

Last Monday I took communion
to my former churchwarden, now in a care home in Thirsk.
She'd been very kind to us in our early days in Helmsley:
our girls were billeted with her
whilst we sorted out the most disorganised vicarage in captivity.
I put the bread I'd consecrated previously at our 8 am service,
in a little silver box called a pyx.

This pyx had been presented to my dad by his moorland parish
before he went to theological college in 1960,
inscribed *From Boosbeck Youth Club*.

Solid silver, it was obviously a generous gift.

My dad didn't really use it, but I have for forty years,
taking communion to the housebound and poorly
in Middlesbrough, Pontefract, Helmsley...

Jesus, the Good Samaritan, in his blessed sacrament
graciously coming alongside those
left half dead by the world's wayside.

Some parishes put the pyx containing the precious bread in a safe called an aumbry or tabernacle.

Thieves forced open a tabernacle in a rough part of Cardiff, stole two pyxes and scattered the consecrated bread in the church car park before making off with the silver.

The faithful parish priest gathered and then consumed the discarded hosts, on his knees, in the car park, weeping: the epitome of priesthood.

The next Sunday I visited to re-hallow the church, pointing out that the thieves were like the hapless Nazis in Steven Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, oblivious to the power of Christ they had unwittingly unleashed. But even the saddest episode has its funny side.

The vicar reported the theft to the somewhat baffled police. 'Excuse me, sir, I hope you don't mind me asking, but why had you locked up two **pixies** in the church safe?'

To the outside world, the things we do must look very odd.

As it says in our BCP Gospel,

the Good Samaritan came to where the wounded Jew was.

Jesus simply comes to where we are in whatever need,

Holy Communion a profound symbol of that connection.

Often Christ comes with a cheerful glint in his eye.

As in this variant of the-footprints-in-the-sand story.

‘Lord, you claim you are always with me,

an extra set of footprints as I walk along the beach of life.

But why, when I really needed you,

such as when my son was ill, when my dad died,

are there only one set? Why did you desert me?’

‘My child,’ Jesus tenderly replies,

‘I didn’t desert you.

At those terrible times we were hopping, just for fun.’