

ST ANDREW'S CHURCH GRAFHAM

'THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK'

3rd February 2021



I think almost everybody loves snowdrops - whether it's one or two in the garden or carpets of them as in this picture of Walsingham Abbey in Norfolk. Several gardens, such as Painswick Rococo Garden in Gloucestershire or Benington Lordship in Hertfordshire hold special 'snowdrop weekends' which in normal years attract huge numbers of visitors. The RHS website says that snowdrops provide 'welcome assurance that the brighter days of spring are on the way'.

Stories and legends about snowdrops abound and they have a wide variety of country names. 'Fair Maid of February' and 'Candlemas Bell' refer to the time of flowering but also the religious symbolism bestowed on this simple flower. Other names, such as 'Mary's taper' or 'Mary's festival of candles' make more explicit the link with Mary, the mother of Jesus. Another name for Candlemas in addition to the feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple is that of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Mary's purity is represented by the simplicity and colour of the flower and many of the earliest colonies of snowdrops occur near churches. One of the French names 'perce-neige' may be a reminder of the sword which Simeon said would pierce Mary's heart (Luke 2:35). People often say how 'brave' snowdrops are, pushing through all the odds and Mary offers us a model of determination as well as faithfulness and hope.

Kate McIlhagga's poem 'A green heart' expresses this sense of hope. Like the feast of Candlemas itself and Simeon's words it offers a bridge between Christmas and Easter. I'll leave you to make your own associations.

Into a dark world
a snowdrop comes,
a benison*
of hope and peace,
carrying with it a green heart,
symbol of God's renewing love.

Come to inhabit our darkness
Lord Christ,
for dark and light
are alike to you.



May nature's white candles of hope
remind us of your birth
and light our journey
through Lent and beyond.

(from The Green Heart of the Snowdrop published by Wild Goose Publications)

* benison means 'blessing'.

Possibly today you might like to go outside and spend time looking at a single snowdrop. Maybe go out again as it begins to get dark - I was amazed the other evening how the white of our snowdrops almost shone like candles in the twilight. As you look at your snowdrop, perhaps reflect on God's love and its renewing power. May this simple flower be a sign of hope for you especially in our present dark times.

With my love and prayers

Camilla

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