

A few words from the Vicar

And after he [Jesus] had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. (Matthew 14:23)

When I get the opportunity, I like to watch 'Murder Mysteries' on the telly. And yes, I much prefer the old Poirot to the new one.

Do murder mysteries accurately depict reality? Daft question, of course not. The murder rate in Midsomer, a beautiful English country district, is higher than London. And, after watching Morse / Lewis / Endeavor, no sensible person would ever visit Oxford again. See Oxford and die!

What amuses me is the depiction of clergy in these series. Passing over those instances where the vicar is the murderer (a clear indication that the selection process doesn't always work) or one of the horribly murdered victims, he or she can always be found in Church (often polishing the brasses, tidying the hymnbooks or playing the organ) and can remember obscure pieces of information from many years previously at the drop of a hat.

I can't think of any vicar who has the time these days to potter about in Church. We're too busy, spending most of our time visiting, attending meetings or at our desks.

As for Father Brown, where does he get the time to solve murders?

One thing these series get nearly right is on those occasions when the detective walks into an open Church to find the vicar, at that precise moment, kneeling at the communion rail in prayer. Well, sometimes I go into church to pray but, mostly, I pray in my office.

Nonetheless, I guess, the writers of these series deserve some credit for acknowledging the importance of prayer in the lives

of parish clergy. Admittedly, sometimes it can be a struggle to carve out the time for prayer, but it can be done – it is not unknown for me to pray on the train using the C of E's daily prayer app!

But how about you? Prayer is not for the clergy alone; anyone can do it. Indeed, it is something all Christians should do, and I would strongly urge everyone to set aside a quiet time each day to read the Bible and pray. Jesus is our model in this. Even when busy, he took himself off to somewhere quiet, away from the crowds, to pray.

And, whilst you are at it, don't forget to ask God to bless this Church with the funding we need to pay for essential repairs, to improve the sound system and to properly cover the cost of mission and evangelism in this parish.

Of course, there is much more you could pray for. Our weekly pewsheet suggests some topics but this is not a definitive list. Often, the best thing to do is pray as you feel led.

Talking of prayer, praying together is a priority for our Deanery and, at Ainsworth, we are hosting a prayer meeting on 19th February (7.30pm). Members of all the congregations in the Deanery have been invited but, as we are the hosts, it would be good if we were well represented. So, please come along.

Every Blessing

Dave