



THE NEWSLETTER

ALL SAINTS CHURCH

Upper Norwood



March 2019

The Vicar's Monthly Letter

Dear Friends

This coming Wednesday is Ash Wednesday. The Church invites us to remember our common humanity, and to turn to our creator and redeemer as we journey towards Easter and the new life it brings. All Christians should be in Church on Ash Wednesday to receive the mark of the cross in dust to remember who we are and what we are called to be.

We all begin in the same place, whether we are Charles Darwin, Richard Dawkins, the biologist, or the book of Genesis, we all agree we are creatures of the dust; in fact, we are creatures of star dust.

The name Adam in Hebrew means a creature of the earth or creature of the dust. In the myth of the paradise garden, the Lord God says to Adam, Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return. We shall repeat those words in this service.

It is the truth about human existence that we are part of the universe, but more than that. We are conscious participants in the drama of the universe. We are the universe consciously reflecting on itself. Every beast of the field and every fowl of the air were brought to Adam, and he named them. We are to give voice to the universe. Some choose to remain earthbound; some choose to regard human beings as in the end little more than clever but aggressive bipeds. Others hear the call to go beyond the earthbound. The journey into spiritual life, life in all its fullness, to life as a human being, never forgets our starting point.

Jesus Christ teaches us this, that the very first step in becoming a human being is to refuse to be a little god. It says in the letter to the Christians in Phillipi, "Your attitude should be the same as Christ Jesus, who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing---taking the nature of a servant.

All of us have a surface self that we develop as life goes on; it is necessary, to a certain extent to enable us to deal with the world around us.

In time, however this surface self becomes a kind of crust, and what begins as a protection, and a channel for our energies, and a way of doing business becomes a burden, becomes an oppression, that cuts us off from the fountain of life, which wells up from our spiritual centre. This crust must be pierced rather than reinforced by self-justification.

Real spiritual progress from earthbound existence towards life in all its fullness may be also impeded by all kinds of illusions we may have, about ourselves.

Indeed, we are slaves to drives and desires which exist in the psychic dimensions of our lives, which lie partly hidden beneath the surface self. This dimension of ourselves is the source of the powerful and sometimes destructive anger which can erupt when triggered by some apparently trivial event. When we feel a surge of irritation about someone we've only just met, it is often an indication of what we are afraid of in ourselves, what we are covering up in ourselves. The psychic zone, as it were, it also the cauldron in which projections are manufactured. We project our fears on to some public figure, like the woman accused of adultery in the story in John's Gospel.

Jesus asks the question which pierces the surface self: "He that is what sin - let him cast the first stone". The crowd melts away, leaving Jesus alone with the woman. There is no question about it. She is guilty. Guilty as charged. It says in the Gospel, Jesus lifts himself up. Those words reverberate throughout John's Gospel - he is lifted up on the cross in his passion. There is no condemnation for the woman, or for us - but rather the way is opened for transformation. "Go and sin no more."

There is wisdom in this story for us, as we set out on our journey to Easter, our journey to the empty tomb; our journey away from an existence which tends to retreat from the merely earthbound, an existence that can so easily be stale, flat, and unprofitable. A journey from that to the new life away where in solidarity with Jesus, the human face of God, we can have life in all its fullness. St. Irenaeus said "The glory of God is a human being who is fully alive."

So what are the lessons for us in our journey to Easter?

We must refuse to be a little god. We must stay close to the earth. Sin by contrast is treating ourselves as the centre of concern and attention, the centre of the universe - turned towards ourselves, either in admiration or even less attractively in self-hatred.

Examine your selves; withdraw those projections, which come from the shadow within. The ones we have not fully seen through. If we cover up those shadows, they have the power to do us and others great harm. If we look at them - the shadows and the shame inside, it hurts, but they lose their power to do us permanent damage. Life in all its fullness is the gift of God. You can by some technique create serenity, but that is not life in all its fullness, in all its creativity.

Consumerism has even made a commodity out of spirituality. The spirituality journey is this: Following the way of Jesus Christ, accepting the pain that comes, turning away from being a consumer of the world, to being alive to God. The joy and the glory that comes from this makes other versions of life poor substitutes indeed.

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Leonard Marsh



CLERGY

Vicar

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Articles etc. for inclusion are most welcome and can be given (in writing) or sent to the editor (details above). Email is preferred but any other medium perfectly acceptable.

SERVICES

All Sundays

8.00 am	Said Eucharist
10.00 am	Sung Eucharist

6.30 pm	Night Prayer
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Tuesdays

7.30 pm	Said Eucharist
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1st Saturday of month

10.00 am	Said Eucharist
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Saints of the Month: March.

- 1st St David. Patron Saint of Wales; died around 600. Founder of 10 monasteries, his relics are preserved in St David's Cathedral, Pembrokeshire. His emblems, the leek and daffodil, are still worn on his feast day.
- 17th St Patrick. Patron of Ireland.
- 19th St Joseph. Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, patron of fathers and carpenters.
- 20th St Cuthbert. Bishop of Lindisfarne.
- 25th The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. On this day we traditionally celebrate the appearance of the angel to Mary announcing that she would bear the Lord.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

6th March: Ash Wednesday; see below for details of the 8 pm service.

6th March and following Tuesdays in Lent: Lent Groups at 8 pm – see the Lent 2019 article below for details.

Our regular 'Sunday School':

Small Saints: Every Sunday (depending on staffing) in term time for children up to 10 yrs.

All Saints' Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Important Notice

If a parent is considering asking about a Foundation place for their child at All Saints' school they need to let Fr Leonard know well in advance.

Eligibility has to be agreed with Fr Leonard before completing an application form at the school, and is dependent on church attendance.

Lent 2019

Ash Wednesday March 6th 8 p.m. Sung Mass and Imposition of Ashes.

On **Sunday evenings** in Lent at 6.30 p.m.: Stations of the Cross. A Meditation on the meaning of the Cross.

Lent group - Hymns and the Faith

As usual, these will take place on Tuesdays in Lent 8 p.m.

On Five Tuesdays beginning on **12th March** we will be exploring the theme of **Hymns and the Faith**. We will look together at the place of Hymns in the worship of the Church, looking at five well known hymns that express our own faith and the faith of the Church.

As usual a said mass (7.30 p.m.) will precede the Lent group which will begin at 8 p.m. Please consider taking this opportunity to deepen our faith, hope and love, in the Lenten season.