

**Materials for Virtual Worship - Sunday, 17 January 2021
The Second Sunday of Epiphany**

**Please use this material with the order of service for
Virtual Worship for Christmas & Epiphany 2020-2021**

Collects for The Baptism of Christ

Almighty God,
in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature
by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

(or)

Eternal Lord,
our beginning and our end:
bring us with the whole creation
to your glory, hidden through past ages
and made known
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings

1 Samuel 3: 1-10 Samuel's Calling and Prophetic Activity

Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread.

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, 'Samuel! Samuel!' and he said, 'Here I am!' and ran to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call; lie down again.' So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli, and

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said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli, and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."' "

John 1:43-end Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

Reflection

Epiphany 2 Year B Heart speaks to Heart
1 Samuel 3:1-10 Psalm 139 John 1.43-51

Most of you will have heard of John Henry Newman, the nineteenth century Anglican clergyman and scholar, one of the leaders of the 'Oxford Movement' which led to the renewal of what is often called 'Anglo-Catholicism' in the Church of England. He later became convinced that to belong to the universal church fully one needed to be in communion with Rome, and he became a Roman Catholic, and eventually a Cardinal. His name was in the news in the last few years as

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first, he was beatified (declared 'blessed') by Pope Benedict when he visited the UK in 2010, and then he was canonised (declared a saint) by Pope Francis in 2019.

When Newman became a Cardinal, he chose as his motto the Latin words: Cor ad Cor loquitur. 'Heart speaks to heart'. Nothing could express more clearly how important things that are inward, and unseen are to Christian belief. Although Newman joined a church in which outward things - rituals, sacraments, holy objects and relics, a hierarchy of priests and bishops, and clear and definable acts of teaching – are all hugely important, he held these things together with a strong sense of the inward, the less obvious and definable. This is true Christianity, which anybody of any denomination should be able to recognise – the interplay between outward and inward. It's tragic that, at times, the different streams within Christianity have sometimes emphasised inward at the expense of outward, or outward at the expense of inward, and fought, killed and been incredibly destructive over this very issue. 'God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth', as St John's Gospel tells us. But equally, as C.S. Lewis pithily put it, 'God likes matter; he invented it'.

Today's Gospel reading, with its story of the calling of Philip and Nathanael, highlights the inward and mysterious nature of Christianity; and Newman's motto, 'heart speaks to heart', could be used to describe the essence of what's going on in it. The story points us to two mysterious things – the fact of an inward, true person (what we might call 'a soul') at the heart of everybody, and a kind of communication which goes beyond words, and sometimes underlies them, making what seem like purely inconsequential conversations fraught with deeper meaning.

The idea of 'a soul' within each person is controversial, and hard to define, although it's terribly important to our culture. It's lurking there in all the debates about artificial intelligence: could a machine somehow become intelligent and independent enough to make choices, have feelings, and be said to have acquired the status of 'having a soul'? There are those who suggest that even human beings

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have no real inner core: we're made up of the coming together of genetic material with the experiences and interrelationships of life. In the end, these people claim, it's dubious whether there is 'anybody in there' who can truly be said to make free choices. Our personalities and sense of freedom are like a set of billiard balls, pushed around on the surface of life, and bouncing off events and experiences.

But our Gospel story today says otherwise. It tells of people who had an essence, a true inner being, which Jesus could see into, recognise, and invite to make a free response: 'here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' 'Follow me.' This bit of the story about Christ's recognition of Nathanael comes just after the moment in which we're told that Jesus looked at Simon, son of John, knew who he was – in his true inner self – and said 'You are to be called Cephas' (or Peter), which means Rock (John 1.42).

We're left in no doubt by St John that Jesus himself has a strong and commanding inner core of being and that he called people – and calls them still – by looking into them, and finding their true selves, their 'souls'. We sometimes lose ourselves in all the pressure of events and influences which surround us. Jesus finds us again; and we can find ourselves, when we listen to his call.

And this leads us to the second inward mystery which in this passage is describing: the power of a communication which goes beyond words.

Counsellors, and other people who teach and practise listening-skills, sometimes use a phrase, 'the music behind the words'. 'Listen for the music behind the words', they say, by which they mean something like 'discern the feelings, the motivations, the experiences which the words are struggling to express'. St John, in the Gospel story, is asking us to believe in an even deeper 'music behind the words' – the music of the Holy Spirit's wind blowing into people's hearts and souls, bringing revelation and understanding which hardly seem to relate to what has been outwardly said. 'Where did you come to know me?' said Nathanael, when Jesus had addressed him as an Israelite without deceit. And the deceptively simple reply was, 'I saw you under the fig

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tree before Philip called you.’ Why did this evoke the extraordinary confession, ‘Rabbi! You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’? Is it because Jesus has conjured up the mental image of each faithful Israelite sitting peacefully under his own fig tree which had been used the prophets Micah and Zechariah to describe the perfect age, the coming kingdom of the Messiah? Perhaps there’s a memory of those prophetic passages about the wonderful coming kingdom in Nathanael’s response. But really, Jesus’ remark about seeing him sitting under his fig tree, sounds like quite a mundane observation on the face of it. There’s a ‘music behind the words’ here which goes beyond rational analysis of what’s actually being said. Somehow, the Spirit is at work, and Nathanael knows himself called and commanded by One he can only struggle to name in the highest terms. This is a moment of revelation. Heart is speaking to heart – the heart of the divine to the heart of a man.

Today Christians sometimes struggle to find the right words to explain why they believe. It’s important that we try to do so, for the sake of those who don’t believe. But, in the end, our rational explanations, our careful use of words, can only bring someone else to a brink – a moment when it needs God to give the gift, to make the connection, to supply ‘the music behind all words’.

Jesus ends our Gospel passage today promising that this is his mission: he is the connecting point between earth and heaven, the new Jacob’s ladder on whom the traffic of the Spirit ascends and descends. If, like Philip, we can point other people to him with our own inadequate words, he will do the rest. It’s never a Christian who converts another person; it’s always Christ, by his Spirit. And the moment of revelation may come in the way in which we least expect. Our job is to witness as best we can – however feebly – and then to pray.

‘Heart speaks to heart’. God knows us in our inner being, and can help us find that inner being, that truth of ourselves, again. We need to put ourselves in the position where we can listen to him amidst the jangle of this world’s din, including the din of anxiety, preoccupation and chatter which goes on in our own minds. We need to learn to listen-out

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for him in our hearts. Perhaps, as today's story of the boy Samuel suggests, this is something that comes more easily to children than to adults. But in the end, how, when and why he chooses to speak to any individual is a mystery. We cannot wring his meaning out of recalcitrant words, but we do know it when that meaning comes through and grips us. This is the inward side of faith, which is the necessary counterpart to its outward practice.

Maggie Guite

Songs of thankfulness

- 1 Songs of thankfulness and praise,
Jesu, Lord, to thee we raise,
manifested by the star,
to the sages from afar;
branch of royal David's stem
in thy birth at Bethlehem:
anthems be to thee addressed
God in Man made manifest.

- 2 Manifest at Jordan's stream,
Prophet, Priest and King supreme;
and at Cana wedding-guest
in thy Godhead manifest;
manifest in power divine,
changing water into wine:
anthems be to thee addressed,
God in Man made manifest.

- 3 Manifest in making whole
palsied limbs and fainting soul;
manifest in valiant fight,
quelling all the devil's might;
manifest in gracious will,
ever bringing good from ill:
anthems be to thee addressed,
God in Man made manifest.

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- 4 Grant us grace to see thee, Lord,
mirrored in thy holy word;
may we imitate thee now,
and be pure, as pure art thou;
that we like to thee may be
at thy great Epiphany;
and may praise thee, ever blest,
God in Man made manifest.

Christopher Wordsworth (1807-1885), and Compilers of 'Rejoice and Sing'
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Hail to the Lord's anointed

- 1 Hail to the Lord's Anointed,
great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed,
his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
to set the captive free,
to take away transgression,
and rule in equity.
- 2 He comes, with succour speedy,
to those who suffer wrong;
to help the poor and needy,
and bid the weak be strong;
to give them songs for sighing,
their darkness turn to light,
whose souls, condemned and dying,
were precious in his sight.

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3 He shall come down like showers
upon the fruitful earth;
that love, joy, hope, like flowers,
spring in his path to birth;
before him, on the mountains,
shall peace the herald go;
and righteousness, in fountains,
from hill to valley flow.

4 Kings shall bow down before him,
and gold and incense bring;
all nations shall adore him,
his praise all people sing;
to him shall prayer unceasing
and daily vows ascend,
his kingdom still increasing,
a kingdom without end.

5 O'er every foe victorious,
he on his throne shall rest;
from age to age more glorious,
all-blessing and all-blest.
The tide of time shall never
his covenant remove;
his name shall stand for ever,
his changeless name of Love.

James Montgomery (1771-1854)

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Closing Prayer

God of glory,
you nourish us with your Word
who is the bread of life:
fill us with your Holy Spirit
that through us the light of your glory
may shine in all the world.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen