole family had food and shelter. If they were bereft of such care they were often reduced to begging. So the apostles did their best for them with what little they had, relying on the generosity of others to do this. They felt Joseph had encouraged them on their mission so much they called him Barnabas.

At the time of writing, there are hundreds of people stranded on boats in the Mediterranean being denied landing on Greek Islands, or Malta, or Italy, or other islands and countries. There are also refugees crossing the English Channel in nothing more than a child's blow-up dinghy. Among those on the boats are many children. Without getting into a political debate, I wonder what Barnabas and the apostles would have to say about this?

We are also waiting to hear who will become the next leader of the Conservative Party and thus our Prime Minister. Whoever succeeds, will they extend generosity towards the other candidates and the nations of Europe (and the world) as they attempt to lead our nation out of Europe in an orderly and peaceful way to the benefit of all. Almost every piece of news can be challenged by asking "where is the generosity in that?"

In a nutshell, to ponder on generosity; to challenge ourselves on our own generosity is something I believe we should do more of. Even if we don't consider our possessions, there is also the question of our generosity of spirit. How willing are we to give of ourselves, our time and our love? Last year a book was written to help us divorce ourselves from our phones, so that we give more of ourselves outwardly instead of to a screen. (I think that might only get read though if it is produced as an app on screen!) We run the risk of becoming more and more insular and in short, selfish.

So – as we move towards those lazy, hazy days of summer, how about we each reflect on how we just might take a lesson from Joseph (aka Barnabas) and give more of ourselves to others, by leaving our phones alone, spending more time and energy and love on each other and engaging with charitable causes that can truly help those in need or distress.

Enjoy the start of summer and for all those people and homes affected by the wait for exam results I offer you my love and prayers.

With my best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.