



St Mark's Church, Reigate

September 2025

Letter from the Vicar, Father Martin Colton

Dear Friends

*Strengthen for service, Lord,
the hands that have taken holy things;
may the ears which have heard your word
be deaf to clamour and dispute;
may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit;
may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love
shine with the light of hope;
and may the bodies which have been fed with your body
be refreshed with the fullness of your life;
glory to you for ever.*

Common Worship post-communion prayer for Trinity 8

This prayer, attributed to Ephrem the Syrian (c.306-73), has a long history in the Eastern Churches, most notably, since the fifth century, in the Syro-Malabar rite in South India. I first came across it as a hymn, translated by J. M. Neale and Percy Dearmer; in 1997 it was included in *Common Worship* as the post-communion prayer for the Eighth Sunday after Trinity, in this version rewritten by Bishop Michael Perham.

As I preside at holy communion, I often reflect on how the priest's hands take and consecrate the ordinary things in life, that they may become for us the body and blood of Jesus Christ. That is an awesome privilege, and a solemn responsibility. But the prayer is not only for priests who preside. In holy communion, each of our hands takes these holy things to our comfort; each of us hears and receives God's holy word; and each tongue tells of the glorious mystery. Our eyes behold the Lamb of God, and our bodies are made clean by Christ's body. The prayer makes us realise that everything we are, our hands, ears, tongues, eyes, and bodies, is transformed by this offering of praise and thanksgiving.

When we encounter Jesus in the Eucharist, we enter into a deeper understanding, both of ourselves and our Saviour. Theologians have often asked: "What changes at holy communion?" It is a question that can easily be limited to the elements placed on the altar, but this beautiful, touching, and profound prayer reminds us that it is we who are changed. Indeed, we can go further. What changes? Everything.

With every blessing.