



Eglwys Gadeiriol Tyddewi

Croesawu ymwelwyr fel pererinion

St Davids Cathedral

Welcoming visitors as pilgrims



Oddi wrth Y Deon: Y Tra Pharchedig Dr Sarah Rowland Jones LVO OBE

From the Dean: The Very Revd Dr Sarah Rowland Jones LVO OBE

Dean's Address at Chapter Eucharist The Feast of St James, 25 July 2019

'Credais, ac am hynny y lleferais – I believed, and so I spoke' (2 Cor 4:13)

I must admit I'd been here several months before the penny dropped that alongside Peter, Paul and Andrew, the fourth saint in the Trinity Chapel reredos is in fact James – carved when medieval pilgrimage was at its height, encouraged for both faith and fiscal reasons.

One reason I didn't recognise him is that, he's not, like the rest, shown in something like New Testament robes, but instead is dressed as the archetypal medieval pilgrim, in the garb prescribed by various popes: his wide brimmed hat, for sunshine or showers, with a still half-discernible badge to show he's pilgrim not vagabond; his long cloak, both for cold and rain, and a good blanket; his sturdy staff, for defence and support; his scrip – his satchel-like bag; and in his left hand, well perhaps his pilgrim's water bottle, or the Scriptures. Our 1st century saint is from head to toe a medieval pilgrim, whose patron saint he is.

Yesterday morning, sitting in St Thomas Beckett chapel before Morning Prayer, I was struck how, similarly, in the 1909 window, Saints David and Asaph are not depicted in the dress of their 6th century days, but in the fullest finery of Edwardian coped and mitred Bishops – under the shadow of impending disestablishment to a mere Church 'in' but not 'of' Wales.

The treasures of these saints is presented in the clay jars of the days of their depiction. So, what of us in our time? Into what forms do we shape contemporary clay into jars, reflecting who we are and what we are about, yet trusting we convey something of the unchanging, inexpressible treasure of the salvation and redemption of all that is, in Jesus Christ our Lord?

That is a question for each of us individually, but also to face together, as Dean and Chapter, and in partnership with all the manifestations of the wider Cathedral community, including both staff, faithful parishioners, and all who love and care for us farther afield.

It is in this place it must inevitably be to some degree about pilgrimage – and so St James is a marvellous saint to have as a 'patron' of Chapter Day, even if we understand pilgrimage today very differently from the medieval period, including touching as it now does on many secular yearnings as much as religious impulses.

Y Deondy, Y Clôd, Tyddewi, Hwlfordd, Sir Benfro, SA62 6RD
The Deanery, St Davids, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, SA62 6RD
Tel 01437 720202 • dean@stdavidscathedral.org.uk

And what of the clay of David, Dewi, increasingly owned across our nation beyond any context of organised religion? I've been wondering how we, guardians of the place most strongly associated with him, can promote constructive substance to his character that feeds our nation? Can we give shape to his clay jar, around 'be joyful, keep the faith, do the little things'? Current politics surely holds up a mirror to the need for true joy, of hearts speaking – and listening – to hearts in mutual generosity and openheartedness; of keeping faith in lives of integrity, honesty and truthfulness; of doing the little things, in being diligent and kind. Can emphasising this Dewi, a worthy patron saint to follow, help shape a more Christ-like nation and society?

Both of these concepts we are pursuing with the Installation project – on schedule for March 1st 2020; as is glassing in the Thomas Beckett chapel to provide a haven of peace and prayer. I am enormously encouraged by the progress we are making on both.

Yet life is never all plain sailing. Being inescapably human, we are unavoidably often perplexed, even if not too often afflicted or struck down or persecuted (though all of us have the capacity inevitably to drive one another to distraction, at least from time to time). Yet we dare to remind ourselves of what it is to live with hope, because of the grace that is ours.

So we should step aside from worrying of what 'death' or 'life' might look like, as long as we are focussed on being the servants of the gospel for those who come our way: here not to be served, but to serve God and his people, from the diocese, Christians across Wales and from beyond, and all our visitors of any faith or none – believing that this is a place that is profoundly, transcendently, life-giving for others. As our collect says 'help us, forsaking the false attractions of the world, to be ready at all times to answer your call without delay.'

We too can say, 'I have believed'. Therefore, in all we do, let us 'speak', even using words if necessary, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us, and so many more with us, into his presence, as Paul writes.

So may our work be for Christ's sake, and for the sake of those Christ draws here, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. May it be so for us: the minutiae of our work cashing out in eternal significance. Amen.

Collect: Merciful God, whose holy apostle Saint James, leaving his father and all that he had, was obedient to the calling of your Son Jesus Christ and followed him even to death: help us, forsaking the false attractions of the world, to be ready at all times to answer your call without delay; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Acts 11:27-12:2; 2 Cor 4:7-15; Ps 126; Mt 20:20-28