

Sermon

Welcome to Year 7 Students, 2012

Feast of Charles, King & Martyr

King Charles 1st who believed in the concept of the “divine right of kings” was the King of England from 1625 until the 30th January, 1649 when he was beheaded having been found guilty of treason and other crimes by a court set up by the victorious parliamentarians during the English Civil War of the early seventeenth century. If you are a budding historian you will be interested in the events of the English civil war for they shaped the nature and workings of government in our own country today.

The Church has other reasons for remembering King Charles. They are twofold; firstly, Charles was known as a pious and devout man who believed very strongly that the Church of England should retain its episcopacy, that is its Bishops as leaders of the Church, because this meant that the Church of England would remain part of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church and not therefore as Charles believed become a sect outside of the true Church. The second reason is that by Charles remaining true to these principles he is an example to us all of faithfulness and integrity for if he had denounced the episcopacy as requested by his opponents he could have saved his life. His commitment to “truth” was so strong he was prepared to die.

Such a level of commitment, faithfulness to an ideal, and integrity seems to me to be the making of a true hero and I know that in our contemporary age young men are looking for heroes; sometimes I think they look in the wrong places so along with Charles, King & Martyr, may I suggest some other more modern church men who you might like to investigate and learn about; Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German Lutheran pastor killed for his opposition to Nazism on the orders of Adolph Hitler, Martin Luther King, an American Baptist pastor shot for his campaign for black civil rights, Dag Hammarskjold, the Swedish Secretary –General of the United Nations killed “accidentally” in an air crash in southern Africa, Janani Luwum an Anglican Archbishop assassinated by the Ugandan dictator, Idi Amin, and Oscar Romero a Roman Catholic Archbishop shot while saying mass in San Salvador. These men

stand as exemplars of great principle and I believe are worthy of being heroes because at their heart they served their people by working to overcome evil and therefore to make the world a better place.

If you know anything about Jesus Christ whose birth is the reason we celebrate Christmas you will know that this sense of service and sacrifice and being true to yourself is quite central to the Christian faith which is the foundation of this School, which is why this beautiful Chapel was built, and why as your first formal activity at the Senior School you are invited to worship God. Throughout your time at this School you will come regularly to this Chapel to sing hymns, hear passages from the Holy Bible read, pray for yourself and the world, and listen to the Chaplain and others preach!

In our Gospel reading from St Matthew read by our School Sacristan Elect Sean Guastavino we learn another great truth of Christianity which at its core seems to be inviting us to turn normal thinking on its head; I like to think of this as being counter cultural “Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave.” Jesus goes on further to say that even he, the Son of God, came not to be served but to serve. This kind of humility and life changing service is also at the heart of what this School believes in and promotes. In passing, it is worth noting that the tradition of Anglican schooling goes back to 597 AD with the arrival of St Augustine and Christianity in England and the establishment The King’s School in Canterbury.

It is the hope of the School that in seeking to serve others with a sense of humility, sacrifice and integrity you will make the very best use of the gifts and talents God has given you; that you will be academically curious, diligent and hardworking; that you will participate fully and to the best of your ability in a rich range of cultural and sporting activities on offer – will you be serving and returning as if you were Djokovic or Tomic, sing as if you had the voice of a Andrea Bocelli. However the expectation is also that you will develop your skills and gifts not in a narrow way but in a manner which is intended for the benefit of all people; more often than not people you will never meet or know. Jesus’ call to service to others is taken seriously and to that end I think of our students just returning from Cambodia where they have been building facilities at an orphanage, of our eight Houses with their various charities

they support, the on-going support by the whole school for the work of Anglicare, the social security and advocacy agency of the Anglican Church, the Australian Board of Missions, the overseas aid body of the Anglican Church of Australia, St Bartholomew's House, providing support and accommodation for homeless men, and Parkerville Children and Youth, ministering to abused and neglected children . In undertaking such work it is the School's hope that you will do so not because it necessarily makes you feel good but because you truly believe it is your calling and duty to makes other people's lives better.

It is my prayer that attending this School will be a life changing and life affirming experience for our Year 7 students, that you will be imbued not only with academical, social, cultural and sporting attributes of excellence, participation, and fair play, but it is also my prayer and my hope that the spiritual and religious dimension of your life will become real and that in so doing you will come to a fulsome love and understanding of the message of Jesus Christ for it is message which liberates us from self-centredness and selfishness, materialism and acquisitiveness, and invites us to be concerned for as the Bible says, the poor, the widow, the captive, the orphan, the stranger, the refugee, and the homeless.

By the time you reach Year 12 you will have grown into mature young men as have Hamish, Richard and Sean. Might it be that as you leave through a different honour guard at the end of that year you will have matured in body, mind and spirit. Might it be that the words that Richard Dewar read to us from the Book of Ecclesiasticus ring true in your hearts :

*Those who fear the Lord do not disobey his words,
And those who love him keep his ways.
Those who fear the Lord seek to please him,
And those who love him are filled with his law.
Those who fear the Lord prepare their hearts,
And humble themselves before him.*

And might it be said that in that maturation into manhood Guildford Grammar School played its part! And might it be that then you more fully understand the complexities of life and faith; not least, how someone reviled as an arrogant king could also be celebrated as a humble and principled saint!