

Newman's memorial to him describes him as 'In vita amabilis in morte flebilis' ('lovely in life, wept over in death'). His hymn 'When morning gilds the skies' is a translation of a German hymn, which originally ran to twenty eight verses! Most books today publish eight verses, each ending with the lovely refrain 'may Jesus Christ be praised'. Like so many of Caswall's hymns, the words are beautiful in their simplicity. The usual tune 'Laudes Domini' is by Sir Joseph Barnby, sometime Precentor of Eton College and later Principal of the Guildhall School of Music.

2nd August 2020 The Eighth Sunday
after Trinity
18th Sunday
of the Year

Living the Word

Isaiah 55: 1-3

At the end of the reading is a curious phrase, almost formulaic, "even the sure mercies of David" – what are the mercies of David?

When David was sought out by Samuel, the boy shepherd was not even considered worthy of the kingship of Israel, but God led the prophet to him out in the fields, tending the sheep. In his life, King David was a paradox as there were a number of faults that brought him to shame and led him to seek God's forgiveness - and God did indeed show mercy. Although Christ was without sin, nevertheless it was our sins that Christ forgave from the Cross, hence we were shown mercy as David was – the mercies of David.

As in Isaiah, so the phrase is used in the Acts, when the writer expounds that even though Christ was crucified, it is we who can and must seek out forgiveness by faith in him, and be shown 'the mercies of David'.

One common misapprehension is that it doesn't matter if we sin, we can always assume we shall be forgiven – well, no, it's not as easy as that. Consider the lengths that King David went to in order to feel God's mercy rest upon him, so it is with us – to receive mercy we must acknowledge our faults and repent of them. Then we can rejoice in the abundance of God's mercy upon us.

Elements of the Mass

Posture at Mass

When we pray, we pray with our whole bodies. This means that the different postures we adopt have meaning and are important in expressing what we are doing at Mass. From the moment we enter the church we use different postures. As we approach our seat we might bow towards the altar or genuflect if the Blessed Sacrament is reserved at the altar. When we pray we kneel down or sometimes we stand. We sit to listen to the readings and the sermon. When we approach the altar to receive the Blessed Sacrament we genuflect and then either receive the sacrament kneeling or standing. During the service we bow our heads at the name of Jesus and of Mary, and during other parts of the service we might bow or make the sign of the cross. These actions are often described in the order of service (what are called rubrics). Why not speak to your priest and ask him about the way in which we worship God? He will be able to talk you through all of the different postures at Mass and help you understand them.

Abundance



The story of Our Lord's feeding of the multitude is repeated six times in the Gospels, more than any other incident. Whereas St John expounds its link to the Eucharist, St Matthew stresses the abundance of Christ's provision and the disciples' role in extending that. 'All ate and were filled' as Our Lord gave the bread to the disciples who in turn 'gave them to the crowds'. Sometimes we Christians come across far short of being stewards of abundant life. Though we live in a dangerously confused society it is important to avoid being judgemental, giving people the benefit of the doubt as much as we are able. Abbé Huvelin observed 'There is no more profound or more dangerous enemy to Christianity than anything which shrinks it and makes it narrow'. How can we be better stewards of the good news? The regular discipline of self examination helps us recall God's abundant goodness towards us. God in Christ has not only given us life in all its beauty and fragility, but given us his life to live in us now and for eternity through faith, which is also his gift. Living in ever deeper gratitude for God's gifts makes us more effective witnesses, even if recognising our need of grace goes counter to our makeup. One summary of today's Gospel might be that of D.F.Niles: 'Christianity is one beggar telling another beggar where he found bread'. We could add to that clear witness to the Lord's provision a phrase from St John's account of the abundant feeding applying it to the bread of the Eucharist: 'Lord, give us this bread always' (John 6:34).

O Sing unto the Lord

The hymn-writer and translator Edward Caswall (1814-1878) was responsible for many of our much-loved hymns, including 'At the cross her station keeping', 'Bethlehem, of noblest cities' and 'See, amid the winter's snow'. Born in Hampshire, Caswall became Curate of Stratford-sub-Castle, near Salisbury, where his uncle was the bishop. In 1845 he and his wife went on a tour of the continent, where they were very impressed by the Roman Catholic faith, into which they were received upon his return. Caswall joined John Henry Newman at the Oratory of St Philip Neri in Birmingham.