



St Mark's Church, Reigate

June 2025

Letter from the Vicar, Father Martin Colton

Dear Friends

The church calendar for June is full of all kinds of witnesses/martyrs, from many centuries and all over the world. The word "martyr" is actually derived from a Greek word meaning "witness". When Jesus says "you are my witnesses", he's also saying "you are my martyrs". So the martyrs of the church are respected primarily for their witness to Christ and witnessing even when it led them to die. As we reflect on our witness here in June now, their lives can be examples to inspire us. Here are a few:

June 1st: Justin Martyr witnessed to Christ both in his life and writing, and in his death. Born into a pagan family in Palestine, after his conversion he taught Christianity as a philosophy. He is remembered as the first Christian thinker to enter into dialogue with other faiths and philosophies, and for seeking to reconcile faith and reason. His witness in dialogue is an example in our diverse world now. Beheaded in Rome in 165.

June 9th: Columba, Abbot of Iona. Born in Ireland about 521, he became a monk founding several monasteries. He was called to Scotland, a pagan country, and founded a monastery on Iona. He wanted his monks to be missionaries, and Iona became the starting point for the expansion of Christianity throughout Scotland. The Celtic church's love and respect for the natural world has been rediscovered by the church today.

June 22nd: Alban, the first British martyr. Alban takes us back to the earliest days of the church in this country. Although a pagan, he sheltered a Christian priest from persecution and was converted by the priest's devotion to prayer. He was arrested in the priest's place and tortured, but refused to renounce his faith and was executed in about 250. The annual Alban Pilgrimage celebrates him today.

June 29th: Peter and Paul, the greatest of the Apostles and witnesses for Christ. They were very different men – a fisherman and a scholar – who shaped the early church. They have been remembered together from very early days as it was believed they were both martyred on this day in 64AD.

And there are many more! John the Baptist, Barnabas the Apostle, Irenaeus of Lyons, Ephrem of Syria, Richard of Chichester, Samuel and Henrietta Barnett. So as we travel through the month of June, give thanks for all those witnesses to Christ who brought the Good News, the Gospel, to all lands and give thanks that their witness meant that we also heard the Good News.

Every blessing,