

### Reflection for Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> June

It seemed like one of the hottest days of the Summer so far as I walked towards Chichester Cathedral for the celebration of St. Richard's Day. It was bathed in sunshine and looked splendid and everyone was in good humour for the occasion. Canon Tom had rung a few weeks earlier to ask if I would give the homily, so I had been thinking about the life and times of St. Richard also trying to keep in mind our own situation. Attempting to bring those two aspects of the feast day together I turned to the letter that Pope Francis wrote back in 2013. As I mentioned in my homily, Pope Francis encouragement to spread the good news of Jesus follows the same call, in recent times, of the Popes' from Pope St. Paul VI onwards. Although it is sometimes referred to as the *New Evangelisation* the call to tell others about Jesus is not new, but the ways in which we might do this is, because of the culture of our own times. Each person can share faith in Jesus in their own ways considering their circumstances and it is not a numbers game. But to help I picked out those events in the life of St. Richard that I thought may help us think about our own approach. There were too many and too much material to include in one homily and also in one reflection, so here I have managed only one, but there were five, so we may return to these others in future years!

It was on a visit to Rome with St. Edmund in 1240, that St. Richard decided to study theology and was subsequently ordained a priest. Although his decision was not totally out of the blue or the general direction of his life, this turning point in St. Richard's life could help us to reflect on decisive turning points in our own lives, especially in those matters of faith. For many Christians there may be what one might call a *foundational event* from which our Christian lives have been built. For others it may be a longer process of deepening discipleship from which it is harder to pick out a moment, although there may have been times when we will have been more keenly aware of the touch of God's grace in our lives. Some people seek God following life-changing events and, if those events have been difficult, find him *in the heart of tempest*, as Job does in our first reading. All these can come under the heading of the *personal encounter* or *experience* of God in our lives.

It is out of this *personal encounter* or *experience* that our motivation for sharing the good news can spring. This may develop in direct or indirect ways, as some may take up the work of talking to others about faith and campaigning on Christian issues whilst others may work in charitable outreach inspired by faith. Pope Francis reminds us that it is the *personal encounter with the saving love of Jesus*<sup>1</sup> which is key. He says: *It is impossible to persevere in a fervent evangelisation unless we are convinced from personal experience that it is not the same thing to have known Jesus as not to have known him, not the same thing to walk with him as to walk blindly, not the same thing to hear his word as not to know it, not the same thing to contemplate him, to worship him, to find our peace in him, as not to. It is not the same thing to try to build the world with his Gospel as to try and do so by our own lights. We know well that with Jesus life becomes richer and that with him it is easier to find meaning in everything.*<sup>2</sup>

These words of Pope Francis also help to reflect on this Sunday's Gospel where the disciples experience the presence of God in Jesus in the midst of a threatening storm at sea. They became keenly aware of the difference Jesus has just made in their lives and by keeping the story alive, through the Gospel, it can touch our hearts today. The turning points of faith in our own lives could become turning points of faith for others. The Lord Jesus will use them for his mission if we let him. St. Richard did and may his intercession help us do so as well.

God bless you, Canon David.

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<sup>1</sup> Evangelii Gaudium No. 266

<sup>2</sup> Ibid