

**Address for the Licensing, Collation and Installation  
of Sheridan Angharad James as Canon Pastor for Parish and Pilgrims  
at Choral Evensong, Sunday 12 February 2023**

**The Very Revd Dr Sarah Rowland Jones, Dean of St Davids**

*Psalm 148, Proverbs 8:1, 22-31, Revelation 4*

Today is Creation Sunday and what could be more fitting than to launch a new ministry on the day we celebrate God's breath animating his world and his call to join in caring for and nurturing his creation, ourselves included; and as we give thanks for his ongoing gift of fresh life and purpose for each of us, in the particular, evolving, calling he puts before us.

This gives a wonderful starting point for reflecting on what it means to be a Cathedral Canon, with responsibility to be Pastor to Parish and Pilgrims. Sheridan, we are delighted to welcome you among us today. As you take on this role, new for us too, we – Cathedral Foundation and Parish together – will help and support you as you explore and grow into the possibilities ahead. Christian communities are called to nurture one another, and this means nurturing you as you nurture others, wherever they happen to be on life's pilgrim journey,

Our readings help us begin such exploration. The vision of the worship of heaven, in Rev 4, shapes the heartbeat of Cathedral life, our primary calling. Worship, praise and intercession, through the weekly pattern and daily rhythm of our services, form the bedrock, the firm foundation, of all we are and do. This is the engine of Cathedral life. We who live here are joined by Chapter members coming into residence from across the Diocese, for Cathedrals are Mother Churches, the spiritual home of the whole Eucharistic community gathered under the oversight of their Bishop. So Cathedrals pray daily for the Bishop, and all entrusted to the Bishop's oversight and care: clergy, people and all to whom we are sent in ministry and mission. Everyone across our Diocese should know we pray daily for Diocesan life.

Indeed, we're one small node in the mystical web of prayer joining God's people across Wales, across the worldwide Anglican Communion, across the whole Church of God. We're also united with Christians of ever generation before us, and those who will come after. All of us together are drawn into the unceasing worship of heaven: 'Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and is and is to come' the four living creatures cry; and with the elders we bow down, proclaiming 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will thy existed and were created.' And as the Psalmist says, we invite all who come our way to join us and all creation, 'praising the name of the Lord, for his name only is exalted, and his glory is above the heavens.' This is the soundtrack – the earworm – of life here, calling earth to join in heaven's dance.

St Davids is often called a thin place, and again and again we find ourselves and others experiencing how being here communicates the awesomeness of God – to visitors, to regulars. Not to order, but serendipitously by God's grace. And so we 'welcome visitors as pilgrims', recognising that everyone can be on a journey of faith. My own prayer is that everyone who finds themselves within the Cathedral and Close – ourselves, day by day; tourists and visitors, whether once off or back again; everyone from Bishop to boiler-mender – my prayer is that we will all be open and alert to sense God's hand upon our lives; to hear Jesus Christ's fresh call to follow; and willingly take whatever next step he puts before us.

This is at the heart of the nurturing which the Canon Pastor is called to extend; and to catalyse within the rest of us, across Cathedral, parish, city, diocese ... so we can all help one another better hear and respond to Christ's call to grow in knowledge and love of him, to grow in faithful lives of worship, witness and service within our hurting world, the world he gave his life to redeem and save.

But how to begin such an enormous task? We need the wisdom and understanding of our first reading. Holy Wisdom, as in this passage, is sometimes seen as the personification of Christ, sometimes of the Holy Spirit. 'From the beginning of creation Wisdom calls, Understanding raises her voice' – we have God's communication of God's own self into God's creation, inviting us to live in harmony with our creator.

The reading left out verses 2 to 21 of Chapter 8, but in these we learn more of Holy Wisdom,  
 6 Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right;  
 7 for my mouth will utter truth ...  
 10 Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold;  
 11 for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her ... 17 I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me. ...  
 19 My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver.

This is God's call to every one of us. It's also a welcome reminder that neither you, Sheridan, nor any of us, are burdened with the responsibility of arguing others into the kingdom of God, or onto the paths of righteousness. Instead we say, as Christians have done right back to the time of the disciples 'come and see, come and hear, come and find for yourself ...'

And there is so much to see and hear and find here. I often say that the Shrine is not really the destination of pilgrims. It is the ultimate signpost to Dewi's God and ours, pointing to the reality of centuries of living faith in the living God.

Likewise, this image I heard in a sermon at theological college 25 years ago has stayed with me: the role of a priest is to help others pull back the curtain that obscures their view of God in such a way that we get lost in its folds.

There is much for you to do here, Sheridan – much for you to join in doing with us: with Leigh, and with Gill, in the parish, and especially Janet, our Pilgrimage and Education Officer. But the good news is that it is not about us. We can get lost in the folds of the curtains. All that matters is in the hands of the living God: the God who is creator, redeemer, sustainer; who, as our first reading says, rejoices in his creation and delights in the human race.

May his delight rest upon you, Sheridan in this new calling – and shine through you in all you are and do. May he bless you, and bless us all, in our worship and in our work, and bless those to whom he sends us. Amen