

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH  
GRAFHAM

'THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK'

27th January 2021

I frequently offer you a poem as part of 'Thought for the Week' in the hope that it says something not easily expressed in prose and will encourage and stimulate both your thoughts and prayers. I've written before about *lectio divina* (spiritual reading) as a way of reading scripture and other writings. Through a process of mulling over them prayerfully we are drawn into a deeper engagement with God. What then about *visio divina* (spiritual looking)? Today I want to move beyond our very word based culture and explore how the visual arts might nourish us on our spiritual journey. Immanuel Kant defines art as 'the communication of a state of mind'. That of the artist but also our own as we respond to it. In that deeper understanding we may see God's presence.

Just as we can practise *lectio divina* with almost any text, so we can practise *visio divina* through any medium. The subject might be religious or it might not. The work could be representational or abstract. We don't even have to like it - sometimes because we dislike something it speaks more powerfully to us and reveals more.

So how might you go about it? Here are some thoughts as a starting point.

Focus on the picture. Allow yourself to be engaged by it and let your eyes roam over the whole of it.

What do you see? What draws your attention or what do you want to avoid or at least not linger over?

Don't try to interpret it. Don't impose what you know about the story it represents (if there is one). Notice your responses.

What strikes you?

Where do you feel most comfortable? Where do you feel least comfortable?

How do you feel? What emotions does it evoke. Does it stir up memories or conjure up fresh images in your mind?

Is there a story you want to engage with - not necessarily the one the artist intended?

Does the painting as a whole or in part connect with your life in any way?

Talk to God about your responses or reactions and listen to his response.

You might like to try *visio divina* with the image of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple on the next page. It's by Nicholas Mynheer, a contemporary British glass artist, painter and sculptor.

With my love and prayers

Camilla



*Presentation of Christ in the Temple by Nicholas Mynheer (2013).*

*Oil paint and gold leaf on handmade paper.*

As I finished writing this 'Thought for the Week', a letter to the nation from both Archbishops was circulated calling on us all to reflect and remember the more than 100,000 people in the UK who now have died as a result of Covid-19 together with those who know and love them. The Archbishops also urge us to continue to support each other by following the guidelines and reaching out to each other in practical ways. The letter is attached to this mailing..

You might like to use the following prayer which is also being circulated:

*Gracious God,  
as we remember before you the thousands who have died,  
surround us and all who mourn with your strong compassion.  
Be gentle with us in our grief,  
protect us from despair,  
and give us grace to persevere  
and face the future with hope  
in Jesus Christ our risen Lord.  
Amen.*

Camilla