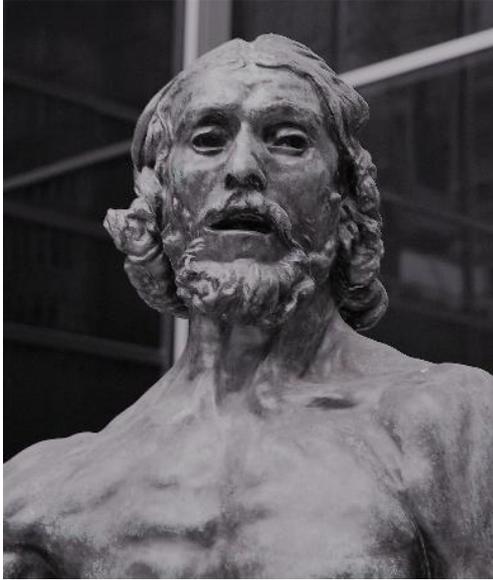


Holy Trinity Church Blacon

Charity number 1180853

13th December 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,



I love this sculpture by Rodin of John the Baptist preaching. His anger, strangeness, and power all too clear in his formidable physique. Rodin captures what a daunting figure he was. Clearly no one found him easy. Something in his militancy touched a sore spot and as vexing and strange as he seemed, ordinary people came to think that there was something of the prophet about him. Our Gospel reading today asks us to think on this.

In a world of dire poverty where many died before their time, simply worn out by the system, John's fierceness met a response. People's lives were dominated by a foreign power and too many wealthy people in cahoots with that power – absentee landlords, high rents, exploitation of labour, and lives that were crippled by work and taxed to the hilt to keep the whole oppressive system working. Who wouldn't be angry at that?

Things need straightening out, according to John the Baptist. And the prophet shouted

the fact loud and clear. The king and his henchmen hated it, the Romans hated it, but the common people longed to hear that the words of the ancient prophet aren't the dead letters of another age, they apply to them: good news to the oppressed, gladness instead of mourning, the raising up of the devastated, the promise of liberty. The Spirit of God seen in the work of the prophet of long ago is rekindled in the work of John the Baptist – and is about to be rekindled in a way even brighter in Jesus. 'I am neither the prophet, Elijah reborn, nor the Messiah,' says John. And the Gospel writer underlines the character of John's ministry: 'He came as a witness to testify to the light.'

Here is part of John's impatience with the enquiries about who he was and what he was about: 'I am **not** the Messiah,' 'I am **not** the prophet,' 'I am **the voice**.' John's crucial ministry is what he said – what he said of the one who came after him: 'listen to me when I speak to you of the Christ, the one who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

It may come as shock to think of 'wild Johnny' as our exemplar, but he is. We're not called to a diet of locusts and wild honey (though Heston Blumenthal might persuade us to try it!). But we are called to give voice to Jesus as the Christ. Like John, shouldn't we speak and act in ways that startle, challenge and inspire others to look to Christ?

Sometimes that will mean we come across as daunting or strange; but sometimes Gospel hope requires that in a marred and troubled world. Things still need straightening out!

With every blessing,

Christopher.



NOTICES

Holy Trinity Blacon are the living church of our living God, and we continue to be at work here! If you are able, do check the parish website www.holytrinityblacon.org (especially the Coronavirus Support page) or our Facebook page (holytrinityblacon) for updates. Look out for our special Advent reflections videos available each Sunday morning in Advent.

DIARY FOR THE COMING WEEK

Wednesday 16 th	5.00pm	Evening Prayer (<i>on Zoom and in church hall</i>)
	5.30pm	Carols truck leaves from outside church
Thursday 17 th	7.30pm	Bible Group (<i>on Zoom</i>)
Sunday 20 th	9.30am	Parish Eucharist <i>in church</i> <i>Minibus is running – let us know if you want a lift.</i>

PRAYING FOR BLACON Louise and Tina are taking our exercise particularly along those streets we are praying for each week. Do join us in praying for those residents. This week we pray for: *Willow Drive, Naomi Close, Dentith Drive and Egerton Road.*

CAROLS TRUCK We are going round the local streets with a truck playing carols and inviting people to take part in Carols on your doorstep (see below). It will happen this week on Monday and Wednesday evenings, on Wednesday it will leave from Norris Road at 5.30pm. We shall be praying for this at Evening Prayer in church hall (and on Zoom) at 5pm.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS On Sunday 20th December 5.30pm church members across Chester are being encouraged to go onto their doorsteps to sing carols – which will also be broadcast on Dee Radio 106.3FM Carol sheets, and card to pass to a neighbour, are attached to this.

CHRISTMAS MEAL we are joining with Avenue Services to deliver a Christmas Dinner for Blacon residents on Thursday 17th December. We will also be delivering a Christmas Dinner to families on Tuesday 22nd December. For more information, please contact Kerry on managerblaconbeacon@gmail.com or 07851870078

CHRISTMAS SERVICES Christmas Eve: Crib service at 6pm (*Gifts received for Save the Family*), Midnight Eucharist at 11.30pm, and on Christmas Day 9.30am Eucharist.

CONTACTS:

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