

ST GUTHLAC'S COMMUNITY NEWS



Parish Church of St Guthlac
Knighton, Leicester LE2 3LF

<http://www.stguthlac-knighton.co.uk/>

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Churchwardens:
David Hunt
Tina Jarvis

Sunday 20 November 2016 Matins

WELCOME TO ANY OF YOU VISITING US FOR THE FIRST TIME!

Please announce yourself to one of our welcomers and sign in the welcome book so that we get to know you by name! Also, please introduce yourself to Revd Richard or one of the Churchwardens. St Guthlac's is YOUR local church. We feel part of the local community and we hope that you will feel part of the church community. **We have a welcome sheet:** please ask for one if it is not handed to you on arrival.

Newsletter No 227

FORTHCOMING SERVICES AND MEETINGS

Wednesday 23 Nov., 7.30 pm	Worship committee meeting
Wednesday 23 Nov., 7.30 pm	NO CHOIR PRACTICE
Thursday 24 Nov., 9.30 am	Holy Communion
Thursday 24 Nov., 6.45 pm-8pm	Knighton Players Rehearsal
Friday 25 Nov., 7.30pm	Choir practice at St. Mary's
Sunday 27 Nov., 10.30 am	Communion for All
Sunday 27 Nov., 6.30pm	Advent Evensong at St. Mary's

PRAYERS FOR THE FAITHFUL We have been asked to keep **Liz Vickers, Darryl Varley, Bob Newell, Ann Spring, Dorothy Wollaston, Derek Atkinson, Bill & Ann Ibbs and Saty French** in our prayers. For other prayer requests, please speak to the Revd Richard.

THE REVD RICHARD IS INDISPOSED THIS WEEK. CANON JOHANNES HAS KINDLY SUPPLIED THE TEXT FROM HIS SERMON ON REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY, WHICH APPEARS HERE IN ABRIDGED FORM

Lots of people during World War II asked themselves how to remain decent human beings in spite of what they had to experience and what they had to do. This is a paramount question in all life and particularly in war and conflict. One of the more fascinating people who thought theologically about this is the Lutheran minister Dietrich Bonhoeffer who was hanged in Ploetzensee Concentration Camp in 1945 near Berlin. His basic question was how can you possibly remain good if everything around you becomes chaotic and far too complicated to understand?

He started with the basic commandment that thou shalt not lie. It's in the Bible, if you lie, you sin. Bonhoeffer asked his students the question: what do you do if you know your dad is a social democrat and prints posters against Hitler with his friends. One night the secret police comes and questions you. What is the moral thing to do? Remember: 'Thou shalt not bear false witness!' Bonhoeffer gives a pretty obvious answer: the moral path of integrity in this case is that you lie for all you're worth, you lie like you never lied in your entire life, with as much conviction as you can muster.

So far everybody would probably agree. But Bonhoeffer goes one extremely important step further: he says the commandment 'Thou shalt not bear false witness' is not abolished by the outward circumstances you find yourself in. The boy has just committed the sin of lying. The reasons were compelling and it was morally necessary to lie, but nevertheless, it remains a sin to lie.

With this rather simple example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer tries to show that moral people occasionally cannot do anything else but doing immoral things and they have to carry the guilt for this.

Let me tell you another story which happened in 2003 in Germany. This is entirely true. A man in his 20s had abducted a child and tried to extort a ransom from the parents. In the cause of the handover of the money he made a mistake and got caught. The kidnapper was imprisoned but refused to say anything and the search for the abducted child became more and more frantic.

At this stage two police officers of the Frankfurt police made an extremely difficult decision. They decided to threaten the kidnapper with torture. They got some medical tools and literally showed him the instruments. The threat of torture convinced the

kidnapper to tell the hiding place of the child. Tragically the child was no longer alive: he had killed the child sometime before the money was supposed to be handed over. As you can imagine, the case got huge media coverage. Most interesting is what happened afterwards: the two police officers handed themselves in and pleaded guilty for committing a criminal offence. Threatening somebody with genuine torture is obviously a criminal offence, particularly for questioning police officers. They said in their defence that they made the conscious decision to sacrifice their careers as police officers to find the child, hopefully alive. They were fully aware of what they did and pleaded guilty in court, they were sentenced and are no longer police officers. The case occupies the German courts until today, as the kidnapper made demands for financial compensation for his suffering. He is still in prison and will stay there for a very long time, but the point is that his human rights were clearly violated – rather grossly.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer came to the conclusion that in order to stay a moral human being you sometimes have to make such choices as the police officers made. He was part of a group of people who planned the assassination attempt on Hitler on 20 July 1944. The attempt failed and almost all those involved and lots of those not involved ended up being shot, imprisoned, tortured or as in the case of Bonhoeffer, hanged.

Bonhoeffer as a Christian minister came to the conclusion that in this particular case it was justifiable to kill another human being: to assassinate the Head of State of his own country. He obviously did not come to this conclusion easily.

Fascinating about this is another aspect: the people involved in the assassination attempt on Hitler were very much aware that they became incredibly guilty by doing this. 'Thou shalt not kill!' The necessity of the situation does not take anything away from God's law. If you kill another human being you sin gravely.

Bonhoeffer's answer to this was very clear. We who are in this terrible situation that as decent and faithful Germans we have to try to kill Hitler, must under no circumstances be involved in the building of the new Germany following Hitler's assassination. We do what we have to do in this situation of most dire emergency. Once we have done this we have sinned so gravely that we are tainted and must not be involved in the political life of post-war society.

I find this an extremely impressive position to take. I wonder what would have happened in the African former colonies like Zimbabwe if those who had been involved in the fights and wars against various colonial powers had refused to become members of their new governments like Bonhoeffer and his friends? The story of many African countries in the past 50 years might have looked differently if those with blood on their hands for whatever good reason had refused political influence after their fights were over.

In Germany it did not happen this way. The state cracked down on the political opposition with insane fanaticism after July 1944. Huge numbers of Germans were killed by the regime in the last year of the war.

Following the liberation on May 1945 it took quite a long time for some sort of normality to return. My grandmother did not see her once dashing husband for 3 ½ years and for a long time she did not know whether he was dead or alive. My Dad was born in 1944 and saw his father for the first time in 1947.

You have your own family stories – most likely they will be very different from mine. How can decent people stay decent people when things go all wrong around them?

Sometimes, precisely because they are decent people, they have to do horrible things and become incredibly guilty, the alternative of playing along or doing nothing might be even more horrible. This does not deny that some people do just dreadful things with no moral justification. But often good people do bad things, often for very good reasons.

Today we remember the victims of all wars and conflicts and it is special for me to do this together with you. My granddad has been dead for 20 years and there is nobody alive in my family who lived during the war, but all Germans are aware that our history brings with it a responsibility to build a better future.

Thank you for welcoming me to your church.

<http://leicestercathedral.org/about-us/meet-the-team/cathedral-clergy/>

MOTHERS UNION NOVEMBER MEETING Jean Gabbar is going to speak about "Wives in Syria". Friends and visitors are more than welcome in the Parish Centre Lounge, at 2.15 p.m. on **Tuesday, 22nd November**.

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR AT ST MARY'S Sat 26th November 11am-3pm

CONCERT TO CELEBRATE THE MINISTRY OF CANON GLYNN RICHERBY, Vicar of St James the Greater for the last 23 years, on **Sat 26 November**. See notice at back of church for more details.

CHRISTMAS HAMPER RAFFLE Items need to be brought to church by 27th November please. Thank you.

ADVENT REFLECTIONS: TUESDAYS IN ADVENT 6:30 pm in church.

Starting on **29 November**, reflecting on the meaning of the Advent through readings, prayers and reflections, lasting no more than 45 minutes.

ST GUTHLAC'S CHRISTMAS FAYRE Sat 3rd Dec 10pm-1pm. We are collecting: Items for the tombola; Homemade preserves and pickles; Handicrafts; Cakes will be very welcome on the day.

PLEASE SIGN THE LIST IN THE WELCOME AREA IF YOU ARE ABLE TO HELP IN ANY WAY ON 2ND OR 3RD DECEMBER. THANK YOU.

MAKE YOUR CHRISTMAS GREETINGS GO FURTHER. The PCC would like to suggest that, as in previous years, members of the congregation make a donation to Bishop Christopher's Malawi charity instead of exchanging Christmas cards with one another. **A large card for everyone to sign will be in the welcome area from early December together with a box for donations.** Thank you.

CHRISTINGLE COLLECTING CANDLES These are now available at the back of church for you to take home and fill in aid of the Children's Society. The Christingle service will take place in church on Sunday December 11th at 5pm.

FOR THE NEWSLETTER Please send material to be included in the next newsletter to administrator@stguthlac-knighton.co.uk