

Sunday 6th October 2019, St. Faith's Day

Chronicles 29:6-19, Ephesians 2:19-22, John 2:13-22

St. Faith's Day, just a little reminder of our St. Faith in case you were not here when we did a little plays let about her.

The Christians suffered in persecution of the Roman Emperor Diocletian in the 3rd and 4th centuries. He threatened death to all Christians who would not worship the heathen gods, and the Christians of Agen fled to the hills. Bishop Caprasius went with them to protect and minister to his flock.

So the glory of leading the forlorn hope of Agen fell on Faith, still but a child, of about 14 years.

Left in Agen whilst the other Christians had taken refuge among the rocks, she was summoned before Diocletian, and signing herself with the cross she prayed "Jesus Christ, my Lord, Thou never forsakest those who call upon Thee. Help thy servant, and send my lips words worthy of the questions I have to answer before the tyrant". She listened fearlessly to

Diocletian's threats of death, and looking to heaven she said in a clear strong voice, "In the name of Jesus Christ my Lord, not only will I not sacrifice to your gods but I am ready to suffer all kinds of torments". So she was stretched on the fiery bed of torture.

The people were touched with pity to see a young and noble maiden tortured and suffering courageously, and that day an unknown multitude, who confessed the faith of Jesus Christ, were also martyred.

I'm sure you will have noticed our newly painted louvres in the bell tower, doesn't it look lovely. The colour is, well the colour is sage green – and when Keith took off the layers this was the original colour.

But interestingly Keith (who along with Paul do lots of jobs for us around and about here and the Pallant Centre) when he was over in France a few weeks ago and in Aquitaine visited Louzette a square with the church and medieval houses, restaurants etc.

And all the windows in the square had shutters including the church covering the stained glass windows – and what colour do you think it was? Well I think I have given a rather large clue – yes it was sage green the same colour that we have on the louvres.

In our Old Testament reading we heard about all the gifts given for the service of the house of God – it must have been a fortune, a daric was a Persian coin whose value was measured by weight, ten thousand darics weighed approx... 185 pounds – the total value was over 5000 tons. Wow!

And all the people rejoiced because they too had given willingly.

‘Yours O Lord are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord.....sounds familiar? And then David talks about freewill offering...for all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.

Well on a day when we remember St. Faith on this our patronal/dedication day a chance to be thankful for all the recent improvements - there have been so many in the last few years but it is worth stopping and as churchwarden Colin says enjoy the journey!

And here at St. Nicholas, recent improvements with the painting and the new frames for the photos and information about Langstone.

And a chance to say thank you to everyone for their generosity recently and in years gone by and a reminder that while we own some things many are just on loan from God – this building we are but caretakers. We have a responsibility to look after for future generations as it has been looked after for us.....well mostly!

I am very lucky in that most days I am about here in church and I am sure that those who steward or pop in from time to time will agree with me about the numbers of people who pop in – some every day,

some visitors, some intrigued or seeking stillness or answers but most of them say something about this building, how beautiful it is, how peaceful, a haven in the middle (well nearly) of Havant.

They admire the architecture, the windows, the history, the light walls, the prayer corner, the chance to light a candle, the servery, the coffee we serve the chance to have a conversation the community and that is what we are about. Lots have a story to share.

We are all community, sharing a welcome, hospitality which we know was so important in the old testament times and times of Jesus and here and now.

And in many cases if not most of what we do it is all about community, our partners who use the Pallant Centre, the charity shop, our coffee mornings – what a buzz there was here yesterday and we made just over £300, weekday coffee mornings our new TAT group and even our Little Seeds we do not know what seeds

are being sown. What we do know is that in all these things people enjoy coming together being community.

And very soon we will be able to show you what we are going to do at Advent with our local schools and it will be open at a weekend for all to explore, and I'm not going to tell you anymore.....

In a moment or two the choir are going to sing a rather lovely anthem based on Psalm 122 the psalm set for today and it begins ' I was glad when they said unto me, let us come to the Lord's house. Now here we are, now here we are.....

We in this country are not persecuted as Faith was, but as Christians Jesus asked us to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind and love your neighbour as yourself so as we come forward and hold out our hands to receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ may the light, and the life and the love of Christ shine within our hearts, and as our post communion prayer says, may we be the temple of His presence. Amen.