



**DURHAM  
CATHEDRAL**

THE SHRINE OF ST CUTHBERT

# Praying Together

*during the week beginning Sunday 3 January  
The Second Sunday of Christmas*

*During this time of great anxiety and uncertainty, we want to stay in touch with our regular worshippers and indeed with everyone who is associated with the Cathedral family. We are delighted that we have been able to reintroduce congregational worship here at the Cathedral. Durham Cathedral is also open for private prayer and quiet reflection.*

*If you'd like to come to the cathedral for worship and/or prayer, there are some important measures we'd like you to know about, to ensure the safety of members of the public and staff. You can find this information on our website: [www.durhamcathedral.co.uk](http://www.durhamcathedral.co.uk) We will continue to live stream services as well so that, if you can't re-join us yet, you will still be able to engage with us online.*

## **Gospel**

**John 1. 10-18**

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."')

From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

# Thought for the Day

by the Reverend Canon Michael Hampel

The Christ-like attributes of grace and truth are qualities worth pursuing in this new year which we hope will also be a post-Covid, post-Brexit and post-Trump new year.

New years bring with them new hope and new possibilities but our aspirations for them quickly become tired and stale when we realise that a new year is only a few hours younger than the old year and that the political agenda is unlikely to change any more than our new year's resolutions are likely to change us.

But I'm a little more optimistic than usual for a variety of reasons. There is a vaccine, we did get a trade deal, a liberal progressive Christian is about to enter the White House, and the environment is now a standing item on the political agenda of virtually every nation in the world.

There is something in this, it seems to me, about the plan for the fullness of time of which St Paul speaks in his Epistle to the Ephesians, in which all things in heaven and earth are gathered up in the one who dispenses grace and truth.

I realise that this is quite a bold statement. It suggests that God has had something to do with the shift in political will brought about by a world health crisis, the need to neutralise the effects of Brexit, democratically sanctioned bullying in the White House, and the very real possibility that our grandchildren might not be able to breathe properly any more.

The danger with suggesting that God has had anything to do with a shift in political will is to imply that God takes party political sides. I reckon God does take sides although – as Jesus demonstrated clearly and succinctly when he was tempted by the devil in the wilderness – just not party political ones.

What lies behind my implied assertion that God is somehow involved in the current shift in the political temperature is the very simple and obvious truth that, in the incarnation, God got involved in the world a couple of thousand years ago with the specific intention of influencing the political agenda.

It started even before Christ was born when Mary incanted the song of high revolt

which we call the Magnificat – in which the mighty are cast down from their thrones and the humble and meek are exalted.

It was symbolised by kings casting their crowns before the Christ Child in the stable at Bethlehem as they knelt and worshipped.

It was manifested in the Sermon on the Mount in which those who traditionally don't do very well in elections, like peacemakers and social justice campaigners, are blessed by God.

It was memorialised at the Last Supper when the good news of the Gospel was to be marked not by the erection of a colossal statue but by the sharing of a simple meal.

And it was sacralised when the old order tried to silence the new order by putting Christ to death – only to discover that their actions led to an explosion of new life more powerful than the first.

And all because God got involved in politics when he became flesh and blood and dwelt among us full of grace and truth.

And where there is good in politics, where we see the political shifting to fairer and more inclusive ends, it may be no bad thing to look for the hand of God in the shift – and to sacralise anything which, however faltering and tentative, has the air about it of new hope and new possibilities, so that what is faltering and tentative becomes customary and statutory (unlike the majority of our new year resolutions...).

In other words, let's be more confident about involving the Christian Gospel in the political agenda and informing the latter with grace and truth of the former so that the political landscape can be just that little bit more gracious and truthful – as my optimistic take on this new year has suggested it might be.

It seems to me that it doesn't otherwise make sense to celebrate the incarnation and then politely to keep out of politics.

So, perhaps a more dynamic new year's resolution would be to get more involved in politics, to be more ready to compare and contrast the political agenda with such manifestos as the Magnificat and the Sermon on the Mount, and to look for grace and truth in our political activity and, when we find it, to bless it.

# A Form of Intercession for the New Year

We pray for God's faithfulness to be known in our world.

In a world of change and hope,  
of fear and adventure,  
faithful God  
**glorify your name.**

In human rebellion and obedience,  
in our seeking and our finding,  
faithful God  
**glorify your name.**

In the common life of our society,  
in prosperity and need,  
faithful God  
**glorify your name.**

As your Church proclaims your goodness  
in words and action,  
faithful God  
**glorify your name.**

Among our friends  
and in our homes,  
faithful God  
**glorify your name.**

In our times of joy,  
in our days of sorrow,  
faithful God  
**glorify your name.**

In our strengths and triumphs,  
in our weakness and at our death,  
faithful God  
**glorify your name.**

In your saints in glory  
and on the day of Christ's coming,  
faithful God  
**glorify your name.**

## Hymn

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided,  
Urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,  
Sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided,  
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,  
Speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,  
Teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:  
Lord of the word, receive your people's praise.

Lord, for our land, in this our generation,  
Spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care;  
For young and old, for commonwealth and nation,  
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

Lord, for our world; when we disown and doubt him,  
Loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain;  
Hungry and helpless, lost indeed without him,  
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake us,  
Self on the cross and Christ upon the throne;  
Past put behind us, for the future take us,  
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

*Timothy Dudley-Smith*

# Calendar of Holy Days

WEDNESDAY 6 JANUARY THE EPIPHANY

O God,  
who by the leading of a star  
manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth:  
mercifully grant that we,  
who know you now by faith,  
may at last behold your glory face to face;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.

## The Renewal of the Covenant

God made a covenant with the people of Israel, calling them to be a holy nation, chosen to bear witness to his steadfast love by finding delight in the law. The covenant was renewed in Jesus Christ our Lord, in his life, work, death and resurrection. In him all people may be set free from sin and its power, and united in love and obedience. In this covenant God promises us new life in Christ. For our part we promise to live no longer for ourselves but for God. We meet, therefore, as generations have met before us, to renew the covenant which bound them and binds us to God. Let us then seek forgiveness for the sin by which we have denied God's claim upon us.

Let us pray.

God of mercy, hear us as we confess our sins.

For the sin that has made us slow to learn from Christ,  
reluctant to follow him  
and afraid to bear the cross:

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, forgive.**

For the sin that has caused the poverty of our worship,  
the formality and selfishness of our prayers,  
our neglect of fellowship and the means of grace,  
and our hesitating witness for Christ:

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, forgive.**

For the sin that has led us to misuse your gifts,  
evade our responsibilities  
and fail to be good stewards of your creation:

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, forgive.**

For the sin that has made us unwilling to overcome evil with good,  
tolerant of injustice,  
quick to condemn  
and selfish in sharing your love with others:

Lord, have mercy.

**Lord, forgive.**

Beloved in Christ, let us again claim for ourselves  
this covenant which God has made with his people,  
and take upon us the yoke of Christ.

This means that we are content that he appoint us our place and work,  
and that he himself be our reward.

Christ has many services to be done:

some are easy, others are difficult;

some bring honour, others bring reproach;

some are suitable to our natural inclinations and material interests,  
others are contrary to both;

in some we may please Christ and please ourselves;

in others we cannot please Christ except by denying ourselves.

Yet the power to do all these things is given to us in Christ, who strengthens us.

Therefore let us make this covenant of God our own.

Let us give ourselves to him,

trusting in his promises and relying on his grace.

## A Prayer for use during the Coronavirus outbreak

Keep us, good Lord,  
under the shadow of your mercy  
in this time of uncertainty and distress.  
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,  
and lift up all who are brought low;  
that we may rejoice in your comfort  
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love  
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

## A Prayer of St Gregory of Nazianzus

You alone are unutterable,  
from the time you created all things that can be spoken of.  
You alone are unknowable,  
from the time you created all things that can be known.  
All things cry out about you;  
those which speak, and those which cannot speak.  
All things honour you;  
those which think and those which cannot think.  
For there is one longing, one groaning,  
that all things have for you.  
All things prayer to you that comprehend your plan  
and offer you a silent hymn.  
In you, the One, all things abide,  
and all things endlessly run to you who are the end of all.  
Amen.

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