

Sunday Readings

3 February 2019

FIRST READING

A reading from the prophet Malachi 3:1-4

The Lord God says this: Look, I am going to send my messenger to prepare a way before me. And the Lord you are seeking will suddenly enter his Temple; and the angel of the covenant whom you are longing for, yes, he is coming, says the Lord of Hosts. Who will be able to resist the day of his coming? Who will remain standing when he appears? For he is like the refiner's fire and the fullers' alkali. He will take his seat as refiner and purifier; he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and then they will make the offering to the Lord as it should be made. The offering of Judah and Jerusalem will then be welcomed by the Lord as in former days, as in the years of old.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 23:7-10. R/. v.8.

R/. Who is the king of glory? It is the Lord.

O gates, lift high your heads;
grow higher, ancient doors.
Let him enter, the king of glory! **R/.**

Who is the king of glory?
The Lord, the mighty, the valiant,
the Lord, the valiant in war. **R/.**

O gates, lift high your heads;
grow higher, ancient doors.
Let him enter, the king of glory! **R/.**

Who is he, the king of glory?
He, the Lord of armies,
he is the king of glory. **R/.**

SECOND READING

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews 2:14-18

Since all the children share the same blood and flesh, Christ too shared equally in it, so that by his death he could take away all the power of the devil, who had power over death, and set free all those who had been held in slavery all their lives by the fear of death. For it was not the angels that he took to himself; he took to himself descent from Abraham. It was essential that he should in this way become completely like his brothers so that he could be a compassionate and trustworthy high priest of God's religion, able to atone for human sins. That is, because he has himself been through temptation he is able to help others who are tempted.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Gospel Acclamation

Lk 2:32

*Alleluia, alleluia!
The light to enlighten the Gentiles
And give glory to Israel, your people.
Alleluia!*

GOSPEL

Luke 2:22-40

The Lord be with you. *And with your Spirit.*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.
Glory to you, O Lord.

When the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, the parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord, – observing what stands written in the Law of the Lord: *Every first-born male must be consecrated to the Lord* – and also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.

Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he looked forward to Israel's comforting and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said:

'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel.'

As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, 'You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare.'

There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favour was with him.

The Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The Presentation of the Lord - 3 February 2019

The Word of God

If we look at Luke's gospel we encounter two characters, beyond St Joseph and Our Lady, whose life is clearly defined by their encounter with Jesus. The first one is Simeon. Now, although the gospel does not reveal anything about his age, tradition has often pictured him as an elderly figure. But really all we know about him is that he was 'upright and devout' (Luke 2:25), and that, as a special grace from God, he had been promised to encounter the Messiah before his death. Up to this point Simeon's whole life had been an unspeakable yearning for Jesus, and when he eventually does meet him, he is overwhelmed by this encounter – the whole point of his life is fulfilled, everything falls into its proper place, and the ultimate goal is finally achieved. The gospel does not say whether or not Simeon died soon after this, and there is no reason to think he did. All we are told are the prayer and the prophecies he utters. To this day, Simeon's words of thanksgiving and joy are prayed daily at Compline as thanksgiving for the day.

The second character is Anna, the prophetess daughter of Phanuel, (Cf. Luke 2:36) whose pious and holy life is provided with crowning glory when she too meets the Lord. Her encounter with Jesus is the fulfilment of a life devoted to serving God in his Temple, and it is the cause of such an uncontainable joy that she begins to speak to all those seeking renewal about Jesus. For Anna the encounter with Jesus is both the fulfilment of her existence and a validation in her service of God.

Finally, in today's liturgy (a little different from other Sunday Masses) we have begun with a procession recalling Simeon and Anna as they journeyed to meet the Lord. More importantly, by processing around the church we have represented our pilgrimage through life guided by the light of the Lord. As it is in this liturgical action, so it is in our daily living; we are encouraged to go forward to encounter the Lord Jesus who comes to meet with us in the Eucharist and renews us in his service.

Prayer of the Week

A Prayer for the end of the day (from Compline)

Save us, Lord, while we are awake;
protect us while we sleep;
that we may keep watch with Christ,
and rest with him in peace.

Amen.

Saint of the Week

Friday 8 February 2019

St Cuthman of Steyning



Cuthman was a shepherd, who after his father died, had to look after his crippled mother. They fell on hard times, and Cuthman was forced to beg from door to door. He set out from his home, perhaps at Chidham near Bosham, going eastwards, pushing his mother in a one-wheeled cart or wheelbarrow which he made. A rope from the handles over his shoulders took part of the weight. The rope broke, and he improvised a new one from withies. Some haymakers who were watching laughed at him, but a heavy rainstorm ruined their hay and taught them a lesson.

Cuthman decided that when the makeshift rope of withies gave way he would take it as a sign from God that he should stop at that place and build a church. It happened at the place we call Steyning. After building a hut to accommodate his mother and himself, he set to work to build the church. The local people helped him, and those who did not found themselves in trouble. As the church neared completion, Cuthman had difficulty with a roof-beam. A stranger showed him how to fix it. When Cuthman asked his name, he replied "I am he in whose name you are building this church."

Cuthman was venerated as a saint before the Norman Conquest. After the conquest his relics were transferred to Fécamp, since the Steyning church had been given to the Abbey there. In charters of William the Conqueror Steyning is sometimes called "St Cuthman's Port" or "St Cuthman's Parish".

In Norman times Steyning was a minster church, administered by a college of secular canons. This college was dissolved in 1260 and vicars were appointed by the Abbey of Fécamp. It was at this time that the church was re-dedicated in honour of St Andrew, which is its dedication today.

However, Cuthman's name and exploits were not forgotten. There is a German engraving of him with his "cart" dated about 1450 and a choir seat carving at Ripon Cathedral dating from a few decades later. And at Chidham, where he was born, there was a Guild of St Cuthman, which was subject to a tax in 1522 under Henry VIII. Finally in 1658 the Bollandists transcribed and printed his Life, giving his feast day as February 8th. Visitors to Steyning to this day will see the representation of "The Boy with a Cart" on the town sign.