



Light, in simplicity, forms a rainbow of colours, and the rainbow reflects earth and heaven together into one whole glory.

God calls us through all the colours of our hearts, minds and souls, to share his light into the world, that all creation – on heaven and on earth – may be wholly given and drawn into his glorious love.

You shall be holy.....

When I was a new deacon I was invited to join a sodality. A group of priests and deacons who make a special commitment to putting prayer, study, and service at the heart of what we do, and what we stand for in the world, with a one-line vision statement : *because the world needs holy priests*. My first meeting with them was in Llandaff Cathedral to offer mass, which was also the first mass I had ever deaconed – I had only been ordained a few days before.

I was terrified.

But... it was beautiful. Although I had no clue what I was doing, I was wrapped in love, and prayer, and also became aware that what was being offered and received in that mass into the world was in fact that : love. Love from God, broken on the altar (gathering up all the things that frighten us, or break us apart in any way) - shared in friendship, made whole in God, and taken out as part of us, into the world.

That something holy was happening, and drawing me into it. And in that mass I grew a little bit to become a little nearer to the deacon and priest I longed to be.

Holiness lifts us beyond ourselves, into the best of ourselves – into a self that we long for. It's like a homing instinct.

Today's readings give us a call to be holy.

You shall be holy, says the Lord through the prophet Moses.

We know in our hearts and instincts that **God** is holy. The angels sing *Holy, holy, holy* around his throne. We sing of Christmas: *O Holy Night* in which God is born.

Are **you** feeling holy?

Holiness – what is it? Well, the Hebrew word for holiness, "*qadosh*," means "set apart" or "sacred."

Holiness then is something set apart, and blessed. Set apart from what?

Holiness is, I believe, related to wholeness (with a '*wh*') - *completeness*. God is holy, because God is completely - *wholly* - good, *wholly* love, with no shadow of any evil, or brokennesses of the world. So there is our 'set apart' – God is set apart from all that is broken and shadowed, and he is pure light and life and love: Holy.

When we are born, we are born in that holiness – pure and created by love and for love. All babies are holy. Look in a baby's eyes and you know it understands all the deep truths of the universe and its heart beats pure love. And yet life batters us, and distracts us, and pretty soon those deep truths we instinctively knew when we were born become muddled under other layers and bruises. Holiness remains with us, though, as something we long and yearn for, speaking to us at the root of our deepest and best desires. Holiness is love – lifting us up.

To be holy.

It's not something we would normally claim for ourselves.

And yet that's today's call.

You shall be holy.

But then the Lord completes the sentence

You shall be holy for I, the Lord your God, am holy.

Comfort there – we shall not struggle to be holy through some endeavour of our own, but we become holy, simply because *God himself is holy*. God, who created us, created us to be holy.... And God constantly draws us back into his holiness.

He draws us in through our heart-instinct - our homing-instinct - taking us back to the place where we were born. Calling us in all the mixed-up challenge of the world and of being human... to keep it simple. To risk opening our hearts to let him lift us up, away from the complications; the troubles and fears and competing voices of the world; into a place firm within his light and love. Set apart, standing on firm foundations.

For me, in that little story I began with, with all my fears of *getting it wrong in the cathedral*, or of *these experienced priests thinking I'm an idiot*, or of *somehow spoiling the liturgy*, or of *not being worthy*... God cut through in holiness... and said *you are my child, and this is love, and you're just fine*. And that meant I was fine. Set apart from my fears, and free to grow into the breaking and sharing of his love.

When we negotiate more tricky waters of how we live together in human community and the choices we make, the words we use, the fears we navigate, and the things we stand for... the simple truth of the little story is still true.

Stand in the love, and we shall be fine. Let God be holiness in us.

Because the *world needs holy priests*... and although if we are ordained, that's a particular type of priesthood, everyone, once baptised, is baptised into a priesthood too – we are all part of the priesthood of God, living his holiness into the world, standing in Christ's love, and inviting others to come and share in it.

God calls us today, through Moses, with a manifesto... You shall be holy. You shall be just, you shall be forgiving, you shall be love. Our holiness should lead us to have a positive impact on the world – to make a path set aside for justice, peace and hope.

So how do we do this? So many ways, but let's see what Jesus tells us in our gospel today.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

The first thing to notice there is that little word *all* – this is where the holy bit comes in. Not to love him with some of ourselves mixed up among other priorities and competing desires... to love him with ***all***. To every day ask him to make us holy in all that we are – offered, set aside, for his love.

To love God with

all our heart,

with all our being...

... and with all our ***mind***.

Now, that was a thing Jesus did there.

The Jews prayed every day from the text of Deuteronomy to

love the Lord with all our heart,

all our soul,

*and all our ... **strength**.*

But Jesus changes this to add the word ***mind***. To be thinking, seeking Christians. Being ready to use our mind to discover, to challenge, to be curious about God, and about how we can share his love in the world.

The Jews believed God created everything – thought everything up – **therefore every time we learn something about what is deeply true, deeply beautiful in our faith and in our world we are thinking God's thoughts after him.** We are learning – growing – to be like him. Learning to participate in his life-giving creation. Our discoveries about the world around us; about science, society - about what it means to be community, about ways to use knowledge to grow and to heal ... become rooted and grounded in God's life in the world.

God calls us to share his holiness. To give ourselves wholly, and newly, over and again throughout each day. To be curious. To learn, to study, to pray, to reflect. To bring our love and our reason, our intellect, our imagination, to help us to find and follow his footsteps in the world, and to speak and act in his love – *because the world needs holy priests.*

You shall be holy, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind ... and you shall love your neighbour as yourself¹.

How do we inform our decisions? How do we choose our path? How do we know what to stand for in the world, and in our local little communities? How do we add to the sun of knowledge and love in the world, rooted in his grace and to his purposes?

Happy are they who walk in the counsel of the Lord, says today's psalmist – they shall be like trees planted by streams of water, bearing fruit and evergreen.

And we responded:

**Let us walk in the ways of the Lord,
and ponder his law, day and night²**

Let it be so
Amen

¹ Jesus here drawing together in a new way texts from Deuteronomy and Leviticus

² Response to today's responsorial psalm