

## Second Sunday before Lent 7 February 2021 Homily

This Second Sunday before Lent is always a Creation Sunday in the Church of England; perhaps to set Lent within a much broader picture; to open our eyes to God's loving purposes lest we go in for too much privatised introspection! Psalm 104 is a wonderful hymn to God's creation and its diversity: 'O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.' When we look to the Creator God, we are filled with thankfulness and praise, but perhaps also a sense of our responsibility in helping to maintain this diversity: yet again, David Attenborough is warning us and this year the UK hosts a crucial round of climate-talks. In the context of coronavirus, the psalm also speaks: is God's face hidden and are we troubled after so many deaths; this week, especially the death of Captain Sir Tom Moore? He was a light in the darkness and inspired so many others to imitate his attitude and his actions. As Christians, we must hear the next verse of the psalm: 'when you send forth your spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth.' We pray that Captain Tom and the 100,000 who have died will share in resurrection hope.

In today's Collect, we will pray: 'teach us to discern your hand in all your works and your likeness in all your children'. This maps beautifully on to the twin themes at the close of our Old Testament reading from Proverbs; how the LORD and His wisdom, first, "rejoice in his inhabited world" and, second, "delight in the human race." Here we have a simple blueprint for human living, which in our own way in the Merton Priory Team, we aim to live out. We want to rejoice in the inhabited world and see God's hand in all His works by working to become an Eco-Church; and not just getting a certificate, but all of us corporately and individually caring for God's creation locally and seeing this care as the most natural expression of our faith in God. And then we want to delight in the human race and see God's likeness in all His children by understanding and then opposing racial injustice; not just by putting a Black Lives Matter logo on a website, but this Lent studying a book ("We need to talk about race", by Ben Lindsay) as part of a continuing conversation. And again, this exploration we want to see as the most natural expression of our convictions that all are made in God's image and likeness and the Church is one Body.

These are quite tall orders: to help eradicate climate and racial injustice; did you realise what you were achieving and signing up to in worshipping week by week?! Well, thank God that we do none of these things in our own strength: the Word became flesh and lived among us. The Word (Wisdom) has taken human form; this is now the inheritance of humanity; to be the master workers, not just the ones who have been made. Thank God that we have seen this in those who have made the vaccines; what master workers those scientists and medics are! Just imagine what can be achieved in the climate crisis or around racial injustice if we applied that same energy, creativity and perseverance?

If this still feels daunting, especially in lockdown, again I emphasize that as Christians we are among those who know that we are children of God. If sometimes amazing things are being done by others who may or may not acknowledge their status as God's children, our special vocation may be to take their work to the Lord in prayer and praise. We can not only remember, but pray for Captain Tom and all other victims of coronavirus. So it is with the creation and the human family: we turn to God for inspiration and guidance and strength and we begin with overflowing praise; from the hymn we will hear shortly (after words of St Francis, that great lover of God's creation and of all God's people): 'Let all things their Creator bless,  
and worship him in humbleness,  
O praise him, alleluia!  
Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,  
and praise the Spirit, Three in One.' Amen.