

Renewed, released and rejuvenated

Renewed

In Psalm 51 v.10 it says;

Create in me a clean heart, O God and put a new and right spirit within me.

When we pray this verse from psalm 51, the first word gives us a clue of what renewal might mean to us in our real lives. The word 'create' highlights that renewal is not about staying the same. The word 'create' means that we are to open our lives to the creative grace of God.

The creative process of any artist needs at some point a spark of inspiration, a spark of an idea, a spark of making something new that might not have existed before. Having a blank piece of paper before the first stroke of the brush or pencil is made, just like for an author with a blank piece of paper in front of them, can be at first a block that needs to be overcome. As soon as the first stroke or first word is written the blank canvas is transformed and will never be the same again.

We individually and together are not however a blank canvas, we all have a past as well as a present, something which an artist might use to create a new perspective or a new vision. As the ultimate divine artist God is able to fashion what exists already within us into a whole new perspective, a whole new vision. This creativeness by God can only be limited by ourselves. How open are we to be renewed by God? How open are we to be created or more accurately recreated by God?

Being renewed by God is not the same as for example renewing our car or home insurance. Renewal in those terms is limited by our human understanding of the terms and conditions of such policies. Being open to the creative grace of God's Holy Spirit within us, to recreate us should be without restrictions, without limits. If we put terms and conditions on our renewal by God we in turn limit our openness to God's Holy Spirit to transform not only just our hearts but also the spirit within us.

As we reflect and pray about what renewal might mean to us individually and together in reality let us not limit God's grace by placing terms and conditions upon it, because to do so we in turn limit the canvas upon which God's creative divine nature can work. God will continue to work within us whether we like it or not. But, by praying for God's renewal to be made visible within us, we are praying that God's renewal will not just creatively transform us as individuals but also renew and transform His church, in the parishes in which we live, worship and pray; and also renew, transform and grow His church across our deanery and our Diocese.

Let us pray

Create in us a clean heart, O God and put a new and right spirit within us.

Amen.

Released

In psalm 124 v.7 it says;

We have escaped like a bird from the snare, the snare is broken and we have escaped.

What might being released mean to us in our lives? The idea of being open to God in some way releasing us, might be equated to being open to God at work in our individual and collective lives so that we might have a real sense of divine release or divinely inspired freedom.

The question we might want to ask ourselves is: what, if we are truthful to ourselves and to God, is it that holds us back? What is it that in some way makes us feel inhibited or trapped in our mission to proclaim the Good news? What are the barriers for us that in some way restrict what we do and say to bring others to know God's love?

The first part of the process of beginning to answer these questions is to firstly acknowledge that we need to have that real sense of being released, to fulfil what God might be calling us to do.

Jack, who was 6 years old, grew up in a pit village. Next door to Jack lived Mr Dewsnap who had a pigeon loft and every day at the same time Mr Dewsnap would go out and would release the pigeons into the sky. Jack would watch the pigeons as they would perform a glorious dance in a great arc together as a large group, like a murmuration of starlings before they settle in their roost for the night. As Jack watched they seemed to fly free for what seemed like hours until Mr Dewsnap would once more come out of the pigeon loft and shake a tin can which Jack found out later contained dried corn. On hearing this noise the pigeons would fly as fast as they could back to Mr Dewsnap. This would simply mesmerise Jack who one day plucked up the courage to ask Mr Dewsnap whether pigeons were free to fly off if they wanted, to which he replied they could but they never did. Being an inquisitive lad Jack said that they couldn't be really free and that Mr Dewsnap must have them tied together with very long fishing line. Mr Dewsnap smiled and said to Jack that the birds were free but they also knew who their dad was on earth, and with that he shook the tin with the dried corn inside.

Being released by God is about being open to God releasing us to fly, to release the thing that inhibit us to fly in his name. In so doing we will then open our lives to the active powerful presence of God's divine release.

All of us can find physical reasons why we might not be able to do something in God's name, but being open to being released to fly, is a wonderful thing to reflect and pray about, not only for ourselves but also for the whole of God's church.

Let us pray that we might all be released from those things that might be holding us back, to proclaim the Good News to all around us.

Amen

Rejuvenated

In Psalm 51 v.12 it says;

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

To be rejuvenated, to be restored, is first and foremost an invitation to be once more rejuvenated, restored, in the joy of God's love and God's salvation.

In any one's life there will come a point when we might need a very real sense of rejuvenation, of a real feeling of being lifted into a new place individually and collectively. Our identities do not change, who we are doesn't change, but life is once more given a real sense of joy that believing in a God who loves us brings.

Sarah was 20 years old when her grandmother died, about 30 years ago and on one of her weekends back from university her grandfather asked her to call round to see him as he had something for her. She went to see him and after a good strong cup of tea and a plate of custard creams and broken biscuits, her grandfather then brought out a small box from behind the cushion on the chair he was sat on. He passed the box to Sarah and told her that her grandmother had wanted her to have what was inside. Sarah slowly opened the box and inside, wrapped in tissue paper, was a small silver egg cup. Her grandfather told her that the egg cup had been her grandmothers as a child. Sarah was very touched and emotional, and thanked her grandfather with a hug and a kiss and said she would cherish the little egg cup for the rest of her life.

The first few years after that the egg cup took pride of place on Sarah's sideboard, but after a couple of moves of house, the egg cup gradually made its way to the back of the kitchen cupboard, It was hidden my more modern utensils. A few years ago, Sarah was going through a box of old kitchen equipment she was going to take to the charity shop as a way of attempting to get rid of some clutter. Going through the box she saw at the bottom, a little glint of something as it caught the light. There, just a bit tarnished, was the little silver egg cup. Sarah sat for a good hour looking at the egg cup in its almost unrecognisable state.

Sarah got in her car and went down to her local supermarket and when she got to the till the assistant asked if that was all she wanted. Sarah simply replied that it was all she needed. After a little bit of rubbing with the Silvo she had bought, the egg cup began to once more shine. It was the same old egg cup, its identity hadn't changed, but it just needed to be rejuvenated, to be restored. To once more live in pride of place on the sideboard.

The question we might want to pray and reflect upon today is what do we ask God to rejuvenate, to restore individually and together as a church family, as a Deanery and as a Diocese.

Let us pray that we will be rejuvenated and restored in the joy that comes in knowing we are loved and cherished by God and his salvation.

Amen.