

THIS AND THAT (371)

To receive a whopping inheritance isn't necessarily morally ruinous. Needn't turn you into a privileged prat, bloated brat or hedonistic horror.

The sharp sweet flowers of Michaelmas

I should know. I inherited a fortune from both my parents, too much ever to squander. It remains with me to this day, not ruining but enhancing and delighting my life.

Perhaps more from my mother than father, I inherited an oblique, more than literal way of looking at things. That is, through the lens and after the manner of poets. It is a gift of gifts. It allows the world to remain enchanted, leaves room for God, eternal beauty and absolute truths.

This good fortune came to mind last week as Diana and I read yet another fine poem by Charles Causley.

Called *Zelah*, (a village in Cornwall) it recounts a local legend about a great stone dropped into a churchyard by a flying demon. The poet describes the demon tumbling into the sea, shot by an arrow from a "silver bowman" on the beach. The bowman is possibly Cornwall's patron Saint, St Michael the archangel. The poet ends by saying:

*I saw no demon in the sky
With other than a secret eye,
And not an angel on the land
Had any but a human hand.*

*Angel and stone and demon-claw,
These I did see, though never saw.
All these I saw but did not see
As I went down by Zelah Tree
And found beside the fading grass
The sharp, sweet flowers of Michaelmas.*

It thrilled us. Thrilled us. Left us saying "Yes, yes! That's how it is. That's how it is!" Wonder all around us, seen but not seen, not seen but seen.

Black crow days

Another valuable part of my huge inheritance is a head full of evocative hymnody.

Margaret, my first wife revisits me from beyond time and space whenever I hear "The day thou gavest Lord is ended....", so reminiscent of our happy days on St Helena. My mother comes to mind when I hear her favourite "The duteous day now closeth," sung to the tune "Innsbruck".

My father is recalled by Cardinal Newman's "Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom". A good hymn for these black corvidian days. Queen Victoria asked for it to be read to her when she lay dying. It was sung at the final service aboard the Titanic on the afternoon before the disaster.

Amid the encircling gloom

As a young Anglican, Newman, travelling in the Mediterranean, was struck down by a fever that nearly killed him. "My servant thought I was dying and begged for my last directions," he recalls in his autobiography. "I gave them as he wished, but said, 'I shall not die, for I have not sinned against light.'" He recovered, but felt desperately homesick. On the way back to England his boat from Palermo to Marseilles was becalmed in the Straits of Bonifacio. Stranded, exhausted and emotional, he wrote this verse as a meditative poem called "The Pillar of the Cloud". It's expressive of his longing for consoling Christian certainties in an age of mounting doubt. When questioned as to the nature of the "kindly light" and the identity of the lost "angel faces" in the last line, Newman replied, "I am not bound to remember my own meaning."

*Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead thou me on;
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene: one step enough for me.*

*So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost a while.*

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TODAY: LAST SUNDAY after TRINITY 25/10/20
St Nicholas' Chapel Pilley: 8.00am Holy Communion BCP
St John's Boldre: 10.30am Eucharist

For Prayer This Week

The Bible Society and all Biblical Scholars. Those areas of our country under strict lock-down. The Prime Minister and advisors. The unemployed isolated, lonely and anxious. **Prayer Requests:** Robert Boxall, Joan Downer, Colin Erne, Harold Hendey, Pat Tanner, Rachel. **Rest in Peace** Frederick Hollister.

Forthcoming Weekday Activities

Sun 1 Nov - 10.30am St John's - All Souls and All Saints service
Mon 2 Nov - 10.30am St Nicholas' Chapel - Clergy Meeting
Wed 4 Nov - 10.30am Holy Communion St Nicholas' Chapel
Wed 4 Nov - Bible Study Ph 07786 194282 for venue or zoom
Sun 8 Nov - 10.45am St John's: Remembrance Sunday (outside)
Mon 9 Nov - 17.00pm St John's: PCC Meeting
Wed 11 Nov - 10.30am Holy Communion St Nicholas' Chapel
Wed 11 Nov - Bible Study Ph 07786 194282 for venue or zoom

NEXT WEEK: ALL SAINTS & ALL SOULS DAY 1/11/20
St Nicholas' Chapel Pilley: 8.00am Holy Communion BCP
St John's Boldre: 10.30am Requiem Eucharist

REMEMBERING OUR DEPARTED

Next Sunday, 1 Nov at both St Nicholas' and St John's we remember our departed. Put the names of your loved ones on the list by the door, or email them to Andrew. They will be remembered by name at our services on 1 November at which there'll be a candle to light & vases for a flower for any who brings one, as a gesture of love.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY, 10.45am 8 NOV 2020

A little briefer and **entirely outside this year**, (assuming this still to be legal then) come wind come weather. If a storm is raging it will still go ahead, with sodden wreaths, a defiant Last Post, the Roll of Honour recited fortissimo and the National Anthem roared.

ST JOHN'S CHRISTMAS CARDS

Don't forget to bring along some cash for our lovely Christmas cards are available now at church and from Jen Dixon Clegg (07786 194 282) or the Vicarage. Packs of 5 cost £3.50, in aid of St John's and the local hospital.

BOTTLE TOPS & USED STAMPS

We are collecting ONLY WASHED milk bottle tops. They help raise funds for Air Ambulance. We also collect used stamps. They help raise funds for "Canine Partners". Two worthwhile causes!

COMMUNITY PARISH GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE
Next door to the War Memorial outside St John's again this year is a marked square of lawn for the insertion of small crosses, available in the Church porch. Families and friends are invited to remember their loved ones and comrades associated with the two World Wars or subsequent Campaigns

AN OLD MORNING PRAYER TO SAY THIS WEEK

God bless to me the new day,
Never vouchsafed to me before;
It is to bless your own presence
You have given me this time, O God.

God bless to me my eyes,
May my eyes bless all they see;
I will bless my neighbour,
May my neighbour bless me.

God give me a clean heart,
Let me not be lost to your sight;
Bless to me my family
Bless my means and my possessions.

from *Carmina Gadelica*