

The Parish Voice



ST JOHN
the Evangelist

October 2020
50p

Harvest in time of Pandemic – ‘Care for our Common Home’



Creator God, you made the goodness of the land, the riches of the sea and the rhythm of the seasons; as we thank you for the harvest, may we cherish and respect this planet and its peoples, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

How do we celebrate Harvest, at a time of global pandemic? This year our Harvest Festival will take place on Sunday 11th October. Inevitably there will be the superficial questions, like how do we stage a major Festival with limited capacity. Are we able to have a Harvest lunch - sadly not! And what about our usual participation in a range of local school Harvest events? But this year we face the much bigger question of how we re-orientate our lives towards the fundamental needs of Creation – not just at Harvest, but throughout the year.

It is clear to everyone I believe— save a few climate sceptics – that we are living through an unprecedented time of ecological crisis. At the time of writing, in mid-September, it is unseasonably warm; the media is reporting seismic changes to the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets; the World Wildlife Fund has reported record loss of species (a population reduction of vertebrate species by 70% over 50 years); and measures of CO² in the atmosphere remain at critical levels. This is not a mere fringe issue, but

directly effects more extreme weather patterns, ecological diversity, coastal flooding, and patterns of human conflict and migration.

Sadly whilst one of the initial spin-offs of the global pandemic and widespread lock-downs, was the decrease in emissions, with improving air quality, statistics suggest we are now back to pre-pandemic levels, and there hasn't been any significant long-term improvement. The big question before the summer was, how can we learn from this pathogen crisis, and build back better, with a more green economy and way of living, which doesn't exploit the natural world unsustainably? It would seem that we now risk missing the chance to debate these vital issues, and build back better.

The present Government's White Paper, 'Planning for the future', is concerned to 'Build, build, build', with a relaxing of local planning restrictions. And whilst this may appear to meet a still significant housing shortage, what of the risk of further damaging our local environments, without essential green measures being in place?

There is a lot of wisdom around in terms of theological, ethical and practical avenues for celebrating Harvest more appropriately, and indeed transforming our engagement with God's Creation as a whole – which is, after all, at the heart of Christian theology, and indeed of the other world faiths. In Colossians 1.19-20, St Paul writes of Jesus Christ - 'in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things.' Notice that the object of God's concern, in reconciliation through Christ, isn't just human beings, let alone Christians, but 'all things' – in other words all species, indeed the whole Creation. There is nothing beyond God's loving concern, and our Gospel is similarly concerned with this wider reconciliation of and care for all Creation. Hence one of the Five Marks of Mission: 'To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth'.

In 2015 Pope Francis published his remarkable Encyclical 'Laudato Si – On Care for our Common Home'. Taking its inspiration from St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology, and his poem, 'the Canticle of Brother Sun', which praises God for all creatures, this Letter explored with real depth the crisis we're in, and how Christians might respond. In it he writes about the Gospel of Creation, the human roots of our present ecological crisis, and

how we might nurture an 'Integral Ecology', as well as a transformed spiritual understanding. I thoroughly recommend reading this text, which is available online: http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html

So what can we do, to celebrate Harvest well - and more importantly, to face up to our ecological crisis, and take necessary Christian moral responsibility? This is a huge question, and I am delighted that we at St John's are looking at seriously developing our engagement with this issue, not least through the actions of Rev Dr Peter Heslam, Sir Brian Heap, climate change expert Dr Joanna Depledge and the work of our Mission Committee. Various Bible Study or home group options are being explored, on the Creation and environmental theme, and discussions are in progress with Sam Davies, Chair, Queen Edith's Community Forum, to see how we might involve the wider community.

One of my areas of learning from my previous ministry in Leicestershire, was the possibility of transforming our liturgical engagement with Harvest and Creation, so that instead of just one Sunday each autumn, we have a whole Creation-tide season, encompassing a significant part of the autumn. Furthermore Church leaders are calling for a Climate Change Sunday. Alongside of worship and teaching, parishes also have the opportunity to work towards becoming an 'Eco Church', in partnership with A Rocha UK, and this involves an environmental audit, and tools for developing our engagement on many different levels: theologically; in terms of our church and local community; and in terms of both individual actions and wider climate justice. It is hoped that, in due course, St John's will begin to work towards becoming an 'Eco Church', in order to embed our commitments. And this, of course, means that all of us – in our own particular lives and communities – need to commit to living more sustainably, and responsibly.

We are at a time of crisis, but there is always time for repentance, fresh eyes, and restoring a better ecological balance, and theological wisdom. May we, at St John's, this Harvest, and indeed in our nation and our world, as we emerge from this pandemic, look to live differently, in order to 'cherish and respect this planet and its peoples', through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



Having Dominion

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?
Yet you have...given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
(Psalm 8.3-end)

One of the first times faith felt it had come fully alive in me was when I was a young teenager. I was attending a large Christian festival in the Peak District. One of the

speakers was the astronaut Buzz Aldrin, one of the first two humans to set foot on the moon. He spoke movingly about the wonder and majesty of what he had seen during his moon mission eight years earlier in 1969. In doing so, he cited the first of the two lines from Psalm 8 shown above. He had, in fact, broadcast these words to the world from inside his Apollo 11 spacecraft as it returned to earth.

Five decades later, the Psalmist's insight in those two lines that human beings are a part, but only a tiny part, of the vast created order has become central to a movement I joined a couple of years before becoming a teenager, as the result of a school project on pollution: the environmental movement. However, the following line of that Psalm, which suggests God has given humans 'dominion' over creation, has proved problematic to many members of that movement. That line directly echoes the account of creation in Genesis 1. But for many environmentalists, this idea is largely responsible for the human exploitation of the natural world that has led to our current ecological crisis.

This charge against Christianity, which for many people represents a stumbling block to faith, relies on a selective reading of scripture. For the second account of creation, in Genesis 2, provides a key insight into what 'having dominion' really means. There we read in verse 15, 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it'. The Hebrew verbs translated here as 'to till' and 'to keep' are horticultural terms that are specifically about the careful nurture of nature. They are an early example of a recurrent theme in scripture about the wise stewardship of the earth's resources.

Christians have, of course, been amongst those who have irresponsibly exploited the earth's resources. But a truly biblical view would be that, when they do so, they are not fulfilling God's command to have dominion in Psalm 8 and Genesis 1 but are reflecting the fallenness of human beings depicted in Genesis 3. As a result of that fallenness, we read there, the relationship between human beings and the natural world is marred by alienation and hostility.

This reflection, which originally appeared as a Thought for the Day on St John's website on 14th September 2020, is the first of several 'Thoughts' I plan to share on the environment. But I intend doing so – if possible – using the readings for Mondays (the day on which it is my turn to write). Although I have not yet looked up what those readings are, I up for this challenge because I believe – as the first Monday's readings of Psalm 8 and Gen 3 illustrate – that the relationship between humans and the rest of creation is so pervasive in scripture that it is almost

impossible to find a set of lectionary readings in which no insight is offered that can help us grapple with this issue.

In the meantime, a word on the photo above. It shows me the day before my Thought appeared cooling off having reached my destination on a cycle ride to Fen Drayton Lakes, a nature reserve including 12 lakes beside the Great Ouse river. It is full of natural beauty and teeming with wildlife. But because it originates in 12 gravel quarries, that for generations provided construction material for many of the roads and buildings of nearby Cambridge, this nature reserve also exuded for me a theological beauty.

It reminded me that God is at work in the earth's threatened habitat, redeeming its fallenness and quietly bringing about a renewal that one day will be seen in all its fullness. As Sir David Attenborough said at the end of his powerful BBC documentary on the day of my cycle ride: 'I may not be here to see it, but if we make the right decisions at this critical moment, we can safeguard our planet's ecosystems, its extraordinary biodiversity and all its inhabitants.'

The Revd Dr Peter S Heslam is Director of [Faith in Business](#), and an Assistant Priest at St John's.

Editor's note: the above reflection appeared on St John's [website](#) and Facebook [page](#) as one of its daily Thought for the Days. Do visit the site or 'Follow' the Facebook page if you would like to receive daily inspiration from members of the Ministry Team.



We are pleased to announce that the St John's Centre has now reopened for bookings.

Detailed COVID-19 safety measures are in place, and each hirer is required to sign up to these. Hirers will need to produce their own risk assessments, in-line with our own. Face masks are required for all users, and social distancing must also be exercised during events.

For more details, please see [the St John's Centre](#), area of the website.



Homerton Charter Choir

We are looking forward to Evensong at St John's on Tuesdays 13, 20 and 27 October at 6.30pm.

You are most welcome to join us, with arrangements including that:

"physical distancing and hygiene measures will be in place and all (apart from those who are exempt) will be required to wear a mask throughout. We will also be keeping a record of those who have attended each service, to facilitate NHS Test and Trace in the event of an outbreak of coronavirus."

Trish Maude
Hon. Lay Chaplain

Continuing along the way

At the end of August, our Sunday Old Testament readings moved on from the book of Genesis, to the book of Exodus; and we will now travel with the Israelites, out of Egypt and into the wilderness, until the end of October. The stories in the book of Exodus must be some of the most well known in the whole Old Testament; Moses being set adrift in a basket, the burning bush, the plagues, the Passover, the crossing of the sea, the Ten Commandments and the golden calf. But, even more than with the book of Genesis, these stories have become more than that. The grand narrative of a group of oppressed people, escaping that oppression and then journeying in the wilderness, has become a song whose refrain echoes through both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament; and which has spilled out across time and space, into any situation where people need hope in the face of subjugation.

The Book of Exodus

The book of Exodus is the 2nd book of the Hebrew Bible. It's name comes from the Greek 'ex hodos', meaning 'way/road out of'. If you were to read it in one go, it would probably take you about 3 hours; but though I'm sure you would start well, you might find it getting a bit tricky nearer the end. Because Exodus is almost a book of two halves. Like Genesis, it includes some wonderful narrative sections, which tell the stories of God's people. These are parts I mentioned previously, the tales we know and love. But the book of Exodus also contains long passages on the law and some incredibly detailed descriptions

about the building of the tabernacle and how it should be furnished. So if we were to break down the structure, it would approximately be as follows:

Chapters 1 – 14: God's people escaping from slavery and oppression
Chapters 15 – 18: God's people journey in the wilderness
Chapters 19 – 24: God's revelation to the people and the giving of the law
Chapters 25 – 31: Instructions from building the tabernacle
Chapters 32 – 34: God's people rebel and are then forgiven
Chapters 35 – 40: The tabernacle is built.

In reality then, it is the first half of the book that really concentrates on the 'exodus event', with the second half of the book being largely concerned with the ways in which the people of Israel lived. Perhaps unsurprisingly then, our Sunday readings mostly miss out the long sections on the law and the tabernacle; although that doesn't mean they aren't worth reading!

Of course, the dominant character in Exodus is Moses and because of that, at one point it was felt that this (and the Pentateuch as a whole) was actually written by Moses. Nowadays, that would not be a common view amongst scholars, but the writings are still sometimes called 'Mosaic' to show they are the sort of thing that Moses would agree with!

But more than Moses, the book of Exodus is about God and God's relationship with God's people, with Israel. Through the book we see so many elements of that relationship. We see a God who listens to God's people, who saves God's people,

who feeds God's people, who fights for God's people and who always journeys alongside them. We see too a God who will guide God's people, who will rule God's people; a God who is ultimate holy and is might even be dangerous. The God that we see in the book of Exodus is our God and through discovering how God related with the people then, we can understand more of how God relates to us now.

How and why was it written and a little more about sources...

Sometimes the book of Exodus can seem quite confusing. Take the plagues in chapters 7-10; does Pharaoh harden his own heart, or is God hardening it? Take the crossing of the sea in Exodus 14; are the people meant to stay still, or move? Or you could look at the various mountain-top experiences of Moses; why exactly does he go up? Or even just the simple question of what Moses' Father in Law was called... Sometimes, when we read these stories, we can feel quite uncomfortable with the inconsistencies and we either try to find ways round them, or we dismiss or ignore them!

In my genesis article last month, I made mention of the different sources that make up the Pentateuch, J, E, P and D. One of the things that these sources help us do, is understand why the narrative doesn't always make complete sense.

Imagine a great event took place. A number of different families witnessed, or lived through that event. Each of those

families would tell their own stories about what had taken place. These stories would then be handed down from mother to daughter and from father to son, and would become a kernel of memory. At some future point, all these families meet up and tell their stories to each other. They had all be witnesses to the same event, but it would be quite expected that each would stress the importance of different people and different events.

Exodus, and indeed the whole of the Pentateuch, is very likely to have been written in just such a way. Different families and groups, slowly came together and shared their own stories of how God had journeyed with them. Parts of these stories were very similar, and parts were quite different. But they all spoke of a God who rescued the people from oppression and walked alongside them, forming them into a free people and promising to be with them always. And then, at some point, probably 500 – 600 BC, these narratives were all written down and eventually merged together, to make one 'book'. We do not know who wrote it all down the stories, nor who compiled them; but we can tell something about what life was like for them, by the ways in which they have told these narratives. As you will notice when you read them; that way doesn't always make for a cohesive 'whole', but for me, it doesn't take away from the truth that is within the story; instead it enriches it and brings it alive!

How has it been received?

Perhaps the most interesting thing about the Exodus story is the way in which it has

been received over the millennia since it was first told. The story is taken up firstly in the Hebrew Scriptures and later in the New Testament, and it has remained embedded in the rituals and rites of both Jews and Christians today. Elements of the exodus story are worked into both the Eucharist and our baptism liturgy and recur in some of our most popular hymnody. But the exodus story has travelled out further than the synagogue or the church, and has become a song for all oppressed people; for those whose voices are unheard and for those who want to challenge the status quo. It is a message of hope for all who wait to be led out of bondage; that God is an awesome God and God will save. The

exodus story has inspired countless people who have lived during times of persecution, all the way up to the present day, and including those involved in campaigns against slavery and the civil rights movement.

Although at times it can be an intensely challenging book (for instance we might feel deeply uncomfortable with the violence in it and with some of the ideas of land ownership), it is perhaps for these reasons, its lasting legacy and the hope it has provided to so many people, that I commend you to study it more deeply as we read it on a Sunday morning.

News from the Choir

The choir are delighted to return after our longest break ever. We are singing whilst socially distanced and as a result we can't all sing together just yet. The trebles are leading the 9:30am service and the adults are leading the 11am and 6pm services.



Congratulations to Sophie who was appointed as head chorister last month.

Candles in the Dark

Say a prayer for me!

Men and women with bowed heads,
remembering their loved ones.

Flaming candles
shimmering in the darkness.
Each one represents a living soul,
bearing the prayers of the loved one.

A sacrificial offering,
incense at the altar,
burning glory,
a pathway of light;
away from the doom-ridden streets,
the collapsed buildings,
the shell-shattered roadways.

Keep the candles burning,
keep the memories alive.
When one flickers and dies,
a living soul has departed,
a dream has been extinguished.

The memory, the flame, the offering
will always outlive the darkness.

Where they have gone
there will be no need of light
for there is no darkness
only the light of life
and Peace with God.

Beryl Johnson

Regular Weekday Worship and Activities		
Mondays	9.00am	Morning Prayer
Tuesdays	9.00am 10.30am 6.30 pm	Morning Prayer Bible Study Group Choral Evensong with Homerton Charter Choir (term time)
Wednesdays	9.00 am 10.00am 9:00pm	Morning Prayer Holy Communion Compline (online) Zoom: 76397722761 Passcode: 6alxwu
Thursdays	6.30pm 7.00pm 7.30pm	Choir Practice (Trebles) Choir Practice (Trebles and Adults) Choir Practice (Adults) Contact: Elizabeth Trenchard (Tel: 01954 201381)
Sundays (alternate)	7.15 pm	Youth Group Tel 241316 for details.

Regular Groups at St John's		
Tuesdays	6.00pm	Brownies
Term Time		<i>Contact: Shelly Palazzo (Tel: 07971 696626)</i>
only	7.30pm	Guides
		<i>Contact: Kristie Bowers (Tel: 510352)</i>
Wednesdays	2.00pm	Knitting Group
		<i>PLEASE NOTE THAT SOME GROUPS ARE NOT MEETING AT PRESENT</i>

Sunday Services at St John's in October		
Sunday 4th October <i>Annual Gift Day</i>	9:30am	All Age Communion
	11:00am	Service of the Word
	6.00 pm	Choral Evensong with Sermon
Sunday 11th October <i>Harvest Festival</i>	9:30am	All Age Service
	11:00am	Communion Service
	6.00 pm	Choral Evensong with Sermon
Sunday 18th October <i>Overseas Mission Links</i>	9:30am	All Age Service
	11:00am	Service of the Word
	6.00 pm	Holy Communion
Sunday 25th October	9:30am	All Age Service
	11:00am	Communion Service
	6.00 pm	Choral Evensong with Sermon

From the Parish Registers		
Baptism	September 6th	Arabella Catelyn Howe
	September 6th	Bethany Catherine Langford
	September 20th	Olivia Madeline Dove Hare
Wedding	September 26th	Laura Scott & Kristian Hewett

'Recovering the Lost Map'
James Shakespeare



Maggie O'Farrell (HAMNET, Tinder Press, 2020) writes about William Shakespeare, following the bereavement of his son Hamnet, '...like someone trying to find their way back to a place for which they have lost the map.'

*"Search me out, O God, and know my heart
and lead me in the way everlasting." (Psalm 139)*

Reconnecting with poetry – creativity, humanity,
Identity and deeper spirituality:
Mid life, emerging from chrysalis, womb of Spirit.

Recovering golden thread, in new time and place:
Settled once more, challenge of translation –
Gathering threads of experience, listening to inner voice.

Recreating space, for meanings to be re-moulded:
Courage, discipline, attentiveness – whispers heard
From far off country, become near.

Reframing future, out of rediscovered seeds
Of childhood: moments in time, vistas opening up
From long lost memory. Recovery of eternal present.

Imbibing sea of stories, fertile human imaginings:
Love lost and found, filial relations stirred,
Community of the heart. Phoenix rising
Out of ashes of unexplained trauma.

Basking in warm glow of sunlight:
Vibrant beauty of nature, endless horizons,
Turning tide of vitality, wildlife re-wilding life,
Balance restored, shells capturing hidden meanings.

Recovering lost map, mind in heart, road less travelled:
Deep roots, living waters; dying and rising;
Rhythm of breathing, belonging, loving, creating;
Challenging self-giving. Return to the centre, labyrinth
Of freedom... Pilgrim's progress.

Following well worn footsteps of people of God:
Way in the wilderness, heaven in ordinary,
Creative road to freedom. Divine summons,
Something understood.

*"And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time"*
(T. S. Eliot, Little Gidding)



A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO POVERTY

Traidcraft will be back soon at St John's

Well, we very much hope it will and that our plans to open our stall at St John's on Sunday 4 October will not be scuppered by new Government guidelines. Our aim is to be in the Wilkinson Room after both the 9.30 and the 11 o'clock services. Tables will be spaced round the room with a limit of 4 customers at one time around each table. We ask that you **don't handle goods unless you are buying.**

There will be a separate payment table with a float of 'clean' cash (ie it will have been stored for many days and sprayed with sanitizing fluid) to be used for change. Servers will ask customers to show the cash they are offering then drop it into a tub so it isn't touched by anyone else on the day. Change will be given from the 'clean' pot. Cheques can be dropped into another pot. We will be well stocked with a new delivery from Traidcraft – including Chocolate Raisins at last and Autumn/Winter catalogues – and we'll be very pleased to see you all again. If you could bring some loose change with you as well as notes, that would be very helpful.

In case of any alterations to our plans, necessitated by new rules, please check the weekly bulletin, which Tricia circulates, on 2 October.

Katie Knapton Tel 212089
katieknapton@talktalk.net

St Francis & what being a Franciscan means to me

The Feast of St Francis is 4th October

By James

It's a real joy to share something about St Francis, and the Franciscan way of life. I'm going to say something about St Francis and Franciscans, and a little about the Third Order of the Society of St Francis, of which I've been a member for over 20 years and am now responsible for vocations and formation.

So what drew me to St Francis & his Charism for the Church, someone who's been a profound influence on my Christian faith and vocation for over 30 years?

- Well there's a sense, for many of us, that the monastic life in general – with its deeper disciplines of prayer and devotion and service – and the inspiration of the Christian saints, in particular, perform an essential role in our following of Christ today. Right back to the witness of the Desert Fathers of the 4th Century - whom Thomas Merton described as those escaping from the shipwreck which was pagan society – the monastic tradition has offered an authentic witness to Christ. And today many Christians are rediscovering, in various forms, the wisdom that the religious life has to offer, in terms of the call to prayer and prophecy and living out the Baptised life more whole-heartedly, in a society which is similarly close to the precipice. And Franciscanism, alongside St Benedict and the Ignatian tradition, is one of foremost strands, in our Christian heritage, which we can draw on today.
- Like many, I first encountered St Francis through contacts with the First Order Brothers in the Church of England. I attended a school influenced by the Oxford Movement, with quite a high tradition of worship; and at a time, after being Confirmed, when I was beginning to discover what Christ was all about, as well as the riches of Christian prayer, we received a mission led by an austere and charismatic brother, called Gregory. What was it, I wondered, that fired this brown brother, who seemed so different and full of energy? And so I was led to discover, in a way that really inspired me, what these strange brothers – who seemed so counter-cultural to our acquisitive society – were all about, and what had spoken to them.
- And so I began to read up about St Francis, as well as visiting various Anglican Franciscan houses, around the country, that I discovered were very much open for business... And over several years, as I grew up, I immersed myself in their life: whether it was visiting their Mother House, at Hilfield in Dorset – and helping run their annual youth camp – or staying in their more monastic houses, like Glasshampton and Alnmouth, or observing their care for the homeless, I was



fascinated by this bold experiment in Gospel living. And in Cambridge, as an undergraduate, I discovered St Benets, then run by the Franciscans, as well as receiving spiritual guidance – over many years – from Brother Michael, who had retired to their community there, having been a serving Bishop & Minister General of the world-wide Order.

So let me step back and reflect a little, if I may (& I realise that you will already have plenty of knowledge about St Francis already, I'm sure) about Francis, and Franciscans, and some of the keynotes of Franciscan spirituality.

- There is undoubtedly something about St Francis, if at times tinged with a romanticism that doesn't always chime with the reality of the Gospel he embraced, that speaks to people. Whether it be our concern for fraternity in a society of individualism and inequality, or young people's passion for the fragile state of our natural environment, or our fears about the reality of conflict and violence in our world, Francis seems to have universal appeal. Listen to these words written by the American Franciscan writer, Carlo Carretto, in the 1980s, in his book 'The Way of St Francis' – *'At least once in our lives we have dreamed of becoming saints. Stumbling under the weight of contradictions in our life, for a moment we glimpsed the possibility of building within ourselves a place of simplicity and light. Horrified at our selfishness, we burst asunder the chains of our senses... and glimpsed the possibility of true freedom and authentic love. Bored by middle-class, conformist life, we suddenly saw ourselves out on the streets of the world – bearers of a message of light and love, love of all sisters and brothers, and ready to offer, on the altar of unconditional love, the witness of a life in which the primacy of poverty and love would make communicating and relating an easy matter. This is when St Francis entered our life in some way.'*
- In this respect, then, St Francis is one of those Christian saints who holds almost universal appeal well beyond the Church. But we need to remember, of course, that Francis always remained at the heart of the Catholic Church – called to proclaim the Gospel of Christ and to administer the sacraments - and he saw himself, essentially, as a humble servant of the Church. So obedience, for Francis, was all important, and even if in distinct ways Francis & his followers were subversive, he believed himself called by Christ to an apostolic ministry of preaching and service, rooted in a rigorous life of prayer and devotion. What was unique about Francis, however, as revealed in his early Rule of 1209 was his call (as he put it): 'To follow the teaching and footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ... who says, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."'
- In other words, St Francis, or at least his original Brotherhood, was committed to a life of radical poverty and an almost literal imitation of the teachings of Christ, not least the

Beatitudes. And if you look at his original Rule, of 1209 (later adapted in 1223) what you find is essentially a weaving together of the injunctions of Jesus from the Gospels, as a radical pattern of Christian discipleship. [I always remember, as a teenager, being captivated by this, and writing to Bishop John Moorman, one of the contemporary biographers of St Francis, asking him if it was still possible to live a primitive Franciscan life today. I wish I'd kept his hand-written response, which was full of sane wisdom!]

So let me remind you, in broad brush detail, some of the key elements of the story of St Francis, before giving a quick survey of his Order, and some of the keynotes of his spirituality today.

- Francesco Bernadone was born in 1181 in Assisi, the son of a wealthy cloth merchant Pietro. His conversion began in 1204, at the age of 23, leading him to renounce his earlier dreams of military glory, and to begin to contemplate a deeper life of prayer and devotion to Christ. In 1205 Francis began to live the life of a penitent, giving up his possessions and engaging in charitable activity, serving the outcast lepers in the vicinity of Assisi; this following a transforming moment of embracing a leper, whom he had encountered along the road – someone he would formerly have avoided at all costs. Francis also tried his hand at repairing medieaval Churches, such as St Damiano, after a particular call from Christ. And this moment in his conversion is also worth recalling, for one day, while praying alone in the tiny Church of St Damiano, Francis saw the lips of Christ move – from the great Byzantine crucifix – and say to him, ‘Francis, go and repair my church, which you see is falling down.’ Something he would enact literally, begging for money to buy stones, before realising that it wasn’t of course bricks & mortar that God wanted him to repair, but the Body of Christ in the world.
- Then in 1206, while living and praying at the nearby Church of St Mary of the Angels, outside of Assisi, Francis heard the apostolic call (through the words of St Matthew’s Gospel), to preach the Kingdom. Matthew 10.5: ‘These twelve Jesus sent out, “As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The Kingdom of heaven has come near.’ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons... Take no gold or silver, or copper in your belts, or sandals, or a staff; for labourers deserve their food.’”
- Sometime afterwards Francis, who had begun to preach (despite not having any formal education), began to attract followers, who formed the first brotherhood – the First Order; and in 1209, having written his simple Rule of Life, managed to secure an audience with Pope Innocent III in Rome, who (after a dramatic vision) approved his Rule.
- Francis’ ministry (& you can read all about his life, from various sources, including Thomas of Celano, St Bonaventure, the Little Flowers of St Francis; and numerous

modern biographies) really did transform and revive the Church and civilization, throughout Europe, not least through the impact of his rapidly expanding Orders, such that by 1224 the first Franciscans had even established themselves in England, initially in Canterbury, London and Oxford.

- In 1224, after 15 years of tireless ministry – which resulted in an incredible number of religious vocations, as well as the contemplative life of St Clare and her companions (about which Brian will speak), and sometime after 1214 the Third Order of Penitents – Francis retired from his active life of preaching and serving and missionary work, and (on Mount La Verna, above Assisi) he received the stigmata: the sacred marks of Christ's passion on his hands and feet and side. Francis died two years later, in 1226, and was canonised in 1228.

What about the Franciscans in the Anglican Communion? This in itself is a fascinating story, told by Dr Peta Dunstan, in her book 'This Poor Sort'. Essentially, in the context of the revival of Anglican religious life in the 19th Century, following the Oxford Movement and the Missionary Movement, a number of different orders eventually came together to form the Anglican Society of St Francis in 1937. These comprised, among others, the Brotherhood of St Francis from 1921; the Christa Seva Sangha, which grew out of an Indian Christian mission, in the 1920s; the Brotherhood of the Love of Christ, based for a time at St Ives, Huntingdon; and various Franciscan communities in the American Episcopal Church. These all came together, then, to form a united Anglican Franciscan Community in 1937, under the leadership of Brother Douglas, and subsequently spread across different Provinces of the Anglican Communion.

The Third Order in the Anglican Church had its roots well before 1937, but became formally part of the Society of Francis in that year, and has since developed, initially in close relationship with the First Order of Brothers (and later Sisters), throughout the Anglican world. And similar to its expression in the Roman Catholic Church, the Third Order offers a dedicated life, under vows, enabling ordinary Christians – male or female, ordained or lay, married or single – to embrace the spirit of the Franciscan principals, in everyday life. And let me quote directly from the service of profession of Anglican tertiaries, which gives a flavour of its own particular charism: *'Franciscans seek to be conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ, after the example of St Francis. Living in the world, members of the Third Order seek, like him, to make humility, love and joy the pre-eminent notes of their lives.'*

And within the principles of the Order, we find its purposes and core values expressed according to its three aims and ways of service. The aims of making our Lord Jesus Christ known and loved; spreading a spirit of love and harmony; and living simply. And the ways of service, common to other lay monastic communities, or prayer, study and work. All of which is supported by individual Rule of Life, a pattern of meeting together, a novitiate and the requirement of regular retreats and quiet days, spiritual direction, as well as accountability

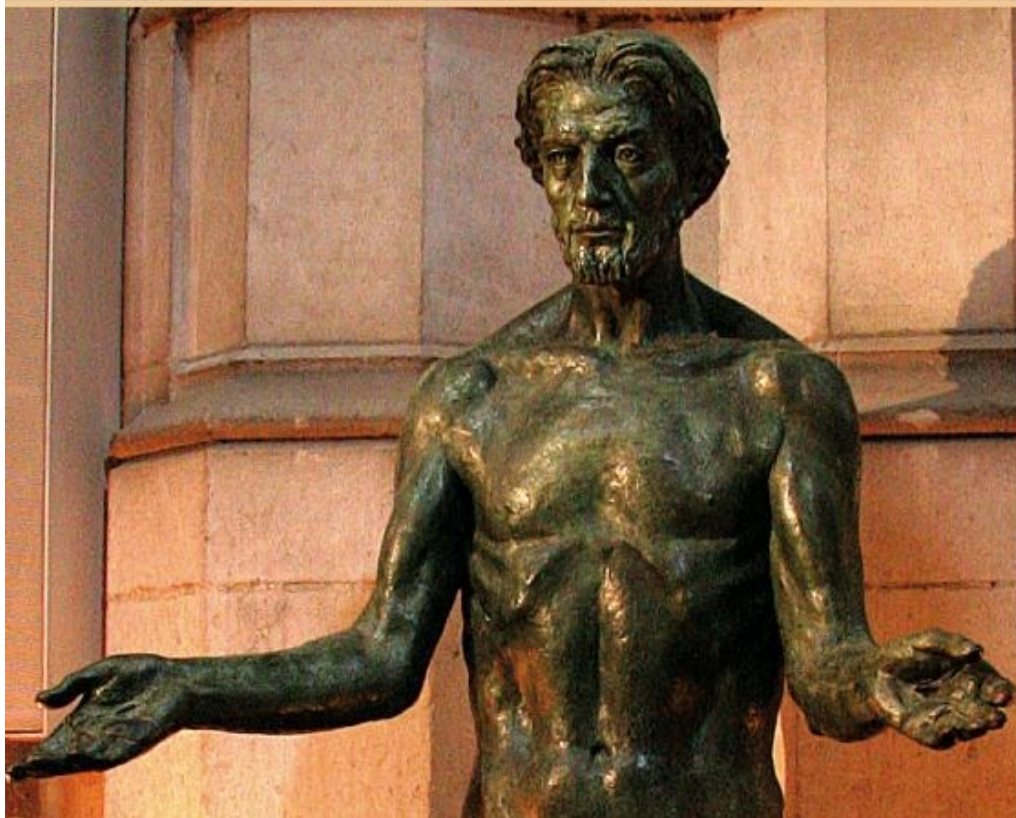
for serving within the Church and society.

But, before I finish and hand over to Brian, let me say a little more about the charism and spirituality of St Francis himself, who – alongside other Christian saints and monastic traditions – offers such a rich resource for baptised Christians today:

- Contemplation and action, with loving devotion to Christ. Like other Orders, Franciscan spirituality is rooted in prayer, as well as the eucharist. It is characterised by a particular devotion to the person of Christ, as well as his passion and resurrection. For some there is an element of nature mysticism, such as we see reflected in Francis' Canticle of the Creatures, and there is also (as with Mary and Martha) a dynamic tension between withdrawal for contemplation, and active engagement with the world, or prayer in action.
- Humility and simplicity. Inspired by Francis himself, a strong element of the tradition is the importance – or at least aspiration – of humility and simplicity; an attitude which recovers our joyful dependence on God, and a generosity which seeks to share with others.
- Brotherhood and sisterhood, proclaiming Christ by word and action, and serving the poor. Francis moved beyond the strict hierarchies of the church of his time by calling everyone brother or sister (including creatures), and was committed to proclaiming Christ by word and action, as well as having a particular concern for the poor and marginalised; and it is inspiring to hear, like many Christians, stories of Franciscans at work in many contexts of social need, such as work in inner city parishes, with the homeless, in prisons and with refugees and asylum seekers, or those who feel themselves to be broken.
- Justice, peace and reconciliation, Serving God in creation. And finally, Franciscanism tends to emphasize, after Francis, the priority of justice, peace and reconciliation, as well as building relationships and friendships across different world faiths.



Called to Change: Justice and Community in Christian Living



Called to Change: Justice and Community in Christian Living

Over the last six months our whole society has changed. The global pandemic has shown how much we human beings depend upon each other for our wellbeing.

When lockdown isolated us physically, we saw in stark ways how closely we are joined. We need each other for the basics of life (food, healthcare, shelter) and we also have profound emotional needs—for touch, presence and the blessings of community.

This autumn's programme explores our mutual dependence through a Christian frame, as a community, the Body of Christ, called to care for and about the world.

We start by looking at our joining as one Body through the Eucharist, and the challenges of our changed context upon long-established worship habits.

But we go on to explore other challenges to loving humanan community: the urgency of climate change, the ugly presence of racism, the cruelties on our doorstep of modern slavery and exploitative work.

Come and join us by Zoom on Thursday evenings (and one Sunday morning!) in October.

Booking is free. For the Zoom link, please email Emma Jones, Mission and Learning Assistant: e.jones@elycathedral.org



Pope Francis

We have such need of the light and strength of the Holy Spirit! The Church needs it to walk harmoniously and courageously in the witness of the Gospel. And the entire human family needs it so as to move out of this crisis more united and not more divided.
02 June 2020

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	Revd John Hillier (Tel: 844282)
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Toddle Along and Children's Church	Parish Office, Tel 241316)
Mother & Toddler Group	Lesley Jenkins (Tel: 565974)

Uniformed Organisations

5th Cambridge Brownies (Tuesday 6pm term time only)	Shelly Palazzo (Tel: 07971 696626)
5th Cambridge Guides (Tuesday 7:30pm term time only)	Kristie Bowers (Tel: 510352)
28th Cambridge Beaver Scouts* (Wednesday 6pm term time only)	Denise Owen (Tel: 510357)
28th Cambridge Cub Scouts* (Monday 6pm term time only)	Jeremy Racher (Tel: 244085)
28th Cambridge Scouts* (Tuesday 7:30pm term time only)	Geoff Oliver (Tel: 413553)

*At HQ, Flamsteed Road

