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June 2012
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God is Love

Nicolas Stebbing offers a reflection on the reconciling love of God in the world

Also in this issue:

- The Diamond Jubilee
- Introducing the new Bishop of Chichester
- Michael Fisher on Pugin

parish directory

BARRY near rail, bus and town centre *Credo Gymru (FiF Wales)* **St Mary's**, Holton Road Sunday: Solemn Mass 8am and 11am, Sunday Club 11am, daily Mass, except Friday; **St Cadoc's**, Coldbrook Road Sunday: Solemn Mass 9.30am, Vespers 6pm Saturday with Benediction 1st Saturdays. Daily Mass in Parish except Friday. Priest to be appointed - 01446 406690

BEXHILL on SEA St Augustine's, Cooden Drive, TN39 3AZ Sunday: Mass at 8am, Parish Mass with Junior Church at 10am. Further details: Father Robert Coates ssc on 01424 210 785

BIRMINGHAM St Agatha, Stratford Road, Sparkbrook (B11 1QT) *"Any similarity between the Church of England and St Agatha's is purely coincidental!" (A Diocesan Official - 2001)* Sunday Mass 11am. Secure Parking. Canon John Herve ssc - 0121 449 2790

BISHOP AUCKLAND St Helen Auckland, Manor Road, West Auckland Medieval church, *Forward in Faith, Resolutions ABC*. Sunday: Sung Mass 10am, Evensong and Benediction 6pm. Weekday Mass: Mon 7pm, Tues, Thur, Fri, Sat 9.30am, Wed 10am, Rosary Mon 6.30pm. Parish Priest: Canon Robert McTeer ssc 01388 604152 www.sthelenschurch.co.uk

BLACKPOOL St Stephen on the Cliffs, Holmfield Road, North Shore Vicar: Canon Andrew Sage ssc. Sundays: Said Mass 9am, Solemn Mass (Traditional Language) 10.30am, Evening Service 6pm; easy access and loop. Tel: 01253 351484 www.ststephenblackpool.co.uk

BOSTON LINCOLNSHIRE St Nicholas, Skirbeck Boston's oldest Parish Church. *Forward in Faith Parish* under the Episcopal care of the Bishop of Richborough. Sunday: Low Mass 8am (1st and 3rd), Sung Mass 9.30am. Daily Mass, offices, benediction and confessions as displayed on notice boards. Rector: Fr Paul Noble ssc 01205 362734 www.forwardinfaithlincs.org.uk/stnicholasboston.html

BOURNEMOUTH St Ambrose, West Cliff Road, BH4 8BE. *A Forward in Faith Parish with Resolutions ABC in place*. Sunday: 8am Low Mass BCP, 10am Sung Mass Traditional Ceremonial, modern Rite, 6pm Evensong. Parish office 01202 766772

BOURNEMOUTH St Francis of Assisi, Charminster Road (corner of East Way) *A Forward in Faith Parish* under the care of the Bishop of Richborough. *Resolutions ABC*. Sunday: 8am Low Mass, Parish Mass 10am, Evening Prayer and Benediction 6.30pm - first Sunday of each month and major festivals. For information about all services during the Interregnum contact Barbara Geatrell 01425 470370 or Hubert Allen 01202 529336 (Parish Office) Churchwardens www.stfrancis-bournemouth.org.uk

BRADFORD St Chad, Toller Lane (B6144, 1 mile from city centre). Sunday services: Low Mass 8.30am, Solemn Mass 10.45am, Evensong and Benediction 6.30pm. Weekday Masses 8am (except Wednesday 7.30pm and Thursday 9.15am). Parish Priest: Canon Ralph Crowe ssc 01274 543957. *Resolutions ABC*. English Missal/BCP www.st.chads.dial.pipex.com

BRIDPORT St Swithun *Resolutions ABC*. Sunday: Low Mass 8am; Sung Mass 9.30am, Evening Prayer and Benediction second Sunday 6pm. Weekday Masses: Tues 12 noon, Wed 9am, Thur 10am. Parish Priest: Fr Peter Edwards 01308 456588

BRISTOL All Saints, Pembroke Road, Clifton (near zoo and suspension bridge) Sunday: Mass 8am, Family service 9.30am (Mass 2nd and 4th Sunday), Solemn Mass 11am (children's group), Evening Service with Benediction 6pm. Feast days: 7.30pm Solemn Mass. Daily Mass. Confessions: Saturday 11.30am, 5.30pm or by arrangement. *Resolutions ABC (Ebbsfleet)*. Information, appointments: Fr Richard Hoyal 0117 970 6776

BRISTOL Christ Church, Broad Street, Old City Centre BS1 2EJ *Resolutions ABC*. Sunday 11am Choral Eucharist, 6.30pm Choral Evensong with Anthem and Sermon. Georgian gem, Prayer Book services, robed men and boys' choir, Renatus Harris organ. Tues, Thurs and major holy days: 1.05pm Eucharist. Regular recitals and concerts (see website). Parish Priest: Fr Richard Hoyal 0117 9706776 www.christchurchcitybristol.org

BRISTOL Holy Nativity, Wells Road (A37), half a mile from Temple Meads Station *A Forward in Faith Parish, Resolutions ABC*. Sunday: Solemn Mass and Junior Church 10am, Friday Mass 10.15am. The parish is in interregnum. Contact: Philip Goodfellow, Churchwarden 07733 111 800 phil@goodfellow.org.uk

BROMLEY St George, Bickley Sunday: Low Mass 8am, Sung Mass 10.30am. Daily Masses: Mon 7.30am, Tues 9.30am and 7.30pm, Weds 10am, Thurs 9.30am, Fri 9.30am and 6.30pm, Sat 9.30am. Times of Confession and other information from Fr Owen Higgs on 020 8467 3809

CARDIFF near rail, bus, Millennium Stadium, city centre and Bay Daily Mass; *Credo Gymru*. **Bute Street St Mary**: Sunday: Solemn Mass 11am; **Pentre Gardens St Dyfrig** and **St Samson**: Sunday: Solemn Mass 9.30am; **Paget Street, Grangetown St Paul**: Family Eucharist 10am. Parish Priest: Fr Graham Francis 02920 487777. Associate Priest: Fr Ben Andrews 029 20 228707


ST JUST-in-PENWITH, Cornwall - St Just

CHARD The Good Shepherd, Furnham. *Resolutions ABC* Sunday: Sung Mass 9.45am, Solemn Evensong and Benediction (3rd Sunday only) 6pm. Weekday Masses: Tues 10am. Contact: Heather McCann on 01 460 64531

CHESTERFIELD St Paul, Hasland, Derbyshire Sunday: Sung Mass 9.45am (Family Mass 1st Sunday), Evening Prayer 3.30pm. Masses: Tues 7.15pm (Benediction last Tues of month), Frid 12 noon, Sat 8.30am. **St James**, Temple Normanton, Chesterfield, Derbyshire Sunday: Parish Mass 11.30am, Thur: Mass 7.15pm. Fr Malcolm Ainscough ssc 01246 232486

COLCHESTER St Barnabas Church, Abbott's Road, Old Heath, Colchester *A Forward in Faith Parish. Resolutions ABC*. Sunday: Said Mass 8am, Sung Mass 10am. Weekday Masses: Mon 6pm, Tues 10am, Thur 7pm, Holy Days 7.30pm. Check website for other daily services www.oldheath.org.uk Vicar: Fr Richard Tillbrook ssc 01206 797481 fathercap@hotmail.com

DEVIZES St Peter's, Bath Road, Devizes, Wiltshire *A Forward in Faith Parish under the episcopal care of the Bishop of Ebbsfleet. Resolutions ABC*. Sunday: Low Mass (BCP/EM) 8am, Sung Mass 10am, Exposition, Devotions and Benediction (First Sundays) 5pm. Thurs Low Mass 7pm. Mass on major Saints Days and other Festivals (times vary. Fr Peter Moss ssc 01380 724785

EASTBOURNE St Saviour's *A Forward in Faith Parish with Resolution ABC*. Sunday: Low Mass 8am, Solemn Mass 10.30am. Daily Mass and Office. Details and information from Fr Jeffery Gunn 01323 722317 www.stsaviourseastbourne.org.uk

FOLKESTONE Kent, **St Peter on the East Cliff** *A Forward in Faith Parish under the episcopal care of the Bishop of Richborough*. Sunday: 8am Low Mass, 10.30am Solemn Mass, 6pm Evening Prayer. Weekdays - Low Mass: Tues 7pm, Thur 12 noon. During Interregnum - tel: 01303 254472 www.stpeterschurchfolkestone.org.uk - stpetersfolk@yahoo.co.uk

GRIMSBY St Augustine, Legsby Avenue Lovely Grade II Church by Sir Charles Nicholson. *A Forward in Faith Parish under Bishop of Richborough*. Sunday: Mass 9am, Parish Mass 10.30am, Solemn Evensong and Benediction 6pm. Weekdays: Mon, Wed and Sat 9.30am, Tues and Fri 7.30am, Thur 7.30pm. Vicar: Fr Stephen Jones 01472 877109

HARTLEPOOL St Oswald's, Brougham Terrace. *A Forward in Faith Parish under the episcopal care of the Bishop of Beverly*. Sunday: Sung Mass 9.30am, Benediction 6pm. Daily Mass, Offices and Confessions as displayed. Parish Priest: Fr Graeme Buttery ssc 01429 273201

HEMPTON Holy Trinity (near Fakenham, Norfolk). *ABC, FiF.* The Church on the Green. Visit us on the way to Walsingham. Mass on Sundays and Wednesdays at 9.30am. Linked to the Shrine of OLW. Parish Priest: Fr Allan Buik ssc 01328 820030

KINGSTON-upon-THAMES St Luke, Gibbon Road (short walk from Kingston railway station) Sunday: Low Mass (English Missal) 8am, Sung Mass (Western Rite) 10.30am, Evensong and Benediction 5pm. 3rd Sunday each month: Teddy Bears Service for pre-schoolers 9.30am. For further information phone Fr Martin Hislop: Parish Office 020 8549 4551 www.stlukeskingston.co.uk

LEAMINGTON SPA St John the Baptist *Parish under the Episcopal care of the Bishop of Ebbsfleet - all resolutions passed*. Daily Mass. Sunday: Low Mass 8am, Parish Mass 9.30am, Solemn Evensong and Benediction (1st Sunday only) 3.30pm. Traditional Catholic Worship in a friendly atmosphere. Parish Priest: Fr David Lawson ssc 01926 422208 www.fifparish.com/stjohnleamington

LIVERPOOL St Agnes and St Pancras, Toxteth Park *(FiF & ABC)* Sunday: Parish Mass 10am; Solemn Evensong and Benediction 6.30pm. Daily Mass. Sunday School. Glorious J L Pearson Church, with modern catholic worship, good music and friendly atmosphere. Parish Priest: Canon Christopher Cook ssc 0151 733 1742 www.stagnes.org.uk

LONDON EC3 St Magnus the Martyr, Lower Thames Street (nearest Tube: Monument or Bank) *Resolutions ABC*. Mass: Sunday 11am, refreshments following, Tues, Thur and Fri 12.30. Visitors very welcome. www.stmagnusmartyr.org.uk Fr Philip Warner saintmagnus@bulldoghome.com

LONDON N1 Holy Trinity, Hoxton Sunday: 10am Solemn Mass ans Sunday School. Midweek Services: contact Fr Andrew Newcombe 020 7253 4796

LONDON N21 Holy Trinity, Winchmore Hill. *A Forward in Faith modern catholic Parish. Resolutions ABC*. Sunday: Mass 9am and 10.30am. Weekdays: Tues to Fri 12 noon Angelus and Mass. Saturday: Rosary 9.30am, Mass 10am, Reconcilliation 11am. Confessions Saturday at 11am or by appointment. Contact Stephen Whittam on 0208 886 5217

London NW9 Kingsbury **St Andrew** *A Fif Parish under the Episcopal care of the Bishop of Fulham* Sunday: Mass at 8am and 10am. Tube to Wembley Park then 83 Bus to Church Lane Parish Priest: Fr John T Smith ssc 020 8205 7447

LONDON SE13 St Stephen, Lewisham (opposite Lewisham Station) *A Forward in Faith Parish under the episcopal care of the Bishop of Fulham*. Sunday: Mass 8am, Parish Mass 10am. Weekdays: Mon 7am, Tues 7.30pm, Wed 12.15pm, Thur 8am, Fri 6.30pm, Sat 8am Parish Priest: Fr Geoffrey Kirk 020 8318 1295

LONDON SE16 St Mary Rotherhithe, St Marychurch Street SE16 4JE *A Fulham Parish*. Sunday: Solemn Mass 10am, Evening Prayer 6pm, Benediction monthly. Mass times: Tues 12 noon; Wed 10am School Mass; Thur 6pm; Fri 9.30am; Sat 9.30am. Tube: Jubilee Line Bermondsey/Canada Water/Rotherhithe Overground. Visitors most welcome. Fr Mark Nicholls ssc 0207 394 3394

LONDON SE18 St Nicholas - ***the Ancient Parish Church*** - St Nicholas Road, Plumstead. *A Forward in Faith Parish under the episcopal care of the Bishop of Fulham*. Masses: Sunday 8am; Solemn Sung 11am; Mon 8pm; Tues 7.30pm; Wed 9.30am; Thur 7pm; Fri 12 noon; Sat 10am. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament half an hour before every Mass apart from Sunday. Modern rite, traditional

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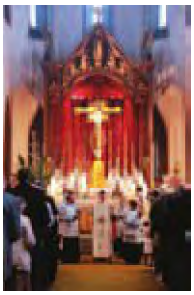
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LEAD STORY

God is Love

Nicolas Stebbing CR offers a reflection on the Gospel according to St John Chapter 17

Something over sixty years ago in a far-off cathedral in one of the colonies belonging to His Majesty King George the Sixth, a young couple were presenting their baby son for baptism, or christening as they called it. He was not, I am sorry to say, a very young baby, as he was notoriously a crying, squalling, miserable baby and it was fully twelve months before his parents could face bringing him to church.

You have probably guessed by now who the baby was! Anyway, in the course of this service the parents were asked on behalf of the child to renounce the world, the flesh and the devil; or more specifically 'renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with the covetous desires of the flesh and the carnal desires of the same...'

the world became a thoroughly good place, and now the babies only had to turn to Christ

A dark place

Pretty strong stuff for a twelve-month-old baby to deal with and probably that baby and millions of other babies baptized with Cranmer's magnificent rite were badly traumatized by having such horrid things imputed to them. I won't say that renouncing all this at the age of one year made a very great difference to my life then and the story of how far I did or didn't steer away from the covetous and carnal desires of the flesh is not one to be told here. The point here really is that all this – the devil, the pomp and glory, the covetous and carnal desires – were all part of the world. The world was a dark and wicked place, full of the works of the devil, full of nasty desires and sins.

Radical changes

That was back in the Forties. But then came the Sixties. Suddenly the Church discovered it had got it wrong. The world was not an evil place. The devil did not exist. The world was a place of beauty, love and light, a place which God had created beautiful and filled with lovely people. The Church stopped reading all that nasty stuff in the Old Testament which spoke of wrath, judgement and sin; and it cut out much of St Paul who also goes on all the time about the world's wickedness; and it had to reinterpret quite a lot of the Gospel to get it saying what was wanted.

And of course the baptism service was changed. The nasty bits were taken out. The world became a thoroughly good place, and now the babies only had to turn to Christ and all would be well; they would live happily ever after.

The modern world

Unfortunately the world did not cooperate with this new vision of itself. The Sixties were the time of the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the cultural revolution in China, the endless revolutions, military coups and dictatorships of South America; and then the bright new dawn of African independence dissolved into the horrors of civil war, famine and crime which has convulsed almost every country in that great continent over the past fifty years. Even Europe has not escaped – the horrors of Yugoslavia, discovering the extent of child abuse, the exploding drug scene, the increase of crime – well, you see the news.

And so we come to chapter 17 of St John's Gospel. Where does John stand on this question of the world? With Cranmer, or with the Sixties? Well you do not have to be a great biblical scholar to realize that John is definitely Cranmer's man. Nine times in today's Gospel alone Jesus speaks of the world, and on every occasion the world is a hostile place. He is coming out of the world. His disciples are in it but not of it. He will pray that they will be protected, defended, kept from the evil one who inhabits this world. It is pretty clear that the Jesus of St John's Gospel would agree emphatically with Cranmer's view of the world, and not at all with the Sixties that produced our present baptism rite.

The evil around us

Where does that leave us? Well, as always, it is not a choice between two simple alternatives. The world is a very bad place, but it is also a very good place. God did create the world and all that is in it, and saw that it was good. The world is full of beauty, light and joy and there are lots of wonderful, generous people in it. It wasn't the Sixties that discovered this; the Church has always known it. But there is darkness too.

What can we do about it? Well, John's Gospel does not only talk of the world. He speaks often of the truth, of doing the truth, walking in the truth. We need to keep constantly in mind the truth that there is much evil around us; and of course we live in it; we are influenced by it. Our ambitions, our behaviour, our mental images are formed by the things we see, the papers we read, the jobs we have to do to earn a living. As fully practising, believing Christians we may not be fully of the world but we are certainly in it. We have to be constantly alive to the dangers of

living in such a place. That is the bad news.

A major challenge

The good news is that Jesus is in this world. He is everywhere in the world. He is not just in the beautiful countryside, the lovely churches, the joyful Christians. He is not just shut up in golden tabernacles, or imprisoned in a monstrance. It is one of the deepest and most important parts of our faith that Christ can be found in that utterly evil place of Golgotha; the Christ who went down even into the depths of hell can be found in the very worst places in this world.

The bleakest council estate, the poorest parts of town, the poverty stricken places of Africa are places where Christ is found; so too can he be found in the rich places where bankers take huge bonuses and newspaper barons make massive profits.

Finding Christ in these places is one of the major challenges of Christian life. We spend time here at Mirfield, on retreat or in College, or living a monastic life so that we can renew our vision of Jesus, see more clearly what the values of God are, and go and find him in the world. It is his world; he was there before us. We need to go out and find him.

Finding Jesus

And there is one other promise in today's Gospel that we need to take seriously: Jesus is praying for us. I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. I do not pray that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil one. Jesus prayed for those first disciples in the upper room and God did keep them safe. Against all the odds they survived the darkness of the Roman world and gave us the Christian Church we know today. And Jesus is praying for us. However dark and dangerous our world may seem he will keep us from evil.

Can we seek him in this world, and find him, and hold on to him and work with him? If we can our lives will be filled with joy, and that joy no one will take from us.

A version of this sermon was given on the 20th May 2012 at the Community of the Resurrection

the Christ who went down even into the depths of hell can be found in the very worst places

The Rt Revd Dr Martin Warner SSC

Downing Street has announced that the Rt Revd Dr Martin Warner ssc, currently Suffragan Bishop of Whitby in the Diocese of York, is to be the next Bishop of Chichester.

Dr Warner, 53, succeeds the Rt Revd John Hind who retired last month.

Dr Warner studied at St Chad's College in Durham before completing his theological training at St Stephen's House, Oxford. He was ordained deacon (1984) and priest (1985) in Exeter Cathedral whilst working as Curate of St Peter's Plymouth.

He moved north to the Midlands in 1988 to be Team Vicar for five years in the Parish of the Resurrection, Leicester before being elected to be the Priest Administrator of the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham between 1993 and 2002. During his time in Norfolk he was also priest in charge of Hempton and Pudding Norton between 1998 and 2000. He was appointed Honorary Canon of Norwich between 2000 and 2002.

Dr Warner was then appointed as a residentiary Canon of St Paul's Cathedral in London, firstly as Canon Pastor and latterly Treasurer where he made a big contribution particularly with regards to the Cathedral's connection with the art world (2003–2010).



He was selected as suffragan Bishop of Whitby in the Diocese of York in 2010 and has served the parishes of the Cleveland archdeaconry which includes the contrasting communities of Middlesbrough and much of the North Yorkshire Moors.

Dr Warner is a regular contributor to the Church Times and has written five books. He is a cyclist, enjoys the arts and is well known for his hospitality and welcome – an art he perfected when welcoming thousands of pilgrims to England's Nazareth, as Walsingham is known.

Dr Warner is a traditionalist who has worked resolutely in recent years to encourage provision in which people of all integrities can remain together. He worked closely with women priest colleagues at St Paul's Cathedral and has sought to serve with equal care the ordained men and women in his episcopal patch in the north of England.

Bishop Warner said today: 'It is a daunting and exciting challenge to be asked to serve the people of Sussex as the next Bishop of Chichester. I look forward very much to learning more about the mission in which we shall be engaging together, though it will be a big wrench leaving the North East so soon.'

The Rt Revd Mark Sowerby, the Acting Bishop of Chichester, said: 'I am delighted that Dr Martin Warner, whom I have known for many years, is to be the new Bishop of Chichester. I believe that he will lead us with the effervescent energy and clarity that has always been distinctive of his ministry and I very much look forward to working alongside him in the service of the Church and people of Sussex.'

Vivat Regina!

While the country celebrates the Queen's Diamond Jubilee,
Edward Lewis reflects on the deep Christian faith that has characterized her reign

We probably take it for granted when the news shows Her Majesty leading members of the Royal Family to worship at Christmas and at Easter, in particular. Yet that simple journey from Sandringham to one of the parish churches, or going to St George's Chapel Windsor, speaks volumes. It speaks of a deep faith, and personal humility; of an acknowledgement of the power of Almighty God, which has been one of the hallmarks of these sixty years of the reign we now have the joy of celebrating.

Personal occasions

Alongside the great State services and thanksgivings there are occasions which are much more personal, away from the spotlight of the camera. Perhaps the most poignant is the annual remembrance of the death of her father. Approaching the first anniversary of the King's death, Queen Elizabeth, now known as Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother, had returned to Royal Lodge.

On the actual anniversary she was present at a celebration of Holy Communion at Royal Chapel, as she was each year for the rest of her life. We understand that this Requiem continues today. For people who are always in the public eye and whose every aspect is the cause of commentary and speculation, a quiet service, away from the glare of publicity, must be very significant.

Pomp and humility

What a contrast to Coronation Day:

'On Coronation Day all the resources, technical and administrative, of our broadcasting corporation will be brought into play in order to transmit a religious service of the Church of England, built entirely around the structure of the Holy Communion… They will see the greatest living monarch in the world, kneeling humbly to acknowledge the suzerainty of God and to receive her earthly majesty from the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. They will also be told when the most important husband and wife in our great Commonwealth kneel side by side as fellow members of our Church to receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.'

These words, written by R.D. Grange-Bennet in June 1953, sum up the reality of the events at the Coronation, that alongside the pomp and panoply which are part of such an occasion, there was that humble act of receiving the Blessed Sacrament.

Anointing

In the replays of that great Coronation service much is made of the actual coronation, and the heavy seven-pound crown being placed on the monarch's head. However, we ought not to minimize the vital importance of another act within that service, namely the anointing. After the singing of the Veni Creator, Her Majesty was reminded that in past ages monarchs were anointed with holy oil, to confirm their selection for their high office by Almighty God. God promises to give those called to any special service strength to fulfil their office. So the Archbishop, having anointed the Queen with the oil of Chrism, blesses her and invokes God's assistance for all her duties. As Shakespeare has it in Richard II, 'not all the water in the rough, rude sea, can wash the balm from an anointed king.'

A calling

Thus in her consecrated person she symbolizes the relationship between Church and State. Her consecration and coronation declare the State to be Christian in constitution and intention. This of course does not exclude those who do not follow the Christian faith (Her Majesty has always been sensitive in her dealings with those of the major world faiths) but the intentions of that service are undeniable. It is from this sacred service that the Queen, though shy, carries out what for her is a vocation, 'a calling not a privilege, but a calling. If it's costly, it's costly' (Marr, 2011).

her consecration and coronation declare the State to be Christian in constitution and intention

The Archbishop of Canterbury says that she was profoundly affected by being given a book of prayers, just before her coronation, which she still uses. 'For The Queen nothing mattered more than the religious and spiritual heart of the ceremony, still vivid in her mind as an observer from 1937,' writes Andrew Marr. That deep faith has been her sustenance for these sixty years.

Christmas broadcasts

Throughout her reign our Queen has talked about the importance of her faith and belief. This is most often detailed in the annual Christmas broadcast, which time and again emphasizes faith and practice. In 1986 there is a clear reference to Blessed Mary and St Joseph as loving and considerate parents, examples we should all emulate.

In 2007, the year of the Diamond Jubilee of her marriage, she reminds her hearers that Our Lord always sought out those in great need and urges us not to 'pass by on the other side.' And last year she reminds us of the hope brought by the angels as they announced 'tidings of great joy,' concluding with this testimony: 'God sent into the world a unique person – neither a philosopher nor a general, important though they are, but a Saviour, with the power to forgive.' What could be clearer?

Our country has changed profoundly during these last sixty years. Whatever else may have changed, Her



Majesty's commitment and dedication, the daily living out of her vocation to serve has not. In the famous African Speech, she dedicated herself to service and implored the support of her hearers and asked, 'God help me to make good my vow.' In her Christmas broadcast before the Coronation she asked for the prayers of her people: 'I ask you all whatever your religion may be to pray for me on that day – to pray that God may give me the wisdom and strength to carry out the solemn promises I shall be making, and that I may faithfully serve Him, and you, all the days of my life.'

Thanks and prayers

For sixty years of faithful service we thank Almighty God and we continue to pray for our Most Sovereign Lady at the Altar and in our daily prayers. Queen Elizabeth I said: 'Though God has raised me high, yet this I count the glory of my crown, that I have reigned with your loves.' This is surely true of Elizabeth II. ND

O LORD, our heavenly Father, high and mighty,
King of kings, Lord of lords, the only Ruler of princes,
who dost from thy throne
behold all the dwellers upon earth:
Most heartily we beseech thee with thy favour
to behold our most gracious Sovereign Lady,
Queen ELIZABETH;
and so replenish her with the grace of thy Holy Spirit,
that she may alway incline to thy will,
and walk in thy way.
Endue her plenteously with heavenly gifts;
grant her in health and wealth long to live;
strengthen her
that she may vanquish and overcome all her enemies;
and finally after this life
she may attain everlasting joy and felicity;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Anglican Patrimony

Christopher Trundle on the history of the great Anglican preaching tradition

Preaching at the royal court was, until relatively recently, a largely ignored area of study for historians and scholars. The preaching of sermons before the Sovereign, his household and members of court on Sundays and feasts is not, of course, a specifically Anglican phenomenon, but it did nonetheless play a central part in the lives of the most influential figures in the nation, and not least in the devotional lives of the Supreme Governors of our Church.

One of the most interesting periods of court preaching is the seventeenth century during the reigns of James I and Charles I, when Lancelot Andrewes, John Donne and William Laud (among others) preached regularly. Each of these men held distinctly catholic and sacramental views which formed the foundations of their preaching. The frequency of Andrewes' sermons at court, for example, not only suggests that he was King James' favourite, but also that he had a great deal of influence on the spiritual lives of members of the royal household.

Carefully constructed

Sermons of this period were, of course, rather longer than those we are used to today, but were carefully constructed and rich with scriptural exegesis, patristic references, Latin and Greek (particularly in Andrewes) and sacramental theology. Attention paid to the scriptural text and its translation was often so great as to seem tenuous to us today; but these tools were often deployed to teach catholic theological themes.

Take, for example, this extract from one of Andrewes' sermons: 'of the peace-offering, the flesh was to be eaten. Part God had, and part the offerer eat, in sign of perfect peace and reconciliation between them. Christ's blood not only in the basin for Baptism, but in the cup for the other Sacrament. A sacrifice – so, to be slain; a propitiary sacrifice – so, to be eaten' (*From a Sermon preached before King James I at Whitehall, Easter Day, 1612*).

The contrast between these and some other sermons at court is indicative of the wider debates and tensions at work in the Church of England in the seventeenth century, a time when Puritanism vied with more sacramental-focused piety. Royal patronage of High Churchmen was not always appreciated by the nation at large (Laud would be unjustly tried and executed for his loyalty to the King and his High Church views), and matters of doctrinal and political controversy were often addressed by preachers, sometimes to the kings' discomfort (in 1622 King James issued special orders forbidding mention of matters of state and controversial doctrine in sermons).

Awesome responsibilities

In this era the court sermon was a space where the development of the Church of England was acted out; religion and faith were openly accepted as public matters worthy of attention. Perhaps most importantly, however, it was a space where the great Anglican preaching tradition developed, and we are reminded that preaching need not stand over and against devotion to the sacraments. We are reminded too of the awesome responsibilities laid upon preachers in our own days, and of the opportunity for teaching and formation. The work of recalling the Church of England to its roots and to unity with the wider Church is surely one of the most compelling tasks the preacher faces today.

'And now I cannot but wonder what words Saint Paul, were he now alive, would use, to call back 'unity' into dismembered Christendom. For my part, death were easier to me, than it is to see and consider the face of the Church of Christ scratched and torn, till it bleeds in every part, as it doth this day' (William Laud, *From a Sermon preached at the Opening of Parliament, 17 March 1628*). ND

A cure for all ills

If thinking about the outcome of next month's Synod, or the prospect that Jeremy Clarkson will swap his *Top Gear* for Archbishop of Canterbury gear, makes you feel ill, and you continually broadcast your discomfort, take heed from the cautionary tale that follows.

Our parish hypochondriac
Ambushed me in church today.
His aches and pains and yakkity yak
Had grown since last Sunday.

'I take three dozen remedies
At breakfast every day
And more for my elevenses
To keep my ills at bay.'

'When looking for a medic
My symptoms to review;
No good the local clinic,
Only hospitals will do.'

'I know each top consultant
My ills are quite unique.
Referrals are resultant;
Ten X-rays every week.'

I tried to stem the moaning
As we ventured to the street.
'Did you like the Vicar's sermon?
Made me sit up in my seat.'

'My ears too bad to hear it,
So I never caught a word.
Couldn't even read Directions,
My eyes are now so blurred.'

'Can't join the Ordy-what's it;
Movement makes me feel unwell.
And even if I'm tempted
It's too difficult to spell.'

The best form of defence they say
Is to go on the attack.
'Er, I feel a trifle sick today.
Perhaps a flu attack?'

'Rot, you merely have a sniffle,
It's me that's got the flu.
Alan, you're talking piffle.
And I've got measles too!'

He continued in his sorrow
And how he never made a fuss.
I'd have been there until tomorrow.
So I pushed him beneath a bus.

Alan Edwards

Mary Queen of Shops

Clare Williams asks whether the Church can learn anything from the British high street's attempt to re-engage with society and put itself back at the heart of the community

'We're shopping on the internet. Recession is killing the big chains. So what should we do with the streets that were once the heart of our communities?'

'We're working longer hours affecting the structure of our week. Family and social interaction has changed. So what should we do with the churches that were once the heart of our communities?'

Mary Portas is a marketing consultant and retail adviser. She is known affectionately as the 'Queen of Shops' after several television series. In May 2011 David Cameron appointed Mary Portas to conduct a review into the future of the high street. The review identified twenty-eight practical recommendations which would transform the recession sullied high streets, littered with boarded up stores and charity shops, into new business models.

Visionary solutions

Recently a British Sunday newspaper published a creative exploration about the future of our high streets. Six 'big thinkers' give their ideas about how to re-imagine the business of high street culture. One idea was to turn high streets into urban playgrounds, places where skateboarders and older people could meet and have their own space and community within the high street, the idea being that high streets need to be more enjoyable, more comfortable places. There were several financially savvy ideas which clearly pushed the boundaries about what is viable and acceptable for a high street setting. These were all visionary but there were two which really caught the imagination.

Rethinking priorities

Firstly, that public buildings should be on the high street so that amidst the hubbub of the shopping mall, people can find an oasis in a building like a library. The idea that coffee houses have pioneered where one can find a living room in the middle of a town centre is important for the type of shopping experience that people are looking for. Secondly, Alain De Botton advocated the idea of moving psychotherapy onto the high street so that serving that need should be as normal as going to the hairdressers or a nail bar. De Botton approaches this concept by beginning with the thought of a figure who fulfilled a function in society which was not material; he was talking about a priest, someone who

the Church needs to be one of those public buildings where people can find a home from home

was 'there to take care of that part of you called 'the soul" but who was vital in society. He then moves on to the therapist as what he would consider to be the 'new' priest, caring for the emotional needs of the individual. These creative conversations are clearly important. Mary Portas has earned herself a unique position as someone who understands the state of the high street now and the vision and action needed to improve it beyond recognition. There needs to be a re-thinking of what is the priority of the high street and how to re-engage with a society which has been disillusioned by the recession and changed by technology.

Societal change

So it is with the Church. The link is not tenuous or lacking in sensitivity. Of course the Church is not about profit-making or selling itself without the need for integrity and morality, as can be the case on the high street. However, the Church is, or should be, about how to engage with society: how to best 'market' and 'brand' what it offers to



appeal to the 'mass market' and identify its USPs (unique selling points!).

Where the high street is affected by shopping online, the recession, competition amongst big chain stores and the take-over by charity shops, the Church is affected by people's different working hours, changes in family and social life, attitudes in society and the state of church buildings. The Church has to consider what it has to offer and how elements can be changed in conjunction with the societal changes.

Remaining relevant

The Church needs to be one of those public buildings on the high street where people can find a home from home and a calm space from the hustle and bustle of the shopping centre. It needs to think about what it offers to people in that context. The Church needs to be financially savvy, not for a motive of profit-making but rather to ensure that church buildings are used effectively and made financially viable. The Church needs to think about the timings of church services and how they can be made more accessible and more a place of fellowship. The Church needs to think about how it caters for different social groups and how it reaches out to those who have difficulty finding their place in society.

The Church needs to think about the need in society for that non-material function, the person who cares for the soul, a need which still exists, and how the Church can fulfil that function with its priests and lay people serving in the community. The Church needs to think, or find someone who can think, like Mary Portas. The Church needs to have the vision and the action necessary to propel it into the future and still remain relevant to society. The Church needs to do what it can to make it the heart of the community. ND

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faith of our fathers

Arthur Middleton offers some pre-ordination reflections for ordinands

It is difficult being a priest in the present climate, where, even in the Church, the secular culture rather than the Gospel determines so much. Gladstone in the nineteenth century said that the task of the priest had become much more difficult than it had ever been. Was it ever easy? A rising generation in this country does not know God because of a general decay of religion and attempts to push Christianity out of the public square. Also, a kind of thinking in the Church wants to reduce the priest to a mere functionary, a manager, where administration rather than doctrine and worship are to determine the form of the Church. The evil of the Church is the doing of Church work in a spirit of business, something to be got through. The only way to avoid this is for the priest to be instant in prayer. If he is not, he will lose that touch of the supernatural without which he has no right to be a priest at all.

Prayer

Two texts spring to mind. The first, from Proverbs 23.7: 'As a man thinketh so is he.' The second, from the prophet Malachi 2.7: 'men hang upon the words of the priest and seek knowledge and instruction from him, because he is the messenger of the Lord.' The words from Proverbs might be re-expressed thus: 'A man is what he prays,' for a man who prays is a theologian and a theologian is a man who prays. It is such prayer that must inform a priest's thinking, making him what he is and forming him into the man who conquers because he has conquered himself.

Like *Julian of Norwich* our hope must rest on something outside ourselves. She said, 'The remedy is that Our Lord is with us, keeping us and leading us into the fullness of joy; for our Lord intends this to be an endless joy, that he who will be our bliss when we are there (heaven) will be our protector while we are here, our way and our heaven in true love and trust.'

he brings the loving kindness, goodness and friendship of God that will bind up the broken-hearted

This consciousness of a divine presence dominated Bishop Butler's life and he urged his clergy to yield themselves up to the full influence of the divine presence, and endeavour to raise up in the hearts of their people such a sense of God that reverence, love, gratitude, hope, trust and obedience will become an habitual way of living.



All the classical books on priesthood describe him as a healer of men which is much more difficult than being a manager. This is the cure of souls, and the medicine of souls is more subtle than that of bodies. Gregory Nazianzen claimed that 'The Coming of God in Christ is the medicine of the soul, undoing the Fall and bringing us to the Tree of Life.' The priest is to administer this medicine in the Word and Sacraments, the means wherein this medicine is given.

The priest

The priest comes in this same spirit of reconciliation, not as an obscurantist, but wearing the intelligible vestments of living faith, divine but positive, ministering in Word and Sacrament that which is humanity's hope and salvation, the divine energy in which he lives with Christ with the Father in the Holy Spirit, identified but not accommodated to the world Christ seeks to save. His vision will be Trinitarian, his theology a theology to be preached and therefore with a practical purpose, nothing less than to participate in this divine life Christ lives with the Father in the Holy Spirit, for this is salvation that makes us godlike.

The priest is entrusted with the spiritual guidance of his people, becoming responsible for them and making his mark on them, according to the pattern of his own spiritual life. He is their teacher and guide, for the edification, the building-up of the Body of Christ, enabling people to see what happened to them when they were born again through water and the Spirit. We are to introduce our people into the life of the Church which is salvation that they may taste

and see how good the Lord is. First, taste, then see, that is, understand, being edified in the knowledge of the love of God, growth into the divine likeness. So a priest is the Christ-bearer, a living Eucharist of the divine presence, bringing a sympathetic ear and a compassionate heart in which people find God's consolation, understanding and love. He brings more than professional help and skills. He brings the loving kindness, goodness and friendship of God that will bind up the broken-hearted and bring release to those that are captive in the variety of today's prisons.

Suffering

It can never be a comfortable lifestyle and there are more priorities than the 'day off'. It brings spiritual warfare and suffering for the priest as he identifies with those who suffer and shares the frustrations, anger and incomprehensibility of that suffering in what it does to those who suffer. The priest shares in these struggles of his suffering people, the uncertainties it brings, the sense of divine abandonment it induces, and the loneliness it causes. Many people experience Gethsemane moments but eventually say 'Not mine, but thine', even when consciousness of that divine presence must have felt wiped out. They have the transfigured marks of their Gethsemane on them.

To that extent such people know the depths of the human heart when it rejoices, admires or loves, the heart in its agonies of suffering, failure and emptiness. Here in them you will glimpse a clearer vision of death and resurrection than in a textbook. As priests uphold their people in prayer, so their people are to uphold their priests with prayer and love, for a priest cannot work without his people.

as priests uphold their people in prayer, so their people are to uphold their priests with prayer and love

Holiness

Great priests of the past were effective evangelists even in some of the most atrocious slum parishes, because of the touch of the divine in that union of human lives with God in the way of holiness that is fundamental to the life of the Church and to the life of every priest. They were not career men with a ladder under the cassock, but men with the towel of self-sacrifice, devotion, and dedication that issues from men whose hearts God has touched. These priests did not despair in their fight with secularism. Instead of despair they measured things so differently from the rest of people, so much so that they turned the common way of looking at things upside down.

> '[T]he spiritual power of a consecrated will needs no opportunity, and can enter where the doors are shut. … his gifts may suggest to some the thoughts of criticism, comparison, competition; his self- consecration can do no harm in this way. … personal holiness, determining, refining, characterising everything that a man says or does, will tell alike on those he may not know even by name, and on those who see him in the constant intimacy of his home' (*The Hallowing of Work*, Bishop Paget).

Holy priests are to form a holy people. ND

Ghostly Counsel

Intercession

Andy Hawes is Warden of Edenham Regional Retreat House

Last month's 'Ghostly' about prayer and fasting provoked much discussion and correspondence about the prayer of intercession. Here are few further thoughts. First, we can soon get ourselves in knots about this when we forget the whole of our Christian life is to live a life set apart to serve Christ in and for others. From the commission of our baptism onwards we are to be soldiers and servants of Christ, striving against the three enemies of wholeness and salvation: the world, the flesh and the devil. We are caught up in the redeeming and reconciling work of Christ and part of this is our prayer of intercession. It is not that intercession is a separate activity or discipline; it arises as a response of the heart and mind to the needs of others and the world around us as we experience it. To our prayer for others we must bring our whole experience.

Secondly, by our baptism we are living and vital members of the Body of Christ. We are agents and ambassadors of his love and life, and are called to act in partnership with him. What we do makes a difference for good and for ill. This is true of our prayer. The Gospels reveal Jesus acting in response to the pleading and request of others – they are partners with him in the working out of the Father's purpose. We see this when Our Lady intercedes at Cana, when Jairus pleads for his daughter and Martha and Mary ask Jesus to help Lazarus. These and other Gospel events reveal that Jesus both listens and responds. As St Ignatius Loyola put it, 'Work as if everything depends on you, pray knowing that it doesn't.'

Thirdly, prayer for others is a duty and work required of each Christian. Each one of us has a unique and providential awareness of the world. We are aware of challenges and needs in others, or have attachments to others, which are unknown or impossible for anyone else. The Lord calls us to offer them to the Father through him because there is no one else to make the same prayer.

In the light of the centrality and necessity of bringing our whole selves to the work of intercession it is salutary to remember the teaching of James in his Epistle. He says simply the prayer of a good man will bring healing. Intercession by itself lacks integrity if we are not living lives that are constantly seeking to conform to the will of God. We cannot pray for peace in the world if we are in dispute with our neighbour. We cannot pray for the relief of poverty if we are careless stewards of our own money and resources.

A life of intercession devoid of self-examination and penitence is a pious pretence. To pray for others must be part of the way of holiness – nothing else will do. As Psalm 145 says, 'The Lord is near to all who call upon him, to those who call upon him in truth.'

Tradition versus traditionalism

A sermon preached by the **Bishop of London** at St Paul's Cathedral to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the 1662 edition of the Book of Common Prayer

Archbishop Cranmer commandeered Old St Paul's on Whitsunday 1549 to demonstrate the new English liturgy from the Book of Common Prayer. The Lord Mayor and the worthies of the City of London were present but the Bishop of London boycotted the occasion which was further marred by the failure of the Select Preacher to turn up. Today the presence of their Royal Highnesses, the Lord Mayor *locum tenens*, the Archbishop of Canterbury [this time in harmony with the Bishop of London] and a host of witnesses from all over the world, together testify to the historic and enduring significance of the Prayer Book tradition as we celebrate the 350th anniversary of the 1662 edition.

Cultural revolution

The Prayer Book in English was the centrepiece of an audacious cultural revolution. Stephen Gardiner, the Bishop of Winchester, was one of those critical of the scheme to introduce an English liturgy. He dismissed the argument that it was desirable for the language to be 'understanded of the people' and the mode of conducting the services such as to render them audible. The bishop protested that 'it was never meant that the people should indeed hear the matins or hear the mass but be present there and pray themselves in silence.' The barriers of language and audibility were actually conducive to genuine devotion.

This protest from one of the most intelligent conservatives of the day illuminates the radicalism of what was published as the First Book of Common Prayer. It was an audacious attempt to re-shape the culture of England by collapsing the distinction between private personal devotion and public liturgical worship in order to create a godly community in which all and not just the clergy had access to the 'pure milk of the gospel.' The result would be a sense of English nationhood crystallising around the biblical narrative of God's dealings with the children of Israel.

Language

And what English! Tyndale's translation of a large part of the Bible and Thomas Cranmer's Book of Common Prayer made of English a language fit for sacred themes and devotion. Cranmer's was a very distinct achievement. Whereas Tyndale was the heir to previous experiments in turning the Scriptures into English going back to Wycliffe's version, there had never been a liturgy in English. But one of the functions of a liturgy is to preserve words and the possibility of an approach to God which is hard or impossible to express in the language of the street. Cranmer distilled his liturgy from his studies of the Christian past and especially of the patristic period – the first five centuries; the springtime of the Church.

In the Preface to the First Book of Common Prayer, of 1549, he appeals to the authority of the 'ancient fathers' as a guide in liturgical matters. Queen Elizabeth I, in her letter to the Roman Catholic Princes of Europe, amplified the point 'that there was no new faith propagated in England, no new religion set up but that which was commanded by Our Saviour, practised by the Primitive Church and approved by the Fathers of the best antiquity.'

it remains a doctrinal standard for the Church and an indispensable part of our identity



Hearing and understanding

But the liturgical inheritance was drastically pruned and simplified. The accent was on *hearing and understanding* not on *seeing* as in the theatre of late medieval religion. There was, however, growing opposition to any set form of liturgy. The Puritans valued spontaneity and the unpremeditated devotional voice and privileged original sermons and prayers over readings from liturgical texts. They also resented the traditional sources from which the Prayer Book was composed. The survival of symbols like the ring in marriage and the signing of the cross in baptism was attacked as was even the simplified version of traditional clerical vesture. Milton excoriated traditional vestments as 'guegaws fetched from Aaron's old wardrobe.'

Simple and moderate

The agitation against the Prayer Book led to its suppression during the Commonwealth but the sufferings of Prayer Book loyalists during that period gave the book a powerful aura which contributed to its restoration with the monarchy. Our Book of Common Prayer was annexed to the Act of Uniformity which received Royal Assent in May 1662 and so became a part of the law of England. It remains a doctrinal standard for the Church and an indispensable part of our identity.

In a book published in 1662, Simon Patrick comments on the rites and ceremonies of divine worship and approves 'that virtuous mediocrity which our church observes between the meretricious gaudiness of the Church of Rome and the squalid sluttery of fanatic conventicles.' Of course we would be too polite to say such things now but the Prayer Book offers a simple and moderate system for a whole life from baptism to last rites and seeks in its rubrics and ceremonies

to embrace the whole person and not merely the cerebellum.

Cult of the new-fangled

In more recent times both the Bible and the Prayer Book have been more and more edited out of public discourse and increasingly also expelled from school. Cultural amnesia is supposed to be a gateway to a kinder and more tolerant world while there has also been a cult of the new-fangled. There was a fascinating example of the lingering antipathy to our cultural and religious inheritance in the reaction to the Royal Wedding in Westminster Abbey last year. In the acres of commentary in the secular press there was no criticism of the couple's decision to use the traditional language form of the service. Then a week later the *Church Times* published letters from clergy expressing exasperation 'that the language of the liturgy remained buried in the past' and 'that once again the opportunity to present the church in a more up to date way was missed.' A week after that, however, another clergyman wrote to point out that the three who had decried the 'stuffy service' were born respectively in 1960, 1951 and 1937. The royal couple (born 1982) had chosen the service and the author of the letter observed that 'it would appear that nothing dates so rapidly as yesterday's modernity.'

it makes available in a digestible but noble way the treasury of ancient Christian devotion

A fresh narrative

Thanks to the labours of the Liturgical Commission the influence of the Prayer Book in the new Book of Common Worship is more prominent and we still have direct access to the original. There is a challenge in every generation to distinguish between *tradition*, the living stream of spirit filled wisdom and *traditionalism*, which is the obstinate attachment to the mores of the day before yesterday. We live at a time when there is an urgent need to articulate a fresh narrative about the English nation now enriched as it is in this great cosmopolitan city with people who bring their own distinctive narratives. After the financial crisis what we seem to be offered so frequently is the prospect of a return to 'normality' defined in exclusively economic terms. Is it not already clear that we must prepare for a new normal, a narrative about Our Island Story which is realistic about our changed place in the world but which contains the seeds of hope?

Ancient beauty

The Book of Common Prayer which immerses us in the whole symphony of Scripture; which takes us through the Psalms every month; which makes available in a digestible but noble way the treasury of ancient Christian devotion has a beauty which is ancient but also fresh. If our civilization is to have a future the roots must be irrigated and the texts which we choose to pass on to our children have the power to create a community which does not merely dwell in the flatlands of getting and spending but which sees visions with prophets, pursues wisdom with Solomon and lives with the generosity of the God who so loved the world that he was generous and gave himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. ND



Changing ethics, unchanging order

Roger Bellamy explains that although the Church's stance on ethical issues has altered over time, its fundamental order must remain the same

The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them, high or lowly,
And ordered their estate.

So wrote Mrs Alexander, a bishop's wife, in 1848 in her famous children's hymn, *All things bright and beautiful*. Needless to say, we no longer sing those words, but they reveal the changing ethics of the Church. Many of the issues on which we are now very clear were once matters on which contrary views were held. The hymn verse shows support for social inequality, which was not only accepted but regarded as part of the divine order.

The way women were treated – always in relation to some man, and with no independence and only rarely with any education. Property laws which resulted in terrible punishments: hanging being a common sentence. The penal system itself, with overcrowded, unsanitary prisons, where people languished, was supported by the ecclesiastical establishment.

Reforms

People like Elizabeth Fry and John Howard, concerned with prison reform; the Venns, father and son, working with the poor, Octavia Hill on housing and Wilberforce on slavery; these people worked from deep Christian convictions but the changes they wanted to bring about were gained in the face of opposition from the Church. Bishops nearly always voted against these reforms.

More recent reforms brought in education for all and votes for all, and the good of contraception was recognized by the Anglican Communion, inevitably changing our understanding of sexuality.

A different view

Now Christians are among those working to bring about a changed view of homosexuality. They are responding to a changing understanding of sexuality, and with Gospel imperatives. Homosexuals are increasingly seen not as some wicked or depraved group of people: but simply as different, but with the same ability to form stable, loving relationships as other people. Society has moved very markedly in the past 50 years or so, but the official Church has been slow to respond.

It is time, in my view, for the Church to see that the persecution of, and discrimination against, gay people needs to stop, and with slavery, poverty, inequality and vengeful punishments, should be relegated to history.

Order does not change because it is divinely given and we must learn how to use its resources fully

The Church ought to allow same-sex couples to be able to make their commitment to each other in a religious context, and we should honestly accept the ministry of gay people with the same moral demands as we make of anyone else.

The essentials

But what of the ordination of women? Is this also an issue that requires us to change? I think not because this is not an ethical issue but one of Order. The fundamental order of the Church took a few centuries to be reached, but having reached the definitive position, those things remain unaltered.

I refer to the Scriptures, the Sacraments, the Creeds and the Historic Ministry. These matters have to be renewed in every generation: they have to be re-interpreted and their treasures owned by each generation, but they themselves do not change. We translate and interpret the Scriptures, and this has brought in the modern age an amazingly rich resource for our spiritual lives.

The Creeds, cast in a particular philosophic language, need reinterpretation but the essentials are not to be messed with. The Sacraments may have been misused, or abused, but again they are springs from which the living waters flow, and we do not change them.

At the Reformation the Church of England no longer required its priests to be celibate, but this was a superficial change. It did not change the symbolic nature of episcopacy and the other orders of ministry. We should remember that the Orthodox and Catholics, in some circumstances, do not regard marriage as a bar to ordination.

A better balance

What we need to do is to explore what ordination means and alongside that the importance of being lay for the vast majority of Christians. For too long lay people have been regarded as second class Christians, the Church being over-clericalized. If we could get that balance better, then, together with a truly Gospel understanding of ordained ministry, the Church would be richer.

Ethical views change as we gain a better understanding of what our faith is about. Order does not change because it is divinely given and we must learn how to use its resources fully in each and every age. ND

