

The Old Way Day Walks 2021 – Thoughts from day to day

The **saints that inspire us** as we pass the churches named after them.

Day 1

St Michael the Archangel, St Joseph and St Andrew the Apostle

As we set out on our way, from our secure homes on an uncertain road:

- we need protection at our backs to ward off evil: **St Michael** and our vaccinations
- we need a watchful eye on us on the way: **St Joseph** and social distancing
- we need the courage: **St Andrew Apostle** and Martyr and living with uncertainty on the way.

Day 2

St Andrew the Apostle, St Peter and St Nicholas

We revere **St Peter** for the rock that he is and upon which our Church is built, and we despise him for his betrayal of his Master when it counted:

- How steadfast and loyal are we?
- Or did we fall short, not in what we did, but in what we failed to do?

Day 3

St Nicholas, St James, St John the Baptist, St Thomas the Apostle, St Joseph. We have travellers accompanying us today:

St Nicholas who can be found in any port in the world

St James who travelled as far as Compostella, following the stars

St Thomas was with the One that St John the Baptist pointed out as the Messiah.

- What is the message we travel with?
- What do we take away from the religious education we received?
- And in how far are we prepared to show that to others?

Day 4

St Faith, St Thomas a Becket, St Mary, Holy Trinity

We have martyrs today:

St Faith who died a martyr's death in Roman Times

St Thomas a Becket, who was immortalized by T.S. Eliot in Murder in the Cathedral.

- The choice of martyrdom with the heavenly crown coming with it put him in a dilemma: "The last temptation is the greatest treason, to do the right thing for the wrong reason".
- When we do good things, why do we do them?
- To help others or to make ourselves feel good? Does that matter?
- How much are we prepared to sacrifice when we are called upon to act?

Day 5 Rest day –

Day 6

St Peter, St Mary and St Blaise, St Margaret, St Richard

We have a nursing staff among us today

St Blaise is the one we appeal to in case of throat ailments: a reminder to check our health in these times of corona

St Margaret is one of the Fourteen Holy Helpers and patron saint of nurses: a group of people that certainly bear the brunt of the care for covid patients:

St Richard (of Chichester) seems to have been, in his private life, a frugal man: a reminder of our two rolls and an apple that are pilgrim fare.

- Today we think of all the people involved in the care of covid patients.
- In how far do we take for granted that these people are just there when we need them and have been for the past twelve months?

Day 7

Our Lady and St Philip Howard, St John the Divine, St Mary the Virgin, St John the Baptist, Christ the King

Today we have with us the main protagonist of the story of Jesus' life, his mother, the man who proclaimed him the Man to follow and the man who wrote one of his life's stories and made Him know to us.

And titles that are reminders of Church policy:

St Philip Howard was a martyr to the Reformation and hence canonized in 1970.

The feast of **Christ the King** was instituted after World War I in 1925 as a christian reordering of society to offset the cultural pessimism of the period.

- Which should make us think further about the relationship between Church and State, between religion in the public and in the private sphere and the influence of the one upon the other.
- And what we in this respect think of our own religion and if our own ideas are also applicable when other religions are concerned?

Day 8

St Andrew and St Cuthman, St Botolphs, St Andrew, Transfiguration

Two of our fellow travellers have to do with travelling as well as settling down:

St Cuthman and his family fell on hard times and were forced to beg from door to door; the saint built a one-wheeled cart or wheelbarrow (with a rope from the handles over his shoulders taking part of the weight) in which he moved her around with him. When that rope broke he accepted it as a sign from God to stop at that place and build a church.

St Botholphs is regarded as the patron saint of boundaries, and by extension, of trade and travel, as well as various aspects of farming.

With the feast of Transfiguration in mind:

- In how far are we travellers and in how far do we like to stick around?

- Is going on a pilgrimage after so many months of lock-down a relief of a scary thing to do?
- Will the experience of this pilgrimage transform us, at least for the time being?
- Is there place in our minds for people who have to travel of necessity: war, hunger, persecution, discrimination? Will we allow them to settle down?

Day 9

Transfiguration, St Peter, Trinity

Title of churches very much connected to Church history:

- What do these titles still mean to us?
- Do we take them as they come of do they have a meaning?
- And if so, do we go for the historic explanation or do we apply them to our contemporary world?
- Try to give a modern-day explanation of the **Holy Trinity**, as opposed to an exercise in Greek philosophy!

Day 10 Rest day –

Day 11

Trinity, St Thomas a Becket, St Mary, St Peter, St Michael and All Angels

Time to think about **St Mary**, the **Virgin**, the **Mother of God** and all the other titles she goes by – meaning different things to different people.

And the main female face in the Church.

- What is her significance? What does she mean to people of faith?
- What do we think of the position of women in the Church?
- Does it matter that different church denominations have different traditions about the position of women in their church?

Day 12

St Michael and All Angels, St Andrew, the Good Shepherd, St Mary and St Peter, St Peter ad Vincula, St Andrew, Trinity, St John

Two new titles to think about: **The Good Shepherd** and **St Peter ad Vincula/St Peter in Chains**

- Who is our good shepherd – the one to go after the lost?
- To whom do we want to be good sheperds, when called upon?
- And who are the people in chains nowadays, literally?
- People in prison, after a proper trial and a justified conviction?
- Or refugees, looking for a safe haven, whom we lock-up?
- Will we be good shepherds to them as well?
- Or leave it to Jesus to do that for us?

Day 13

St George, All Saints, St Michael the Archangel

We have warriors among us: **St George** and **St Michael**.

And we think of our armed forces. whom we send to fight our wars.

- Would we so readily send them on their missions, if we had to do it ourselves?
- And what do we think of wars in other parts of the world that are fought out with weapons we sell for export?

Day 14

St Michael the Archangel, St Laurence, St Mary the Virgin, St John the Baptist

St Laurence was "Archdeacon of Rome", a position of great trust that included the care of the treasury and riches of the Church and the distribution of alms to the poor and needy. Roman authorities had established a norm according to which all Christians who had been denounced must be executed and their goods confiscated by the Imperial treasury. After the death of Sixtus, after the persecution of the

clergy by Valerian, the prefect of Rome demanded that Lawrence turn over the riches of the Church. Lawrence asked for three days to gather the wealth. He worked swiftly to distribute as much Church property to the poor and needy, as was possible, so as to prevent its being seized by the prefect. On the third day, at the head of a small delegation, he presented himself to the prefect, and when ordered to deliver the treasures of the Church he presented the poor and needy, the crippled, the blind, and the suffering, and declared that these were the true treasures of the Church. One account records him declaring to the prefect, "The Church is truly rich, far richer than your emperor." This act of defiance led directly to his martyrdom.

Which puts to mind all kinds of interesting thoughts about the riches of the Church:

- No church can exist without money, but how is it acquired and how is it spent?
- Are we prepared to spend money on people who in our eyes are 'undeserving' (to quote G.B. Shaw)?

Date 15

St John the Baptist, All Saints and St Nicholas, St Thomas, St Mary

Time to look forward to 2022 – hopefully the year of our pilgrimage to **St Thomas of Hereford**: in a spirit of thankfulness.

We have walked together for two weeks, hopefully covid free, and wary of body but refreshed in mind.

- What do we want to be thankful for?
- Who have we been thinking of on our walks?
- What are we taking away from our walks?
- And have we made plans for the coming year?