



*Notes to help you plan your resolutions and the one or two priorities that will become part of your Way of Living.*

- ◇ Care of self in enjoyment and care of others
- ◇ Enjoyment of giving in celebration of God's goodness
- ◇ Celebration of the great Thanksgiving, the Eucharist

## EASTER

### Celebrating recovery of our authentic, better selves

Some of you might know the Lindchester trilogy of novels by Catherine Fox. No, they are not set in Chichester, in spite of the spire on the cathedral of the front cover.

In many respects, it is the story of the carefully named tenor, Freddie May, and the tantalising question of whether he has a better self that can be recovered.

Freddie does not celebrate; he crashes out on some of the materials you can use for celebration. At the end of the party he is likely to be "wasted".

The Easter celebration of the Christian tradition is a 50 day foretaste of the eternal banquet of heaven.

The image of banquet and celebration is just one way of describing the vision of God in the glory of heaven (Isaiah 25.6; Rev 19.9). I think another way would be to compare it with infectious laughter with, not about, other people.

When we think about our *Way of Living*, the inclusion of enforced celebration is hard to define or explain. But there is no getting away from the fact that infectious joy is an intrinsic characteristic of the Christian life.

This is different from what John Donne calls “light squibs of mirth”. The joyfulness is deeper and it has been forged on the anvil of suffering and broken-heartedness on the cross.

1. How do you register the joy of this banquet, not simply through the 50 days of Easter, but as a symptom of every Eucharist and act of worship?

And though this joy is as yet incomplete and compromised by the futility and transience of human pride, its Christian manifestation must, nonetheless, overflow into everyday life. Being an infectiously joyful person (not the noisy squib sort), is also part of our vocation.

Jesus Christ, who died for you, rose to new life in order to give your life a quality that can never be destroyed (Col 3.3). That is the part of you that already reflects the glory of God.

As a Christian, liberated from guilt and fear, the extent to which you care for yourself is a statement of your thanksgiving to God who made and redeemed you.

This is not permission to be indulgent: quite the reverse. It is release from indulgence that damages, into wellbeing that rejoices in God.

Enjoy life to the full, and in your enjoyment, enrich the joy of others. Include something on that in your *Way of Living*.

2. And here’s the way you measure how well you have mastered the art of celebration: be joyful in your giving.

How well, generously, and joyfully do you give (money is generally a better measure than time)? And another measure is to check that this giving in church is to the whole household

of faith, so that those with more assist in meeting the needs with less. (The Diocesan web has loads of advice!)

Measure your giving against the scale of tithing (not everyone can tithe) and rejoice in just how much you are able to give because of God’s gracious generosity to you.

This is material as well as spiritual generosity. But in these Easter days of celebration, remember the divine cost. You were bought with the blood of Jesus Christ, the beloved Son of the Eternal Father. That makes you priceless. Rejoice!

3. Finally, celebration. The church has many forms, but the ultimate and unique pattern is the celebration of the Eucharist. Everyone is an active participant in that transcendent event. It is crowd drama and sacred drama. It is the privilege for which martyrs shed their blood.

How often do you exercise this privilege? And when you do, in what ways do you prepare? John Calvin described it as being “caught up to the heavenly places and there [to] feed on Christ, whose grace is real and transforming”.

Throughout its history, the Church of England has insisted that every Sunday is marked by this Celebration of word and sacrament. In our time, there are often weekday celebrations as well.

How well practised is your celebration of encountering the risen Lord in this way?