

## St. Lawrence/Bedmond 17.03.19 Adoration

“J’adore Carte d’or.”

“Oh, my dear, I just adore that hat.”

“Did you see little Tommy in his suit at the wedding – wasn’t he just adorable!”

“Don’t you just adore lying in a hot bath with a glass of something, some expensive chocolate and good music playing in the background?”

Well yes, quite possibly, sounds great, but what I’m trying to suggest to you is that the word ‘adore’ is probably one of the most widely misused words in the English language, possibly second only to the word ‘love’.

In our series of sermons on prayer, the first of the ‘Acts’ of prayer is the A for Adoration. So I thought I’d begin by giving you some definitions of the word.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary definition of the word ‘adore’ is “to regard with honour and deep affection; to worship as divine; to love and respect deeply.”

The Catechism in the Book of Common Prayer, a kind of teaching manual for new recruits to the Christian Faith, says “Adoration is the lifting up of the heart and mind to God asking nothing but to enjoy God’s presence.”

An episcopal monk said that adoration is closely related to other forms of prayer – confession, thanksgiving, supplication – but with fewer words!

So how can we actually express ‘adoration’, especially bearing in mind that episcopal monk’s admonition.

Perhaps he has a point. Perhaps words are not the best way to adore God. I think of that story in our Gospel reading. A woman with that deep affection and profound respect which is what adoration is all about tries to express her adoration by anointing the body of Jesus with expensive aromatic oil. She is criticised for her extravagance, but Jesus tells her critics that she has done something beautiful for him.

He also reminds them that they won’t always have him with them, but they will always have the poor. Is there a pointer here perhaps, that our best way of showing our adoration of God in Christ is to do something beautiful for someone in need, some equivalent to the poor whom we will always have with us? Is there a smile on God’s face as we put something in the food bank boxes, or spend some time with a

lonely person, or ease someone's passage from life to death, soothing their discomfort and pain and calming their fear? Doing something beautiful for God might, perhaps, be a way without words of expressing our adoration.

Words, though, spoken or unspoken are essential ingredients of our prayer life.

The pattern prayer which Jesus taught us, the Lord's prayer, begins with adoration - 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.'

The word 'name' means there not just a word by which someone is known, Allah, Jehovah, Vishnu, God, but the character, the very essence or being of that person. To speak or act in God's name is to speak or act in line with, in accordance with, the very character, the very 'being' of God. That's a fearful responsibility to take on. No-one should ever presume to speak in God's name without having gone to a great deal of trouble to try to know and to understand the character and nature of God, especially as he has revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ. Even then, God's name is never something to be taken lightly.

To hallow something is to treat it as sacred and ultimate; to make something the supreme, the all-important value in life, the ultimate concern. 'Hallowed be your name' is a very good way of expressing a prayer of adoration. I recommend it for daily use.

How else can we use words to adore God? Well, after what I said earlier, I hesitate to speak in the name of God, but it does seem to me that God does not really care about eloquence, only sincerity of heart. Just sitting quietly, on your own or in company with fellow-minded people, even those of different faith or outlook and, as it were, opening up your heart and mind, verbally or without comment, just as you might to someone in your life whom you love and 'adore', that's adoration.

Other people's words, though, often put so well precisely what we would have liked to say if only we had that kind of poetic eloquence. Those words we heard from the book of Chronicles – and which we will probably hear again later in this Service – "Yours, Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the splendour and the majesty; for everything in heaven and on earth is yours" – those are eloquent words of adoration. Sadly, we no longer say them together as we used to in the days when we followed the order of service in the ASB (Alternative Service Book) and are only encouraged to join in the next few words, reminding us yet again not to think of ourselves as having any merit "all things come from you, and of your own do we give you". Any of you who still have contact with anyone linked with the Liturgical Commission might consider asking them to consider, in their next revision, restoring those great words to corporate expression!

Then there are the Psalms. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name.” - Psalm 103. “Praise God in his holiness, praise him in his mighty firmament – let everything that breathes praise the Lord!” – Psalm 150. Look through the Psalms, all 150 of them. Pick out some of their words of adoration. You’ll find lots of other sentiments, many of which you will, I hope, not wish to be identified with, but there are some beautiful words of adoration liberally sprinkled among them.

And what about those words from that extraordinary book in the New Testament, Revelation – “Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might – to the One seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might for ever and ever!” That’s adoration.

And then there are hymns - sheer poetry, written in such a way that those with a gift for verse and rhythm find their words set as hymns by those with a gift for music.

“O for a thousand tongues to sing my dear Redeemer’s praise”;

“Be still, for the Presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here”;

“Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes.”

and, of course,

“O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder  
consider all the works thy hands have made;  
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder,  
thy power throughout the universe displayed;  
then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee –  
how great thou art, how great thou art.”

And when that Kingdom of God we all pray for actually does come and God’s name really is hallowed throughout eternity –

“Then I shall bow in humble adoration,  
and there proclaim – ‘my God, how great thou art’”

Amen to that.

**Brian Hibberd**