

The Saint Raphael Link

Some Periodic Ramblings of the Prior

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Dear Friends,

Just for a minute, I would like us to think about the pleasure we get from smelling the aromas of freshly ground coffee or roasting meat. Of hearing a beautiful piece of music performed by our favourite band or orchestra – the sort of music which lifts our spirit or perhaps even brings a tear to the eye. Then there is the natural beauty of our countryside which can be found all around us. Of course to appreciate this, all our senses have to be used to the full.

For me sight ranks amongst the most important of them all. So the other day when I received a telephone call from the optician, I lost no time arranging for an eye test.

So there I was the next day, sitting in the waiting room awaiting the optometrist's attention, when Jane began telling me a story. Jane is the practice receptionist, who confided in me that she had lost her Christian Faith when after carrying her baby for eight months she then gave birth to a still-born child.

When we think about it, the loss of a loved one or even the impairment of one of our senses may leave us with feelings of isolation, frustration or even fear.

I often wonder when reading St Mark's Gospel, just how Bartimaeus, the blind beggar felt ^(Mark 10: 46-52). He had been reduced to sitting by the side of the road and I suppose he was used to people treating him badly. Perhaps he even suffered verbal abuse or violence at the hands of passers-by. However, he did not let his previous experiences subdue him. We are told that when he heard that Jesus was near he began to say 'Son of David, Jesus, have pity on me'.

As usual, there were many in the crowd who scolded him and told him to be quiet. But he only shouted all the louder: 'Son of David, have pity on me'. Well, his persistence paid off you might say, as Jesus then said to him: What do you want me to do for you?'

Can you imagine the courage it must have taken for Bartimaeus to say: 'Master, let me see again'? To this, Jesus replied with his usual tenderness: 'Go; your faith has saved

you.' And immediately his sight returned and he followed him along the road.

When you and I suffer, we often lash out – it may be that we harbour feelings of resentment towards society for not been able to cure the impairments of our senses – it may be that we shout at God and blame him for the loss of a loved one – and in so doing, lose faith in God and in mankind.

With eye test complete and before leaving the opticians, I passed Jane the receptionist my card, saying: 'If there is anything I can do, please don't hesitate to get in touch. Well the next morning I opened an email from her which simply read: 'Thank you for listening, our chat has restored my faith in God'.

In different ways, God blessed both Jane and Bartimaeus with the gift of faith.

Christmas is not too far away and for some it is a time when isolation, frustration or even fear strikes a blow to our faith; but perhaps this year you will allow the seasonal aromas and music to make you pause for just a moment. Then perhaps look at the Christ-child on his bed of straw and pray that we will be given that same sort of strength which Jane and Bartimaeus displayed. Amen.

+ Geoffrey

For your Prayers:

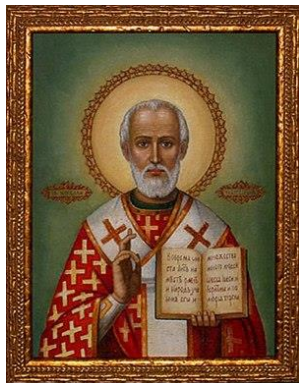


Beryl Anderton / Mary Gallagher / Gillian Gaiter / Norman Glover* / Lesley Fudge / Thelma Thompson / Paul Shaw / Sheila Hogarth / Ivy Holland / Maddie and Alan Penlington / Ruth Barr / Marjorie Greenwood / Simon Taylor / Kathleen Roberts / Suzie Jeng / Hilery Robinson / Tracey Solley / Ian & Anne Weatherall / Marlene Addy / Phillip Ward / Pauline Weatherall / Graham McCrudden* / Ray & Doreen Connell / Margaret Smith / Florence Palmer / Sadie Sutton / Tony Kirby /

Philip Coope / Peter Bell / Bishop Keith Hunter / Margaret Waterhouse / Pat Williamson / Norman Winstanley / Ruby & Calvin Brindley (Gozo) / John Leatherland, bishop / William Collier / Roy & Linda Smith / Tania Walker / Gerard Crane, bishop / Raymond Ketland / Alan Borden / Pamela (Masih -pronounced Massey) / Tommy Ryan / John Bartle / Michael Greer / Brian Lee (OSRaphael) / Brain Adams / Gwen Cordell / John Bodkin / Leah Uttley / Paula Lester / Vicky Grimshaw / Patricia Grant / Bill Griffin. ("*" = close to death)

Calendar of Saints

St. Nicholas was a Bishop who lived in the fourth century AD in a place called Myra in Asia Minor (now called Turkey). He was a very rich man because his parents died when he was young and left him a lot of money. He was also a very kind man and had a reputation for helping the poor and giving secret gifts to people who needed it. There are several legends about St. Nicholas, although we don't know if any of them are true!



The most famous story about St. Nicholas tells how the custom of hanging up stockings to get presents in first started! It goes like this: There was a poor man who had three daughters. He was so poor, he did not have enough money for a dowry, so his daughters couldn't get married. (A dowry is a sum of money paid to the bridegroom by the brides parents on the wedding day. This still happens in some countries, even today.) One night, Nicholas secretly dropped a bag of gold down the chimney and into the house (This meant that the oldest daughter was then able to be married.). The bag fell into a stocking that had been hung by the fire to dry!

This was repeated later with the second daughter. Finally, the father secretly hid by the fire every evening until he caught Nicholas dropping in a bag of gold. Nicholas begged the man to not tell anyone what he had done, because he did not want to bring attention to himself. But soon the news got out and when anyone received a secret gift, it was thought

that maybe it was from Nicholas. Because of his kindness Nicholas was made a Saint. St. Nicholas is not only the saint of children but also of sailors! One story tells of him helping some sailors that were caught in a dreadful storm off the coast of Turkey. The storm was raging around them and all the men were terrified that their ship would sink beneath the giant waves. They prayed to St. Nicholas to help them. Suddenly, he was standing on the deck before them. He ordered the sea to be calm, the storm died away, and they were able to sail their ship safely to port. St. Nicholas was exiled from Myra and later put in prison during the persecution by the Emperor Diocletian. No one is really knows when he died, but it was on 6th December in either 345 or 352 AD. In 1807, his bones were stolen from Turkey by some Italian merchant sailors. The bones are now kept in the Church named after him in the Italian port of Bari. On St. Nicholas feast day (6th December), the sailors of Bari still carry his statue from the Cathedral out to sea, so that he can bless the waters and so give them safe voyages throughout the year.

(Guess the Locations – Carlisle, Coventry, Westminster, Oscott Seminary Chapel)



FOR THE FEAST OF STEPHEN

Ingredients:

A side of salmon about 1.3kg / 2tbsp smoked paprika, thyme and garlic / 4tbsp olive oil.

Method:

Mix all ingredients with Olive Oil and brush over the fish. Place a few lemon slices and roast uncovered on a foil lined baking tray for 20 minutes. 200C Fan 180C Gas Mark 6.

O Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant,
O Come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.
Come and behold Him, Born the King of angels;

Refrain:

O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

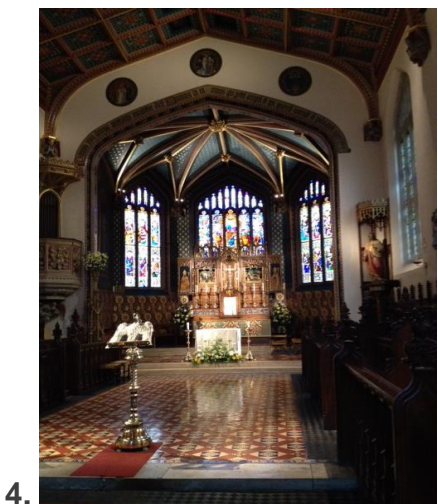
The text to the Carol O Come All Ye Faithful was originally written in Latin (Adeste Fideles) and was intended to be a hymn. It is attributed to John Wade, an Englishman. The music to O Come All Ye Faithful was composed by fellow Englishman John Reading in the early 1700s. The tune was first

published in a collection known as "Cantus Diversi" in 1751. In 1841 Rev. Frederick Oakley is reputed to have worked on the familiar translation of O Come All Ye Faithful which replaced the older Latin lyrics "Adeste Fideles".

Poetry Corner



Guess the Locations



Midnight miracles make quiet mornings.
 Even God sleeps peaceful on the breast.
 Restless nights result in dreamy dawning's,
 Revelations ripe for sunlit rest.
 Years of love lie drowsy, slug-a-bed.
 Choices seem to snuggle, sleeping in.
 Holiness is happiness instead,
 Rich in all that gathers grace within.
 In love of God or man, the Earth must turn.
 Songs of angels come in troubled times.
 The miracle of witness one must earn,
 Moving to transfigure one's own crimes.
 As faith and love require restful sleep,
 So, too, must they their midnight vigils keep.



Christmas is the candle-glow
 That lights the darkest gloom,
 Christmas is the fireside
 That warms the coldest room,
 Christmas is the silver star
 That guides all those who roam,
 Christmas is the shining path
 That beckons us back home.
 Christmas is the peal of bells,
 That spills through frosty air,
 Christmas is the greeting card
 That shows old friends still care,
 Christmas is the fragrant dish
 Of joy and hope combined,
 Christmas is the gift of love
 That's meant for all mankind.

by Margaret Ingall



The Healing Teaching &
 Chivalric Order of St Raphael