

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 76

Wednesday 9th December 2020

‘Virtually Church but with some way to go...’

Welcome

Welcome to this midweek edition of Cutting Edge Camelot.

Scripture Passage

Matthew 6:1-4

“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

² “So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. ³ But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴ so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”

Reflection on St Nicholas (also known as Santa Claus)

This Christmas I am experiencing the excitement of my three-year-old daughter as we get ready for Christmas. Waiting and Advent, however, seems to be a concept which still needs to be learnt. The Advent calendar with its chocolates is under constant attack and needs defending in order to last many more days. And when told that it is not yet Christmas the response is that, unlike other people even the Queen, she has three birthdays each year, one of which is due right now.

And then there is Father Christmas. But what will I say when she comes to the stage of questioning the existence of Father Christmas? I think that in response to the question 'Do you believe in Father Christmas?' I will borrow a useful little phrase she has taught me. That phrase is 'No, not exactly.'

For I will be able to say quite truthfully that there is indeed a real Santa Claus, which is another name for St Nicholas whose saint's day we celebrate shortly before Christmas. Admittedly his geographical location seems to have slipped a little as St Nicholas lived in Turkey while Santa Claus is more normally pictured as being in Lapland and among reindeers. But perhaps this is a kind of early reverse climate change.

Nevertheless, Nicholas was a real-life bishop in Turkey with all too human traits such as losing his temper at the Council of Nicaea (perhaps we can understand and sympathise here). But one of the best-known stories associated with him was when he learnt that three girls were to be sold into slavery because of the poverty of their family. Using his savings he filled three bags with coins. He did not want anyone to know that it was he who was helping the family. So he waited until dark and everyone was asleep. Then going to the family's home he tossed the three bags of coins through an open window and hurried back home. The money which the girls received saved them from slavery.

What we learn about St Nicholas from this is not simply that he was a generous man but that he did not want to become known for his generosity. His giving was done in secret. And in this he was following Christ's command in this passage from the Sermon on the Mount which was to give our gifts (or alms) in secret so that no-one will see us. And in doing so we will have a reward in heaven.

This presents us a double challenge for us. The first is of generosity itself but the second is of not being recognised for our generosity. Our generosity

may not simply show itself in terms of financial giving but in terms of the giving of help and time. And if we are honest many of us do appreciate being recognised for this kind of generosity. But what if no-one recognises this? If no-one ever knows what we have done?

Well, then we need to trust that our reward will be in heaven. And perhaps it will also be on earth although not in the form of receiving public applause. Our reward may be in the way that such secret generosity forms and changes our character, makes us more full of love, joy, peace indeed more like Christ. And as we become more like Christ we will be rewarded, not simply in the sense of being better prepared for heaven but also in the sense of being happier and more fulfilled in the here and now.

Yes, these are important lessons which St Nicholas or Santa Claus teaches us. And theologically they are correct. But there's one final practical question which I anticipate I may be asked on the subject of Father Christmas. For if St Nicholas did not want anyone to know about his generosity how is it that we all do now know? Can I explain this? I think I shall answer 'No, not exactly.'

Tristram

Points for Prayers

- For our spiritual growth and discipleship, for the example of St Nicholas who gave in secret
- Thanksgiving for care, skill and courage of NHS workers and those in care homes
- Those suffering from coronavirus in hospitals, care homes and at home
- Need for further largescale testing

- Give thanks for approval of first vaccine for use in combating coronavirus
- The arrangements for Christmas bubbles and minimising any resulting increase in coronavirus infections
- A fresh and imaginative approach to services and communications in the Camelot Group over the Christmas period
- Bishop Peter and his search for a stem cell donor
- Wedding of Harry and Georgia at North Cadbury this Saturday
- For North Cadbury Church Primary School and Marchant Holliday school in our benefice remembering also Horsington school as they proceed with their new school year
- Prayers for those affected economically by the lockdown, for businesses and those who have become unemployed
- Prayers and thanksgiving for contributions to the foodbanks and for those helping to take these to the foodbanks.

Rules following lockdown

The Camelot Group falls within the area of South Somerset. This area (along with many others) has been placed in Tier 2 which is one of High Alert. Full guidance on what this means can be found on the government website:-

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-restriction-tiers-what-you-need-to-know>

As far as places of worship are concerned, they are open although there are strict restrictions on socialising there. Weddings and funerals are also permitted with numbers restricted at weddings to 15 and at funerals to 30.

Services this coming Sunday

9.30 am, Galhampton Church, Communion

9.30 am, St John the Baptist North Cheriton, Communion

9.30 am, St Michael's Blackford, Matins with Carols

11.00 am, St Michael's North Cadbury, Communion

11.00 am, St Thomas a Becket South Cadbury, Communion with Carols

11 am, St Nicholas Holton, Patronal Service and Sunday Worship

The Parish Office

The Parish Office is closed although Rob does come in regularly. In his absence please contact Rob via email (office@camelotparishes.org.uk) or on 01749 850934.

Growing as a worshipper, a servant and a family

*We pray that 'we might live in love,
as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us'*

(Ephesians 5:2)