

Voice from the Vicarage July 22nd 2021

Dear All,

This morning I was reading some words of Ambrose, the 4th century bishop of Milan, in which he reflects on the sense of the absence of God that can beset the believer. There can't be many folk who haven't wanted as some time or another to ask the Lord, 'Why do you turn away your face?'

Ambrose suggests that at such times, the very fact that we have God on our thoughts—enough to address him - is *itself* a sign that He is in reality visiting our minds, that He is 'touching our intellect' even in the midst of the sense of distance or in the darkneses that hinder us.

I've never quite thought of it like that before. It's a fine insight. In the same passage (some reflections on Psalm 43), Ambrose reflects on the way the Father 'sends out his light' by sending of Jesus, and he commends Zachaeus, the little man who climbed the tree to see that light.

Climbing trees! Maybe in the midst of whatever life throws at us, we



Zachaeus climbs the tree and gets close...

need to learn to climb trees! By that I mean, go to the places where we can have 'sight' of the Lord, sight with the 'eye of our heart'. The Eucharist is crucial to this seeing. To go to the Eucharist is God given tree climbing.

There is a most beautiful and justifiably famous passage in a book about the Mass written by an Anglican monk, Dom Gregory Dix. It begins 'Was ever another command so obeyed?' (I've attached it) The Mass is simply what the people of God 'do' and have done together

from the beginning, in all manner of circumstance. It is the sacred action which is our first duty and joy to offer, and the sacred action we offer when words fall short, and we don't know exactly what to do or say next. It's what to do as you live seeing 'through a glass darkly'. (1 Cor 13:12)

As a Christian I am grateful that in spite of my many unfaithfulnesses, I have by and large remained faithful to the Mass. And as a priest I have felt its power so very much when I have visited the dying, the sick, and the confused. When I have taken communion to Christians with dementia for example, they have often asked me, "Who are you?" but I cannot recall any of them asking, "What is that?" when I have offered the sacrament. Somehow there is an abiding recognition born of their earlier faithfulness, the time when they could more easily climb trees....

Staying close to the sight of Him

As I have often said throughout the pandemic, in the midst of so many serious losses, the loss of our ability to gather for the Eucharist is the greatest loss for the people of God. Can I say that I sort of hope you feel the loss. There are many things we must learn to live without. Don't learn to live without the Eucharist!

THIS SUNDAY, the Mass will again be online, though it will be a little different as I am not able to go into the church to film with our little 'crew' as would normally happen because of the quarantine rules we are under here in the vicarage. Being housebound will end on Tuesday, subject of course to a satisfactory result from the covid test I must take

on Sunday. We are learning to be resourceful, so I can still say, I look forward to 'seeing' you online...

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT can be collected in readiness for Sunday from the Lady Chapel tomorrow (Friday) between 2—4 p.m. and on Saturday between 2—4 p.m. Please note the change of times and VENUE

Talking of the vicarage, here's some happy news....

For some time now, Lucas Smith, who has lived in the house for eighteen months or so, has been 'walking out' with Anita Levy, baptised last Easter, and our lovely cantor last week. **This week they got engaged!**

It will such a joy to marry them. Their relationship is the fruit of meeting here at Christ Church.

It really will be a 'Church wedding' in more than venue.

A heartfelt thank you!

Thank you for the kind messages that have come our way since Javi and I we went into quarantine. Lucas was happily (for him) away. Little 'treats' and offers of help have kept arriving. As I write this, I'm enjoying some delicious pumpkin soup! A super frog has just been delivered by Express post!



Anita with a temporary engagement ring! The real thing is stuck in Lucas's room in the vicarage. He's not allowed in to get it! A little Covid inconvenience but love and a candy ring conquers all!



A super frog... At 23 cm long, I'm somewhat glad it's just made of chocolate!



Heating guys, James & John (very biblical!) work to make sure the new curate is warm....

Life goes on of course, and work on 264 Sydney Rd. continues. The work on the building is nearing completion. Getting 'The Lamb' ready for its food licence inspection has been quite a thing. Thank you to Robyn White who has done so much. And this week central heating has gone in to the upstairs flat where Deacon Jack will live.

It is still unclear when and where Jack's ordination will take place, though the most likely date at present is next Thursday. Keep the prayers going for him, and I'll write as soon as we know. Thanks to those who have dropped him an email. I know it's meant a lot to him.

And finally, thanks be to God for our Thursday lunch!



'Back of house...' Alice does a bit of a post lunch clean up...

Today I hear almost 50 free lunches were served. Maybe a record. Creamy chicken bake on rice, mountains of lamingtons and Anzac biscuits. Thanks to the team, who always begin the work with worship...

Much love. Keep on in your corners.... *+Lindsay*

For your meditation....

Was ever a command so obeyed? For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country and among every race on earth, this action has been done, and in every conceivable human circumstance, for every conceivable human need from infancy and before it to extreme old age and after it, from the pinnacles of earthly greatness to the refuge of fugitives in the caves and dens of the earth. Men and women have found no better thing than this to do for kings at their crowning and for criminals going to the scaffold; for armies in triumph or for a bride and bridegroom in a little country church; for the proclamation of a dogma or for a good crop of wheat; for the wisdom of the Parliament of a mighty nation or for a sick old woman afraid to die; for a schoolboy sitting an examination or for Columbus setting out to discover America; for the famine of whole provinces or for the soul of a dead lover; in thankfulness because my father did not die of pneumonia; for a village headman much tempted to return to fetich because the yams had failed; because the Turk was at the gates of Vienna; for the repentance of Margaret; for the settlement of a strike; for the son of a barren women; for Captain so-and-so, wounded and prisoner of war; while the lions roared in the nearby amphitheatre; on the beach at Dunkirk; while the hiss of scythes in the thick June grass came faintly through the window of the church; tremulously by an old monk on the fiftieth anniversary of his vows; furtively by an exiled bishop who had hewn timber all day in a prison camp near Murmansk; gorgeously for the canonisation od S. Joan of Arc – one could fill many pages with the reasons why men and women have done this, and not tell a hundredth part of them. And best of all, week by week and month by month, on a hundred thousand successive Sundays, faithfully, unflinching, across all the parishes of Christendom, the pastors have done this just to *make* the *plebs sancta Dei* – the holy common people of God.

From 'The Shape of the Liturgy' Dom Gregory Dix, monk of Nashdom Abbey First published 1945

..and during a pandemic in Brunswick....