

A Message from the Dean: Something About Mary

Mary is the saint for which Chelmsford Cathedral was originally named back in the 1240s. That was at a time when the cult of the Virgin Mary was growing in force – and in ways that ultimately became challenging and unhelpful for many Christians. Indeed, although all the historic churches tend to name churches for either a particular figure like Mary, or a particular feast (Holy Trinity, the Transfiguration, etc) that is by no means universal.

So today, when we give thanks for Mary as our “patron saint” (another not entirely helpful word!) what is the point?

As with the cycle of the Christian year, such a feast day is intended to draw us back to the person of Jesus, and inevitably, looking at Mary is a fantastic way to do that – the person who said a decisive “YES” to God and brought forth the Word for the world.

Mary has become a contested figure in the Christian tradition which is a huge shame because she reminds us in the most powerful way of the radical nature of the kingdom of God. When she learns that she is pregnant she sings a song, modelled on the song of Hannah in the Old Testament, declaring that as a result of the birth of Jesus the world will be turned upside down. The mighty will be stripped of their power and the poor and humble will be lifted high; the rich will go hungry while the starving are fed.

This is only found in Luke’s Gospel, who also emphasises the theme of Mary’s virginity – another feature that is seriously misunderstood. Later tradition associated virginity with purity, but – as Luke knows – in the Bible virginity is always associated with failure and shame. That is the significance of Mary’s virginity, and indeed the fact that she is pregnant but not married – something that without Joseph’s protection would have been a death sentence.

So Mary – this young Jewish teenager – is a figure of extraordinary power. She is all the things that God should not choose but he chooses her to be the mother of Jesus precisely because of that. And because she is a deeply unexpected mother of the Messiah, she can bear witness to all of us of the new world in which we are now invited to live because God has become one of us and invited us to become one with him.

Rembrandt’s early painting of the flight into Egypt, depicting Mary, Joseph and Jesus not as the traditional “holy family” but as lost refugees picking their way through the wilderness to safety.



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Creationtide

This is the time of promised gifts:
of seeds grown,
and crops cut,
of sunflowers turning to the light.

**In your grace, let us know
what love is coming to birth,
within us and without our world,
and help us to welcome it.**



Steven Shakespeare. The Earth Cries Glory, Daily Prayer with Creation

The **revelation of God's love in creation** is a constant source of wonder and healing: green literally makes us well, calming our anxieties and bringing good mental health. Yet, we have been removed from the Garden of Eden; our actions are a constant source of threat to the integrity of what God has made. As Christians we are called to repent our misuse of creation: our greed, our selfishness, our domination of all things. Sins against creation have never been so at the fore of our minds as now, when we are pushing all that has been made to a tipping point that threatens our common home and the future of humanity.

As Christians we are called to be **people of hope and people of justice**. The time is now to commit ever more to the protection and care of creation. That means some serious changes to our habits. Yet Covid-19 has shown us that we can live differently, that nothing is permanent and that change is possible. The period between 1st September and 4th October is the Season of Creation, dedicated to **God as Creator and Sustainer of all life**. Let us therefore **commit to prayer** for creation during this time so that our hearts may be changed and our common lives renewed by the God of all healing and power.

Resources

Did you miss Chelmsford Cathedral's **Greening the Church conference**? You can catch up on all the videos on our You Tube Channel: Chelmsford Cathedral, Greening the Church.

There is a lively community on Facebook sharing ideas and information about all things green: **Greening the Church Facebook Group**.

A Rocha is the Christian environmental charity that runs the Eco Church Programme. Do have a look at its informative website. Do you know that Chelmsford Cathedral is working towards the Gold Award?

Pray with Us:

Lord God, we thank you for the education we have received from teachers and schools, from colleges, academies and universities, from parents and friends. Help us to support those who work in education, especially with the difficulties they have faced over the past months. We appreciate the important job that they do in shaping the future of our world and remember them in our prayers.



Pray for St John the Baptist Church, Danbury and Little Baddow URC

Pray for the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, The Most Revd Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop.

Please pray for those who are unwell including Jean Cooper, Rita James, Winnie Towers, Jill Withams and all those in need of our prayers.

Cathedral Life Weekly

Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Sunday 6th September 2020

Study with Us:

Study Notes on the Sunday Gospel: Sunday 6th September

The Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary, patron saint of the Cathedral

Micah 5.2-4

Matthew 1.1-23



First Reading:

Micah is one of the earliest Old Testament prophets dating from the 8th century BC. This was a time when the people of Israel are beginning to face many challenges from both external military threats and internal corruption. Micah has the role of seeking to warn the people of the implications of their actions – if things carry on like this, there will be consequences. We can read his word in a fresh way for ourselves today when we contemplate war, environmental catastrophe and indeed the reality of Coronavirus.

In today's passage, however – another characteristic of Old Testament prophecy – Micah speaks a word of hope of a future that will lead to a new future. These words are deeply familiar to us; we inevitably hear them speaking of the Lord who is to come in Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reading:

Another text deeply familiar from the Christmas story. On this feast of Mary, it helps us see that when we celebrate Mary, what she does for us is point to Jesus.

Today, and in the week ahead, let's seek to point others to Jesus in what we say and what we do.

Daily Gospel Readings for this week, to use in your daily prayer:

Monday: Luke 6. 6-11

Tuesday: Matthew 1. 1-23

Wednesday: Luke 6. 12-19

Thursday: Luke 6. 27-38

Friday: Luke 6. 39-42

Saturday: Luke 6. 43 - end



Safeguarding Officer: Elizabeth Marshall tel: 07902 225131
or email: safeguarding@chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk



Cathedral Eucharist 10.30am on Sundays: Please note there is no longer a requirement to reserve a place/book a ticket. **However, if we reach capacity for any service and it would be unsafe to allow any more people into the building, it is with regret that we would have to close the doors and you would be unable to attend.** Following the latest Church of England guidance, it is now expected that all visitors to the Cathedral, for worship or private prayer, wear a facemask.

Junior Church is also back in Guy Harlings Garden. Please click on the link below to book in as numbers are currently limited in order to comply with government guidelines. You are very welcome to join Jean for some fun activities. <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/118973724613>

Book Group – This month we are reading “My Name is Asher Lev” by Chaim Potok, a novel about a young Hasidic artist. We will be meeting via Zoom to discuss the book on Monday September 7th at 7.30. All are welcome to join us – email sallydilley@tiscali.co.uk for more information.

On **Friday 4th September** there is an **End of Summer Social** from 5.30pm-7.30pm, in Guy Harlings Garden. All are welcome, but as is the case at the moment, please bring your own chair, drink and food.

Breakfast with the Bible: from September 6th, Breakfast with the Bible will be meeting on Zoom from 9am to 9.45am. If you would like to join the sessions, please email Canon Imogen Nay on imogen.nay@chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk for the Zoom code each week. Breakfast with the Bible is led by various members of the Cathedral congregation, lay and ordained. It includes time for discussion as well as some teaching input from the leaders. See the Breakfast with the Bible page on the website for full details.

The date for the postponed **Annual Meeting** has been confirmed as Sunday 27th September. It will follow on from the Sunday service and will also be live streamed. It is anticipated that it will be finished by 12 noon. The minutes of the last meeting and agenda are on the website. These can be accessed from the annual report link at the bottom of the home page (in blue) under ‘Useful Links’. All documents will be displayed in the Cathedral, as usual, two weeks before the meeting.

Stewarding at Sunday Services: Since we have returned to public worship at Sunday Services the roles of the Welcome Stewards and Wardens have changed considerably. We are seeking to expand the team of Welcome Stewards for the future as a number of our current team are still shielding or are cautious about returning to the rota at the moment. Is this something that you would consider? We don’t know yet what worship will be like as we progress towards Christmas but if we can expand our team, we will be ready when we need to step into action. Please speak to Elizabeth Marshall or Maureen Benson (or email ej.marshall@blueyonder.co.uk) if you are interested. New stewards need to be appointed at the Annual Meeting on September 27th. All volunteers must complete a Diocesan Confidential Declaration Form and online safeguarding training in line with our Safer Recruitment Policy

Being Resourced: Bible Reading notes for the September - December period now on sale at the Bookstall in the Cathedral. You can pay for them either by putting the correct money in the slot in the wall or by using our new contactless giving plate.

If you would like to receive the Dean's letter emailed to you once a week and you do not already receive it, please email clare.broome@chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk

Growing in Faith resources in a weekly email. If you would like to receive it, please sign up via the ‘Church at Home’ page of the website or email imogen.nay@chelmsfordcathedral.org.uk