

CUTTING EDGE CAMELOT, No 85

Sunday 31st January 2021

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

Welcome

Welcome to this Sunday’s edition of Cutting Edge Camelot.

On Wednesday we will begin a new midweek series on the Beatitudes.

This edition also contains some information about possible ways in which we could support our community at this time.

Scripture Passage

Luke 2: 22-40

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah.

Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

Reflection

The celebration of Candlemas at the end of January or the beginning of February marks a hinge in the church’s year. From the celebration of Christmas and what precedes and follows, the seasons of Advent and Epiphany, we will after Candlemas start preparing for Lent and Easter. And this brings a marked change of tone, perhaps more austere and less celebratory.

Candlemas recalls the occasion of Jesus’ presentation in the Temple which is narrated in our gospel passage from Luke’s gospel. Luke here introduces

two new characters, Simeon and Anna, into his narrative of Jesus' birth and early life. And this year we might ask ourselves what we can learn from Simeon, Anna and the early life of Jesus about a wise response to the circumstances we find ourselves in.

To begin with Simeon. First of all, Luke wants us to notice Simeon's character. Character always matters but testing circumstances highlights how essential it is as the foundation for anything we might do or achieve.

So we learn that Simeon is righteous and devout, he is patient and waits on God. He has received God's promise and now he trusts that this will be fulfilled. And he is sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Indeed he has had a very specific revelation from the Holy Spirit that he will not die before he sees the Lord's Messiah, the one anointed and chosen by God.

He knows the meaning of his life's work and also what represents its fulfilment. The obedience and sensitivity of Simeon to the Spirit is stressed. Guided by the Spirit he knows when to go into the temple. And so he is there to greet Jesus and His parents when they too enter the temple.

He instantly recognises Jesus and he takes Him in his arms to bless Him. As he does so, he speaks the famous words which we sing in church as the Nunc Dimittis,

“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.”

Part of Simeon's wisdom is that he is able to reckon with and accept his own mortality. The terrible figure of deaths from coronavirus keeps on reminding us of our own mortality and that of others. Yet Simeon can ask God to be dismissed in peace because he knows the purpose of his own life and also

when this has been fulfilled. He has a vision of God's purposes which stretches way beyond the confines of this present life.

And then Anna. In the sixth century, St Benedict reformed monastic life. The essence of the model which he promoted is preserved in the form of the Rule of St Benedict. One aspect of this Rule is that a monk needs to be rooted in a single community. And so a prospective monk had to make a lifelong promise of stability. This promise meant that the monk would stay and live out his vocation within one particular community.

Centuries before St Benedict Anna exemplifies what such stability might look like when viewed over the course of a lifetime. She has been a widow for a very long time and has now reached the age of 84. And during this long lifetime Anna stays in one place, never leaving the temple day or night. It is a lifestyle of continuous prayer and worship.

We might imagine that such a confined sphere of operation would result in a very narrow view of life. But not at all. Anna does not simply cope with the confinements within which she lives, she flourishes. She finds deep roots in God and in worship and these deep roots bear fruit in active ministry to others.

So Anna comes to the temple to praise God and she sees the child Jesus. She recognises Him for who He is. Then she speaks about Jesus to all who are faithfully waiting for the fulfilment of God's promises.

There are obvious parallels between Anna's way of life in the temple, the monastic vow of stability, and the confinements of our own lockdown. But we might observe that Anna and the monks chose their own particular path of service and that this path is not for everyone. We have not chosen lockdown, rather it has been imposed upon us.

On the other hand, regardless of the pandemic, there are many occasions on which we do not control our own circumstances, partly or in full.

Sometimes our circumstances suit us and play to our strengths. But on other occasions we are forced to play outside our own preferred role.

Nevertheless, even when we are pushed into roles which do not really suit us this can still be an opportunity for growth and learning in our lives.

Perhaps we are brought into a deeper sense of our need to seek and rely on God. Perhaps we learn more about ourselves and find that there are hidden gifts and strengths we did not realise we had.

And then there is the early life of Jesus. Luke tells us that after the encounter with Simeon and Anna in the temple, the family returned to Nazareth and that the child Jesus 'grew and became strong, filled with wisdom.'

We can sometimes imagine Jesus knew everything He needed to know in life instantaneously without the need for study or hard work. After all was He not God in human form? And yet the need for Jesus to grow as a human being is just as necessary as it was for Jesus to be born, like the rest of us, as a new born, helpless baby. Jesus, though filled with wisdom, still had to learn and patiently grow like the rest of us.

The need for growth in wisdom and understanding is also important for us in this time. There are so many questions that we want to ask. But we need to be patient in putting those questions before God and other people. So often we can rush to conclusions without first knowing what the right questions are. Sometimes we will never know in this life the answers to the questions that we ask of God. But on other occasions as we continue to pray and to live out our vocations gradually our understanding increases.

So Candlemas reminds us that there are opportunities which present themselves to us despite the confinement of our circumstances. Do we like

Simeon truly know the purpose of our life and can we recognise its fulfilment? Are we like Anna putting down deep roots into God which will bear fruit in active ministry to others? Are we like Jesus growing and being filled with wisdom? What might this time hold for you and for me?

Tristram

Supporting our community

The Lord's Larder

The Lord's Larder is one of our local foodbanks based in Yeovil. In many of our villages we have central collection points for food to be taken to the Lord's Larder and to other local foodbanks. They are immensely appreciative of the support and of food which is given in this way.

However, they also need financial contributions so that they can buy additional food as needed. If you would like to contribute in this way you can do so by setting up a Standing Order in favour of the Yeovil Christian Support Trust. Their bank details are Unity Trust Bank Plc, Birmingham, Sort Code 60-83-01, Account No 20211112. It is possible to increase the value of these donations by claiming Gift Aid.

North Cadbury Church of England Primary School

The school also immensely appreciates our prayers and support in this difficult period.

While prayer remains primary, some of us may be wondering whether we can also help in practical ways. The need for all families connected with the school to be able to buy books for use at home is very pressing in this time of home schooling.

So the school would appreciate donations of book tokens or gift vouchers for this purpose. If in the first instance you could send these donations to the

Parish Office marking any envelopes 'For the School' they can then be passed on promptly to the school.

Vimeo

We are planning to produce some more Vimeo videos and hope to be able once more to draw on the assistance and technical expertise of Dan Gruner and his colleagues. The first of these should be available within the next week or so.

Meanwhile the Diocese's service this Sunday including a Candlemas reflection from our assistant Bishop Trevor Willmott is available. You will find this by going to the diocesan page on the Vimeo website, <https://vimeo.com/user131166676>.

Hymn Suggestion

A hymn recognising Jesus as Messiah and King is 'Hail to the Lord's anointed.' There are also many versions of the 'Nunc Dimittis' which you can find on Youtube and other resources.

Points for Prayers

- For growth in wisdom, that we may recognise God's purpose for our lives and that we might find deep roots in God
- The restrictions of the third lockdown and sustaining our common life in this time
- The roll out of the different vaccines in combating coronavirus
- 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
- Our Bishops (please see notice below)
- For North Cadbury Church Primary School and other local schools as they are unable to open fully at the moment
- 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.

Suspension of services

Services across the Camelot Group have now been suspended as sadly we concluded that it was not possible to hold them safely in the current circumstances. The suspension of services will be kept under review as circumstances change.

Excalibur

The February edition of Excalibur is now online at camelotparishes.co.uk

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.

Update on Bishop Peter

Bishop Peter thanks everyone for all the cards and other expressions of support which he has received. A card was sent to him on behalf of the Camelot Parishes as a whole. He says that he has been lifted on 'eagle's

wings' through the love and prayers of others. He has now received a stem cell transplant. Please pray for the new cells to 'do their bit' and for his continued healing. Please continue to pray for him and his family in this challenging time. Please pray also for Bishop Ruth and the rest of the Bishop's Staff as they take on the oversight of the diocese in his absence.

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)