



The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church



Sunday 20th November 2022

Christ the King

Staying in Contact

The Very Revd Rod Reid - Incumbent (*usual rest day Monday*)

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or on Facebook, search for 'St Mary's Church, Bocking', or 'Panfield Church'

Forthcoming Services

Hymns

St Mary's, Bocking

Sunday 20th November

8am Said Mass

476

10am Sung Mass

585

Wednesday 23rd November

9.30am Said Mass

381

Sunday 27th November

8am Said Mass

10am Sung Mass

Christ Triumphant

Panfield Church

Sunday 20th November

6pm BCP Evening Prayer

Tuesday 22nd November

5pm Evening Prayer

Sunday 27th November

11am Holy Communion

Gospel Acclamation

*Great and wonderful are your deeds,
O Lord God the almighty, just and true
are your ways, O king of the ages.*

NOTICES

Donations - Christmas Tree Festival - Now is the time to get your 'Pound Presents' in to Ann Lanham. We are also looking for items for the 'Tombola'. Instead of a prize draw there will a couple of wonderful hampers, details on what is need for those are at the back of the church. The team on refreshments will also be in need of your support, a list of items needed will be available soon.

Rock Choir concert - THIS FRIDAY at 7.30pm, St Mary's Bocking will be hosting a concert for our friends at Panfield as they continue to raise funds for repairs to the church spire. Tickets are £12 for adults, £10 for concessions, and £2 for children. Available today.

Bocking Calendars - We have a few of the brand new for 2023, Bocking Calendars with photos taken by local photographers. If you would like a copy please speak to Fr Rod. The cost of is just £10.

Advent Course - The course will run for 3 evenings on Tuesdays Nov 29th, Dec 6th & Dec 20th from 7pm to 8.15pm, venue to be confirmed. The course is entitled 'Spend, Spend, Spend: keeping Advent and preparing for Christmas in a consumer society.' A signup sheet is at the back of the church.

Open House, A Warm Place this Winter - From Friday December 2nd to Friday March 10th we will be opening St Mary's Church Hall from 11.30am to 2pm as a warm place. These are challenging times as individuals and communities, and so we must pull together. Along with a warm space, there will be refreshments throughout and a simple soup lunch, all of which will be free, and open to everyone.

Going Green! - In partnership with A Rocha, an environmental charity, we are hoping to work towards the various awards associated with being an Eco-Church. There will be opportunities for all to get involved as we progress, including our younger ones as Eco-Church will be theme for the next Junior Church, Sunday Nov 20th. A reminder to those attending that to bring wellies or appropriate footwear.

Christmas Tree Festival - The Festival weekend will be Dec 10th/11th with performances, raffle, tombola, pound presents, refreshments and lots of in-house stall on SATURDAY 10TH DECEMBER, Father Christmas may even put an appearance in for that. There are lots of ways for you to support this fundraising event, details to follow on the items needed for the hampers plus much more,

Prayers - We keep in our prayers Jean Goodwin, Sue, Jackie, Roger Hurford, Frances, Margaret, Peter, Jenifer, Jo, Bernard, and Margaret Everitt. We also remember our care homes Millard House, Fern Lodge, Aspen Grange, Larchwood, The New Deanery & St Mary's Court. In our Years Mind, we pray for the families of Dorothy Pickford, Lea Beavis, Elisabeth Wright, Reg Thomas, Alice Fitch, Bob Stiff. Roger Midgley and Inge Platt.

The Collect for Christ the King

Eternal Father, whose Son Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of heaven
that he might rule over all things as Lord and King:
keep the Church in the unity of the Spirit
and in the bond of peace,
and bring the whole created order to worship at his feet;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

First Reading - Colossians 1:11-20

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Gospel Reading - Luke 23:33-43

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!' The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.' One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

Address

More years ago than I care to remember, the school I attended had a Debating Society. Indeed I think it had several targeted at different age groups. There were also class debates. These debates were a good way of both teaching pupils how to go about making a case to defend what might be a minority opinion; and how to respect to those with whom you disagreed while holding fast to your views.

I recall that on occasion I spoke in favour of a motion calling for the abolition of the monarchy. The motion was lost. But I do not think that there were any hard feelings between those of us who had republican tendencies and those who were ardent supporters of the monarchy and its then young Queen Elizabeth II. Indeed whatever our views on the principle of monarchy, I think everyone in the school was happy to join in the celebrations when the Queen made a visit to celebrate the 450th anniversary of the school being founded. She even ate with pupils in the refectory, though I think the food might have been slightly better than the usual school dinner.

I can still see both sides of the argument about whether it is better to have a monarchy or to have an elected head of state. But I do not think that even the most ardent republican has any great issues with the festival that we celebrate today: that of Christ the King even though it is a relatively recent addition to the Church of England's calendar. You will not find it in the Book of Common Prayer, nor indeed in the Alternative Service Book which preceded Common Worship. It was established around a century ago by Pope Pius XI to celebrate Jesus Christ's lordship over all creation. It also marks the end of the church's year, which begins next week with Advent Sunday.

But how, in an age which is often regarded as being suspicious of authority figures, do we celebrate Christ the King? One option is to focus on the idea of service. This was at the heart of the late Queen's commitment to her people made on her 21st birthday: "I declare before you all that my whole life whether it be long or short shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong." It is unquestionably the case that she honoured that commitment.

Service to others also lies at the heart of the Christian story. Jesus himself said, 'The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve.' (Mark 10.45). Yet also, when asked by Pontius Pilate whether he was a king he responded by saying: 'My kingdom is not from this world' and 'You say that I am a king'. (John 18.36-37). Yet the image of kingship offered by today's Gospel reading is of the humiliated and tortured Jesus nailed to the cross. Is this what kingship is all about?

Modern hymn writers have focused at times on this image. One of my favourite modern hymns is 'Love's endeavour, love's expense' written by W H Vanstone. Vanstone spent much of his life as a parish priest in a challenging parish before becoming a Canon of Chester Cathedral. His image of Christ, and therefore of God, is of the one who empties Himself for the sake of his creation. The hymn begins with a celebration of God's gifts, whether in nature or in the arts before acknowledging that true love involves self-giving and indeed an emptying of self. The final verses are:

Therefore He Who Thee reveals
hangs, O Father, on that Tree
helpless; and the nails and thorns
tell of what Thy love must be.
Thou art God; no monarch Thou
thron'd in east state to reign;
Thou art God, Whose arms of love
aching, spent, the world sustain.

A similar theme is picked up in the probably better known hymn by Graham Kendrick, The servant king, with its verse:

Come see his hands and his feet, the scars that speak of sacrifice,
hands that flung stars into space, to cruel nails surrendered.

There are important insights here and the theme of the suffering servant is an important one in the Old Testament as well as the New. Indeed the concept of the Son of God participating in the suffering of the world was perhaps one way of holding on to a Christian faith in the aftermath of the Holocaust and other acts of great evil committed by human beings in the twentieth century. It is not surprising therefore that the theology behind the sentiments expressed in Vanstone's hymn was derived from German theologians.

But surely when we celebrate the festival of Christ the King we have to look beyond the image of the suffering servant, or even the crucified Son of God. In human terms, it is good to express empathy towards those who are suffering. It is often, but not always, good to be able to reassure someone who is suffering that they are not alone, that others have walked the same path and that the bad times will pass. It may not be quite so helpful to say words 'I know just how you are feeling'. The person to whom that is said might well feel that no-one else can really understand just exactly what they are going through; and that even if someone can, what is needed is action not words.

If any of that is true at a human level, then surely it is not unreasonable to say to God something to the effect that it would be a lot more helpful if He acted to change the situation rather than just being there through the suffering of Christ. In worshipping Christ the King are we not proclaiming His lordship over the created order and that His sacrifice on the cross was not just a symbolic act but changed something at a very profound level. It was redemptive of creation and of humankind. It opened the way into a new relationship between God and creation filled with anticipation of that time when all comes right because the powers of darkness have been defeated.

This does not, of course, mean that we expect the kingdom of Jesus Christ to be modelled on human kingdoms with their emphasis on status and hierarchy. As was apparent in the conversation between Jesus and Pilate, Jesus was quietly acknowledging that he was a king but not that sort of king. He redefines kingship, but also changes our expectations of the kingdom. It may be an upside-down sort of place. A poem by R S Thomas captures this thought. Here is a short extract.

'Festivals at which the poor man Is king...
mirrors in which the blind look
At themselves and love looks at them
Back.'

Admission is free to those who present themselves with just their faith.

Although a relatively new festival, Christ the King has much to say about some of the fundamentals of our Christian faith. It challenges us to reflect on what we mean when we acknowledge the lordship of Christ. How do we escape the dilemma of over-emphasising the themes of service and suffering on the one hand or relying on human images of kingship on the other? I have offered some thoughts here. But let me end with a few lines from one of my favourite hymns, Jerusalem the Golden. Bernard of Cluny, to whom it is attributed, writes about the heavenly Jerusalem:

'The Prince is ever in them
The daylight is serene,
The pastures of the blessed
Are decked in glorious sheen'

What a superb vision. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people;
that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works,
may by you be plenteously rewarded;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.