

Church @ Home 19 June 2022

Reflection on St Alban

Next Wednesday, the church remembers St Alban, the first Christian martyr. Because we always celebrate with fanfare and trumpet our patron St John the Baptist only two days later, we often overlook St Alban who played such an important part in the story of Christianity in this country and especially as we are so near to the cathedral dedicated to him. So a few words about St Alban taken from the website of the Cathedral.

“Alban lived in the early third century in the Roman city of Verulamium, just down the hill from where the Cathedral stands today. One day he gave shelter to a stranger fleeing from persecution. This stranger was a Christian priest, now known as Amphibalus. While sheltering the priest, Alban was inspired by how important faith was to the priest and asked to be taught more about Christianity.

It was not long until the Roman authorities caught up with Amphibalus. However, Alban’s new-found faith would not allow him to let the authorities arrest the priest. Instead, Alban exchanged clothes with Amphibalus and was arrested, allowing the priest to escape.

Alban refused to renounce his beliefs and the magistrate ordered that he should receive the punishment intended for the escaped priest. Upon this ruling, Alban was led out of Verulamium and up the hillside where he was beheaded.

Alban is honoured as Britain’s first saint, and his grave on this hillside quickly became a place of pilgrimage. This story of an ordinary man, doing an extraordinary thing has endured and continues to inspire to this day.”

How can we learn from St Alban?

We will never have to give our life for our faith but we may sometimes have to be a bit courageous. We may need to stand up for what we believe and not be afraid to speak out as a Christian when we think that is right. Who knows who we may influence when we share our faith, perhaps in small and modest ways but that is what we are called to do – to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ even though sometimes, it may be uncomfortable.

Day by day we can witness to that faith in the way that we lead our lives, by showing care and concern for our neighbours, by using and sharing the gifts that God has given us wisely and for his glory and by being faithful and responsible stewards of God’s wonderful creation.

We can welcome the stranger, just as Alban did. Perhaps that may mean welcoming the refugee and the asylum seeker and those who might not have much in common with us. Undoubtedly, we need to be more hospitable to those who may be desperate for a warm welcome and a friendly smile.

St Alban was a Christian for a matter of days before his life was taken from him and yet his influence lives for ever. Let us give thanks for his life and for his witness, for his courage in speaking out for his faith and for taking in the stranger. Let us pray that we may, in some small ways, follow his example.

David Nye