

Sunday 21 June 2020

2nd Sunday after Trinity

Fr David reflects...

It looks like it's a good year for roses. The ones in front of our house were, we are told, cut back quite hard and at the wrong time of year just before we moved in. At the moment they are heavy with blooms causing the stems to sag and sway in the recent strong winds. I've seen plenty of others on my travels this week, better than ours and certainly more tended.

This Sunday is the one closest to St Alban's Day (22 June). It's a day very close to my heart from my years working and worshipping at the Cathedral and Abbey Church bearing his name. Alban is considered the first British Christian martyr, put to death by the Romans around the turn of the 3rd century. The rose is one of his symbols and as pilgrims process through the great Abbey Church on his feast day they scatter roses around the base of his shrine, reconstructed by the Victorians after its destruction at the Reformation.

Alban is reputed to have sheltered an itinerant Christian priest himself fleeing persecution. The priest helped Alban to know Christ and was baptised. Clothes were swapped and the priest escaped, albeit not for long, dressed as a Roman and Alban, putting himself in the priest's place was arrested, tried and executed.

Sacrifice is something we've heard quite a bit of lately. Recent VE75 commemorations brought much of it home as we looked on the contributions so many people have made to the life of not only our country but humanity as a whole. Sadly, we have always needed people to stand in the stead of the persecuted, vulnerable and afraid. We are fortunate that so many have taken that call seriously and to heart and continue to today.

This Sunday's Gospel reminds us that we matter. All made in the beautiful and perfect image of God, we are known and valued, as we are. Our call as Christians is to simply replicate the indiscriminate love we know in God and the love in which we know we are held. We matter even in our imperfections and with our 21st century prejudices and shortcomings. And perhaps when we feel that some matter less, we should try swapping clothes, and places with them, just for a while, and see how it changes.

Among the roses of the martyrs: brightly shines Saint Alban!