

17th January 2021

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We Brits seem to be particularly attuned to rudeness. Generally, we simply hate it. A certain courteousness comes almost naturally to us and we are easily affronted if that's ignored. Perhaps that's part of the reason why in current circumstances we quietly walk around the unmasked.

In today's Gospel reading Philip's attempt to introduce his friend, Nathanael, to Jesus is met with a rude retort. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" says Nathanael dismissively. Is there something here of local rivalries and antagonisms? It's less than 30 miles from Nathanael's hometown of Bethsaida to Nazareth, but there's obviously no love lost!

Being rude about the place comes naturally to Nathanael. I've heard similar remarks about neighbouring communities locally. I'm sure you know why there are only three faces on the Town Hall clock! Nathanael is sceptical and suspicious of the place and its people; scoffing comes readily to him. The place so near and yet so far. Suspicion, scepticism and scoffing – those are the measures of Nathanael's attitude.

Suspicion, scepticism and scoffing might also be the words for how many people see the churches nowadays. Yes, there are many instances of church folks striving to help their neighbours in all sorts of ways, and appreciated as they are, the church as church is scoffed at. It comes easily to most people to be rude about the church. Many, many people are sceptical about what the church is about. Not because they are sceptical

necessarily about God (although it seems more and more are), but because they don't see the need for all this worship. They see what we do as a nonsense, quite literally. It doesn't make sense to them.

But because the idea of worship comes hard to many doesn't mean that faith amounts to foolish credulity. Surely Christians are hard-headed realists when it comes to human experience. That's one of the things Nathanael's scepticism reassures us about. He doesn't accept news of the Messiah with naïve gullibility. The tensions are recognised. His outlook on life will be radically challenged by Jesus, but first the news must become part of his pre-existing way of thinking.

The gospel is always radically new; a turning about of our thoughts and a turning around of the way things are, but that begins in an honest acknowledgment of the way things are currently. Faith sees the world differently, but it is never indifferent to the way the world is. We are blessed by God with an alternative reality.

I am sure it is no coincidence that the name Nathanael literally means 'gift of God.' Nathanael's encounter with Christ begins in an all-too understandable cynicism, but he will come to see the glories of heaven in the person of Jesus. We too are to live in that alternative reality, that vision gifted to us by God, even when it comes hard.

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 or our Facebook page ([hollytrinityblacon](https://www.facebook.com/holytrinityblacon)) for updates.

LOCKDOWN affects the whole country now, but fortunately we can still continue to meet (socially distanced) in church to worship together, and we will continue meeting at 9.30am each Sunday. The minibus is also running, so do let us know if you would like a lift.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY is *Mon 18th to Mon 25th Jan*. With this letter, you are receiving a copy of a booklet with guidance for prayer on each day of this week. Please use it, and particularly pray for the different churches in Blacon and our relationship with them: URC, Matthew Henry, St Theresa's RC, and Blacon Central (part of Hoole Baptist). Also, on Weds 20th Jan 11.00am there is a service of prayer for Christian Unity, in Holy Trinity at 11.00am.

CALLED TO SERVE Are you wondering what God wants of you? There's a special event being held on Sat 23rd Jan 10.15am-3.00pm. If you are interested, talk to Tina or Louise about it.

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 are praying for: Imperial Avenue, Embassy Close, Bristol Close and Virginia Drive.*

EVENING PRAYER We meet each Wednesday 5pm for Evening Prayer on Zoom. Do let us know if you would like the link – everyone is welcome to join us.

REMEMBER WHEN Over the next few Thursdays we are looking into stories, and particularly the story of our faith and how to share it. We meet on Zoom weekly from this Thursday 21st Jan at 7.30pm. You are very welcome to join us, please do contact us for the link.

Rector	Rev Tina Upton	01244 372721 tina.htblacon@btinternet.com
Curate	Rev Louise Annison	07861 490410 louise.htblacon@btinternet.com
Warden	June Middleton	01244 376933 june.middleton47@gmail.com
Outreach Worker	Sue Mountford	07835 006834 or 01244 313799
Parish Office	Linda Tudor (<i>Admin</i>)	01244 376085 office.htblacon@btinternet.com