



# AD CLERUM

*Oddi wrth yr Esgob/From the Bishop*

February 2019

Dear friends,

I share with you the St David's Day sermon which I preached in the Cathedral at last Sunday's Radio 4 Broadcast. We are so privileged to be serving out our ministries in this Diocese, following in the footsteps of St David, this faithful, humble servant of Christ:

*"Lords, brothers and sisters, rejoice and keep your faith and the Creed, and do the little things you have heard and seen of me. As for me, I shall walk the way which our fathers went."*

*Words from the last sermon of St David – Dewi Sant; words that have been cherished, loved and passed down through the centuries; words that are as relevant today as they were then. Dewi Sant lived in turbulent times: the Romans had left a hundred years before and the local British princes ruled in their tribal areas, now fighting, now allying with each other and the Anglo-Saxon invaders. The threats are different now, but we too live in turbulent and uncertain times, times for which the past offers us no roadmap. Dewi Sant's words offer a simple way to live without one: "Rejoice, hold onto your faith, and to the faith of the Church." Dewi Sant is drawing on the words of St Paul with which his people would have been familiar and which we have just heard. Five hundred years earlier, St Paul had written to the little church in Philippi as it faced persecution, "Rejoice in the Lord always."*

*Following St Paul, Dewi Sant is reminding his community that in changing and painful times, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who created and sustains all that is, can be trusted. Like St Paul, Dewi Sant was not calling for a rejoicing that shuts its eyes and ears to reality, a whistling in the dark; but for a rejoicing that is rooted in trust, rooted in a learning to trust the love of the God who calls us into being, a rejoicing that is open-eyed to the complicated reality of our own lives and the complex times in which we live.*

*Trusting in God is not like having a magic wand. Problems cannot just be waved away but they can be lived through, moment by moment, patiently and even joyfully when we open our minds and hearts to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who comprehends the thoughts of our minds and the prayers of our hearts. "Rejoice and keep your faith." Dewi Sant encourages us not to lose heart. We are to hold tight to the God who raised Jesus from his borrowed tomb to new life.*

*If we are honest though, we cannot always find it in our hearts to rejoice. Dewi Sant's call to keep our faith and the Creed of the Church encourages us. Come what may we are called day by day to keep to the discipline of trusting God, even when that seems counterintuitive.*

*Keep your faith, keep the faith. The faith Dewi Sant tells his community to hold onto is not a faith of their own imagining, it is the faith of the Christian community taught first by those who had met the Risen Jesus, a faith then handed on through the early centuries and summed up in the Nicene Creed; the faith statement put together by the Church in the fourth century. The Creed expresses the core of the Christian faith and is held in common by countless millions of Christians today.*

*We hold onto this Creed and discover its reality afresh in our own lives. This reminds us that trust is not about feeling; it's not about feeling secure, feeling safe; it is about having the*

*courage to live out our Christian faith through the gospel values of love, compassion, peace and justice; come what may and whatever the cost, because holding on to our faith in Christ and to the Faith of the Church reminds us always of the bigger picture, pointing us to the unquenchable and enduring love of God in which our country, our world, our lives along with all that is; are rooted and held.*

*“Rejoice, keep your faith and the Creed” preached Dewi Sant. “Do the little things,” he added. Which little things? “The little things that you have heard and seen in me.” “Do what I do.” Staggering words. “Copy my example.”*

*If we think this sounds arrogant, we are missing the point. In his final sermon, Dewi Sant doesn’t offer words, clever sermon illustrations, or intellectual and intricate arguments; not even the wisdom gained by his lifetime of steadfast Christian living. He offers himself as his sermon illustration: not because he’s vain, but because, in humility, he offers himself as a living example of how a flawed, sinful human being can draw daily on the grace of God, be rebuked and inspired by the words of scripture and the words of others, and live, using the twin walking poles of Christian discipleship, repentance and love, repentance and love, repentance and love.*

*He points his community to their own experience of living alongside him. “The little things that you have heard and seen in me, do.” Just follow my example, live as I have lived. Dewi Sant is quoting St Paul’s words “what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me --- practise these things.” It seems like an arrogant claim .... And yet it draws on the central core of the Christian faith: the incarnation, the Word made flesh: even God used more than words. In the end, words are not enough.*

*I will never forget my Dad’s gales of laughter when the first thing I did when learning to drive was to sit in the driver’s seat reading a book about learning to drive. I soon learnt that practice, practice and more practice under the watchful eye of someone who could already drive was the only way to get the hang of it: other people’s written words only got me so far.*

*It’s the same with living the Christian life: we learn from our own faltering experimentation and observing and reflecting on that of others. Dewi Sant had lived his life open to God and to his community. His relationship with God guided how he lived, and his experience of living his faith fed back into his relationship with God. Dewi Sant lived a life of loving, rejoicing experimentation in following Jesus. It most certainly didn’t make him perfect, but it was a life lesson to his community as to how to live humbly, lovingly, honestly, each with their own eyes open to their own imperfections rather than to the imperfections of others. He was an object lesson in grace.*

*As we now have the courage to follow Dewi Sant’s advice and rejoice, to stand on the faith of the Church, to keep putting our faith in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and day by day to make our faith real in the love of our neighbour, so we, as flawed and imperfect as we are, can be for others signs of hope and people in whom God’s love is made real.*

*“As for me, I shall walk the way which our fathers went.” No doubt they didn’t want to hear it, but these final words of Dewi Sant reminded the community who loved, trusted and depended on him that his life was coming to its end, as everyone’s must. But over fourteen hundred years later, we still repeat his words with love.*

*Like him, we have the courage to offer our own little things, that by God’s grace, they may be signs of a greater love. All of us, wherever we are, can be signs and channels of the love and grace of God, as we offer the little things of our lives in simplicity, gentleness and hope.*

## Dates for your Diary

### CMD 2019

A reminder that these training days are regarded as a professional commitment for all stipendiary clergy and non- stipendiary clergy are strongly encouraged to attend if they can, so please put these dates in your diary now.

#### **CMD Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May. Venue to be confirmed.**

Canon Eileen Davies will be leading a day themed around rural issues, in particular the problems of rural isolation and the part the Tir Dewi charity plays in addressing these concerns. This is a change to what was advertised in the previous Ad Clerum.

#### **CMD Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November. Venue to be confirmed.**

A day focused on Education and Schools' work.

#### **Archidiaconal Days**

Additionally, there are to be three Archidiaconal Days, content and venues to be confirmed.

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> July:           Cardigan**

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> July:       Carmarthen**

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> July:   St Davids**

### LICENSINGS

Revd Vivian Sayer will be licenced as Priest in Charge of Llansadwrn and Llanwrda and Manordeilo and Llanfair on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> March 6pm in Cwrdaf's Church, Llanwrda.

Revd Dr Matthew Hill will be licensed into his new parish of Carmarthen on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2019 at 7pm in St Peter's Church.

### NEW APPOINTMENTS and RETIREMENTS

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Neil Hook as Priest in Charge of the parish of Haverfordwest with Camrose and LMA Dean Designate. He will take up his post on 13<sup>th</sup> May. We pray for Neil as he and his family prepare for this move.

I have received notice of the retirement of the Venerable Will Strange, Archdeacon of Cardigan on 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2019.

I have also received notice of the retirement of Revd Canon Bryan Witt on 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2019.

I have also received notice of the retirement of Revd Ian Aveson on 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2019.

We wish Bryan, Will and Ian long, healthy and happy retirements.

## VACANCIES

Priest in Charge positions will be advertised in The Church Times over the coming weeks, for Aberystwyth and Llanelli LMAs. If you are interested in any of these posts, please do speak to the relevant Archdeacons, applications are warmly encouraged.

Yours in Christ,

+ Joanna Tydewi