

Pastoral Letter – July & August 2011

Dearest Friends,

I was gathered with Sam in Ripon Cathedral the other Saturday – but not perhaps in the Cathedral that you automatically associate with that small city!!!

This was a Cathedral dedicated to fun and amusement: one that has old and new elements to it; one with cosy nooks and towering vaults; one that is open to the elements; one that appeals to the young in particular; one where you even have to pay to enter and yet people were happily paying!!

I'm referring of course to Lightwater Valley Amusement Park.

It cost over £40 for the two of us to gain entry but we were there for almost 6 hours – we were rained upon, we queued in stoic anticipation, we were knocked about and we were scared... it was great great fun. Hundreds of people braved the cool temperature and uncertain weather but all had a great time.

As I stood at the top of a very high platform waiting to go down a water chute in a rubber dingy (don't ask!!!) I scanned the fields and dales of beautiful Yorkshire and reflected upon why that place is so popular and what if anything the church can do to improve its appeal to a wider audience.

Our Cathedrals and parish churches are free to enter, they can offer fun and enjoyment, they can offer a sense of community and solidarity, they can be a place of great succour and of peace... maybe that's the problem!! Maybe we are too peaceful – maybe people equate the church with reflection when now we live in an age of instant gratification and the desire to get away from our worries if only for half a day?!

From a socio-economic point of view it was interesting to watch the clientele at the park – the two main groupings appeared to be middle

class teenagers and working class families... the latter: a group that the church ought to appeal to and the former, a group that the church would love to appeal to.

We in our village churches have so much to offer and the first thing people see when they come to us for whatever reason, are the people already there!! We mustn't just try our very best to be welcoming; but we must bend over backwards to be accommodating – only then will people come back and back again.

Wherever you go this summer – be it cathedrals or amusement parks – may God go with you and may the love of God dwell in you as you return home and take your place in our church and may that love and knowledge of God reflect in our daily lives – a reflection that will be a beacon to others.

Yours in Christ's service, *Garry*

Notices:

Hampsthwaite Vicarage Garden Party has now been changed to *Saturday 2nd July: 1pm until 4.*

The afternoon will have various elements to it, such as:

- General Tombola & Chocolate Tombola
- Hot Dogs and Burgers
- Tea, Coffee and Scones
- Pimms
- Cake Stall
- Professional Plant Stall
- Guess the weight of the cake?
- How many in the Jar?
- Face Painting
- Treasure Hunt/100 Squares
- Hook a Duck
- Bar Skittles
- Sandpit Straws
- Prize Hoopla
- Vicar in the Stocks (not sure what I think about this one but the rest will be great!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!)

Please be aware of and pray for all those involved in Hampsthwaite Village Feast this year and Birstwith Village Show.

The Diocese has issued an invitation to join with others at the Lay Conference to be held in Knaresborough on **8th October**. Those from our churches who have attended this event before have come back invigorated, refreshed and enthused. May I recommend it to you and ask that if you are interested you let me know asap.