

Reflection: 29 December, St Thomas of Canterbury

While the readings are for the first Sunday of Christmas today, we are also taking the opportunity to mark the feast day of St Thomas of Canterbury otherwise known as St Thomas a Becket (1119-1170). The story connected to our own church is as follows: the original dedication of the church was to this Thomas – killed by the knights of Henry II when Thomas as Archbishop of Canterbury defended the rights of the Church over against the King. When Henry VIII began his arguments with the Church focussed around his desire to divorce, he was obviously not keen on dedications to a saint who was martyred many generation before. He insisted that all St Thomas' dedications should now be clearly shown as St Thomas the Apostle. Folks here were wily – they were unwilling to comply (see for example a generation later with the Prayer Book Rebellion under Henry's son Edward VI) but also pragmatic. They agreed that the dedication should simply be to St Thomas, and so let the reader, or devoted parishioner, understand. This is why in the present church choir there are two banners, one for each saint.

We mark most obviously the feast day of St Thomas the Apostle, sometimes known as Doubting Thomas, on 3 July, and more recently have tried to focus our prayers between Christmas and New Year on the Canterbury St Thomas, with his feast day on 29 December.

Is this anything more than an anecdotal tale of dusty church history? Maybe its importance for us is to connect a very local expression of faith with the wider events of the Church in the 12th and then 16th century – a reminder of our local, national and international rootedness. It also opens up a perennial question about the proper relationship between Church and State.

Fr David



NEXT SUNDAY 05.01.2025 Epiphany
10.30am in the Hall

READINGS: OT Isaiah 60: 1-6
NT Ephesians 3: 1-12
GOSPEL Matthew 2: 1-12



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St Thomas, Exeter

29th December 2024

St Thomas of Canterbury

10.30am in the Hall

Today

Sung Eucharist

Hymn Numbers

395 Of the Father's love begotten

542 What child is this

283 Joy to the world

Wednesday 1st January

No Holy Communion

Thursday 2nd January

No St Thomas Tots

10.30-12noon Knit & Natter. 19 Maple Rd

Details from Jenny. 01392 498725

Friday 3rd January

9.30am Morning Prayer

10am Staff Meeting



Collect

Almighty God you granted the martyr Thomas in grace to give his life for the cause of justice. By his prayers make us willing to renounce for Christ our life in this world so that we may find it in heaven. We make this prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God now and for ever. **Amen**

Samuel 1: 20-22, 24-28

Samuel was ministering before the Lord, a boy wearing a linen ephod. His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, 'May the Lord repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the Lord'; and then they would return to their home. Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favour with the Lord and with the people.

Colossians 3: 12-17

As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Luke 2: 41-52

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travellers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.

Post Communion

Heavenly Father, whose blessed Son shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home: help your Church to live as one family, united in love and obedience, and bring us all at last to our home in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

NOTICES

Support for Pensioners on Low Incomes

An estimated 880,000 low-income pensioner households eligible for pension credit currently fail to claim it and a deadline is approaching. The government says it is worth an average £3,900 a year, but it is also a gateway to other financial

support such as winter fuel payments. If you know a pensioner on a low income, please encourage them to check if they could be eligible for pension credit. This can be done online through www.gov.uk/pension-credit:calculator or people can get advice via phone on weekdays 0800 99 1234

Warm Space will return on Thursdays, from 3pm in the Hall. Tea, coffee and biscuits and a chance to meet other people. A start date will be announced once the administration has been completed. **Also there are more spaces for people to volunteer. See David or Ian.** Watch this space for details.

Future dates & local info: 14 December—5 January Winterwood at Theatre Alibi.

Parish Walk

What: Noticing Nature walk—Winter edition

When: Saturday 25th January 11am-12noon

Where: Meet outside St Thomas Church Hall. Come and join us for a gentle, guided walk around St Thomas Pleasure Ground that will help you slow down and notice the things around you as well as connect with your inner world. This walk will take place on paved paths with the option to go on grass. Bring clothing and footwear appropriate for the weather and meet at St Thomas Church Hall.

News from previous parishioners Karen and Roy Williams offer us greetings, and a note about Pension Credits as above: "We are enjoying life in Honiton, where I have reconnected with old friends. I note you mention pension credits ...it is less well advertised that if you live with someone below pension age, you cannot claim! Roy is eligible but cannot claim because I am still nowhere near pension age."

