



# The Lion

A Monthly News Sheet for St. Mark's Church, Basford

[www.stmarksbasford.co.uk](http://www.stmarksbasford.co.uk)

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## Mary: An Example of Faith

Though having to read and digest lots of theological material for preaching and teaching, I still enjoy reading around particular theological issues that interest me and challenge my inherited position on many matters of church life. It's a way of allowing God access to my mind. You might recall that 'reconciliation' was my chosen subject during a three-month sabbatical in 2015. Last year, having been asked to contribute to a pilgrimage on the western isle of Iona, I engaged more seriously with Celtic spirituality and the Gospel of John. Latterly, I've been tackling the 500 year division between the Roman Catholic Church and protestant denominations concerning the position of Mary, the Mother of our Lord. In 2006 a report by a specially assembled commission by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Pope, comprising Anglican and RC theologians came to the joint conclusion that the position of Mary in the Church, and in particular the practice of devotional acts in honour of her should no longer be divisive between our two confessions. For me, this was simply a much too interesting a conclusion not to follow up.

As May is the month during which the Catholic Church emphasises devotions to the Virgin Mary I'm prompted to share just a little of what kind of literature and understanding underpins such. What I'm offering here is something that I found very rewarding to read – it's an extract from a sermon preached by St. Bernard in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. Mary's 'yes' to the announcement of Gabriel's news at the Annunciation is often held up as a supreme example of faith, obedience and submission to God's will. The enormity of what was riding on Mary's response to the angel and the degree to which our salvation depends on an act of free human decision Bernard tries to make known. He portrays a world shrouded in darkness, *'under the sentence of condemnation'*, waiting with baited breath for Mary's response. I think this is a wonderful piece of work; what do you think?

"You have heard, O Virgin, the announcement of the great mystery; the means designed for its fulfillment have been unfolded to you, each wondrous, each replete

with joy. "Rejoice, O daughter of Sion, and exult exceedingly, O virgin daughter of Jerusalem" (Zechariah 9:9). And because to you has been given joy and gladness, allow us to hear from your lips the answer and the good tidings which we desire, that the bones that have been humbled may rejoice. You have heard the fact, and have believed; believe also in the means which have been explained to you. You have heard that you are to conceive and bring forth a Son, and that it will not be through the power of man, but by the virtue of the Holy Ghost.

The angel awaits your reply, for it is time that he should return to God, who sent him. We, too, are waiting, O Lady, for a word of mercy we, who are groaning under the sentence of condemnation. See, the price of our salvation is offered to you; if you consent,



we shall at once be delivered. By the Eternal Word of God we were all created, and behold we die. By your short answer we shall be refreshed and recalled to life.

Adam, with all his race Adam, a weeping exile from Paradise, implores it of you. Abraham entreats you, David beseeches you. This is the object of the burning desires of the holy fathers, of your fathers, who are still dwelling in the region of the shades of death. Behold the entire human race prostrate at your feet in expectation. And rightly, for on your word depends the consolation of the wretched, the redemption of the captive, the freedom of the condemned, the salvation of your entire race, of all the children of Adam. Hasten, then, O Lady, to give your answer; hasten to speak the word so longed for by all on earth, in limbo, and in heaven. Yea, the King and Lord of all things, who has greatly desired your beauty, desires as eagerly your word of consent, by which he has purposed to save the world. He whom you have pleased by your silence will now be more gratified by your reply.

Hark! He calls to you from heaven: "most beautiful among women, give me to hear your voice." If you let Him hear your voice, he will enable you to see our salvation. And is not this what you have sought for, what

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you have prayed for night and day with sighs and tears? Why, then, delay? Are you the happy one to whom it has been promised, or “look we for another”? Yes, you indeed are that most fortunate one. You are the promised virgin, the expected virgin, the much- longed-for virgin, through whom your holy father Jacob, when about to die, rested his hope of eternal life, saying: “I will look for thy salvation, O Lord” (*Genesis 49:18*).

You, O Mary, are that virgin in whom and by whom God himself, our King before all ages, determined to operate our salvation in the midst of the earth. Why do you humbly expect from another what is offered to you, and will soon be manifested through yourself if you will but yield your consent and speak the word? Answer, then, quickly to the angel yes, through the angel give your consent to your God. Answer the word, receive the Word. Utter yours, conceive the Divine. Speak the word that is transitory, and embrace the Word that is everlasting.

Why do you delay? Why are you fearful? Believe, confess, receive. Let humility put on courage and timidity confidence. It is certainly by no means fitting that virginal simplicity should forget prudence. Yet in this one case only the prudent virgin need not fear presumption, because, though modesty shone forth in her silence, it is now more necessary that her devotion and obedience should be revealed by her speech.

Open, Blessed Virgin, your heart to faith, your lips to compliance, your bosom to your Creator. Behold, the desired of all nations stands at the gate and knocks. Oh, suppose he were to pass by while you delay! How would you begin again with sorrow to seek him whom your soul loveth! Arise, run open! Arise by faith, run by devotion, open by acceptance. Mary speaks. “Behold the hand maid of the Lord, may it be done unto me according to thy word.”



Expressed like that, isn't it easier to see why so many Christians feel that honouring Mary is indeed appropriate? I think it's a great shame that unfortunate and misguided excesses concerning Mary adopted in the late Middle Ages caused the protestant church to shy away from all Marian devotion. The resultant skepticism towards anything which honoured Mary left only her 'Magnificat' (*Luke 2*) at Evensong and the Feast of the Annunciation within the liturgical calendar. There's much to be recovered, I feel.

Blessings  
*Terry*

## SANCTUS

Our May collection for the SANCTUS Project will focus on the usual two standard requirements, viz... (i) size '6' nappies and (ii) sanitary towels. The third requirement is for toiletries.

## Some Diary Dates for May

1 <sup>st</sup>	Monday		Bank Holiday
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Wednesday	1.00pm	CAMEO Luncheon Club
5 <sup>th</sup>	Friday	7.30am	Civic Prayer Breakfast – King's Hall Stoke
10 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	1.00pm	CAMEO Luncheon Club
		7.15pm	Archdeacon's Visitation – St. Giles'
7 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday	2.00pm	Church Queen's Afternoon Tea ( <i>see below</i> )
13 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday	12.00pm	Table-Top Sale (Hall)
		5.30pm	Wedding Blessing
14 <sup>th</sup>	Sunday	4.00pm	Deanery Worship – St. James' (Clayton)
17 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	1.00pm	CAMEO Luncheon Club
18 <sup>th</sup>	Thursday	7.30pm	Deanery Standing Committee Mtg (Vestry)
20 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday	11.00am	First Steps Celebration – Lichfield
21 <sup>st</sup>	Sunday	2.00pm	Solo Violin Recital in Church
24 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	1.00pm	CAMEO Luncheon Club
30 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday	7.30pm	Living Faith (Module 2, Session 1) – Chapel
31 <sup>st</sup>	Wednesday	1.00pm	CAMEO Luncheon Club
		7.00pm	'Thy Kingdom Come' – Wolst'n Methodist

## Early June...

3 <sup>rd</sup>	Saturday	3.00pm	Wedding
6 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday	7.30pm	Living Faith (Module 2, Session 2) – Chapel
7 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	1.00pm	CAMEO Luncheon Club

## Worship Services during May

3 <sup>rd</sup>	Wednesday	8.00am	Morning Prayer
		10.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)
7 <sup>th</sup>	FOURTH AFTER EASTER	8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)
		9.30am	Family Worship with HC
		4.30pm	Evensong
10 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	8.00am	Morning Prayer
		10.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)
13 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday	5.30pm	Wedding Blessing
14 <sup>th</sup>	FIFTH AFTER EASTER	8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)
		9.30am	Holy Communion
		4.30pm	Evensong
17 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	8.00am	Morning Prayer
		10.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)
21 <sup>st</sup>	SIXTH AFTER EASTER	8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)
		9.30am	Family Worship with Baptism
		4.30pm	Evensong
24 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday	8.00am	Morning Prayer
		10.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)
28 <sup>th</sup>	SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION	8.00am	Holy Communion (BCP)
		9.30am	Holy Communion
		4.30pm	Evensong
31 <sup>st</sup>	Wednesday	8.00am	Morning Prayer
		10.30am	Holy Communion (BCP)
		7.00pm	Ecumenical Prayers ( <i>see above</i> )

## Table-Top Sale

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May in the church hall will see our next table-top sale between 12.00 noon & 3.00pm. Tables are still available at £6.00 each. Please see or call Diane on 01782 621424. Help will be needed to staff the church stall and help in the kitchen – please lend a hand if you can.

## Church Queen Event

There will be afternoon tea with games and tombola on Sunday, 7<sup>th</sup> May at Diane and Alan's home, 1 May Avenue, between 2.00 & 5.00 pm. Everyone is welcome! Proceeds will go to the Church Queen's fund. Homemade cakes and help on the day would be most welcome. Thanks.

## Thy Kingdom Come

Please see the posters in church regarding this important, ecumenical and international prayer event during Ascensontide.