

St Edmundsbury Cathedral



materials and resources for a quiet day at home
accompanying online audio resources
compiled by Revd Sarah Geileskey Summer 2020

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These are indicative times to help you structure your quiet day. If others are following this day with you from different locations, do try to follow the suggested timings so that you are effectively gathering together at the same time to hear the reflections and to pray.

10.00 am	Welcome	Page	3
10.05 am	Preparation	Pages	4-5
10.30 am	Opening worship	Pages	6-9
11.00 am	Sanctuary - a place	Pages	10-13 & 24-25
11.45 am	Sanctuary - a people	Pages	14-15 & 26-27
12.30 pm	Prayer & Lunch	Pages	16-17
1.30 pm	Sanctuary - a heart	Pages	18-19 & 28-29
2.15 pm	Closing worship	Pages	20-23
	Transcripts	Pages	24-29

There are lots of resources and ideas in this booklet. You might find them helpful at different times throughout the day - the various poems and prayers might be useful at any point today, or in the days that follow this quiet time.

You can listen to the reflections online or download audio files by clicking on 'Learning' and 'Quiet Days' at www.stedscathedral.org. If you do not have access to the internet, written transcripts for each of the reflections begin on page 24.



sanctus... meaning holy

...ary suffix meaning receptacle or place

sanctu+ary = holy place or sacred space

If we are in search of sanctuary, the latin roots of the word tell us what we are searching for: *sanctus* the latin, meaning holy... and the suffix *-ary* a receptacle or place. Thus sanctuary becomes a holy place, a sacred space. Today, in your own home, I hope that you will discover a holy place, a sacred space, a Godly dwelling place.

May you experience welcome and hospitality.
May this day be for you a refuge,
a place of meeting, a shelter. Sanctuary.

Please resist the temptation to flick through the rest of this accompanying booklet!
Instead, don't rush! Take it slowly and gently allow the day to unfold one step at a time.

The programme opposite should be enough to give you a flavour of the path ahead. If you are spending this day with others, please lend one another your voices, taking it in turns to lead prayers or to read aloud any poetry, scriptures or reflections. If you are spending the day alone, speak

the words aloud! Yes, it might feel odd, but it's not as though anyone other than God will see or hear you! As with many ancient stories and texts, reflections are at their most profound when they are received in a variety of different ways: seen, read and heard, yes, but also chewed over, ingested and slept on!



I hope this time brings blessing and peace. Do let me know how you get on.

Revd Sarah Geileskey
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.....
 For we are the temple of
 the living God; as God
 said, "I will live in them and
 walk among them, and I
 will be their God, and they
 shall be my people."

[2 Cor 6:16]

Firstly, you will need: a physical space to help you find sanctuary. A cosy chair, with a cushion perhaps... a footstool and a comforting lap blanket. Maybe a kneeler or prayer stool, if you like to kneel to pray. In front of you, or to one side, but certainly in your eyeline, an arrangement of flowers or something from nature.



Place into this space a candle or a favourite peaceful image or icon. Memories... photographs of precious places or faces: moments where you have encountered highs and lows. An order of service for a funeral, or a marriage. Letters or postcards from a friend. A small gift, a token of love and friendship. Pebbles or a cross to



hold. A scallop shell: pilgrim's symbol of the one who follows the way. Lay open a bible at your favourite passage, a book at your favourite page or hymn... rediscover a precious poem. If you're not sure what to choose, we'll be using Psalm 84 later.



less is more

Do not be anxious about this space: enjoy the time of preparation and certainly do not try all of these suggestions at once!

You can always try something different on another occasion.

Place within your reach a notebook or sketchbook and pen, perhaps some scraps of paper to scribble notes and thoughts - collect them in a jar or decorative box throughout the day or hang them on a 'prayer tree': a simple plant or a few sticks arranged from the garden. One day you might revisit the thoughts and prayers that arise from today. Finally, consider finding some relaxing music that you could listen to as the day unfolds. You might even find yourself singing a favourite song or hymn.

Secondly, whenever you see the 'play' button you can use a device to access the accompanying audio resources on the 'Learning' section of the St Edmundsbury Cathedral website: www.stedscathedral.org. A computer or laptop, tablet or smartphone should work well enough but do locate the resources now and test them if you intend to use them. If it's difficult to find them or you prefer not to use them, everything you need is also found in this booklet.



Thirdly, you will need sustenance! Prepare as though you are ready to receive guests, offer yourself a generous helping of hospitality! Cool drinks prepared in advance on a warm day. A tray of coffee and biscuits set, ready for a mid-morning interlude. A light lunch set out in the kitchen ready to be served. Tea and cake for this afternoon. If you have chosen to fast today: ensure a supply of water. Whether famine or feast, prepare well and take care of yourself.



All set? So we begin.

*turn off calls, emails, social media
switch on silence*

Opening worship



10.30 - 11.00 am

Before we begin, sit quietly in the space you have prepared, listen to a piece of

reflective music or light a candle.

Leader
All The world belongs to God,
the earth and all its people.
Leader
All How good it is, how wonderful,
to live together in unity.
Leader
All Love and faith come together,
justice and peace join hands.
Leader
All If Christ's disciples keep silent
the earth would shout aloud.
Leader
All How good it is, how wonderful,
to live together in unity.
Leader
All Open our lips, O God,
and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Leader
O God our Creator
your kindness has brought us the gift of this day.

A minute's silence

By your love
celebrated in your Word,
seen in your Son,
brought near by your Spirit,

www.stedscathedral.org

You will find an accompanying audio file online
in the Learning section of St Edmundsbury
Cathedral's website.

take from us what we need to carry no longer
so that today we may be free again
to choose to serve you
and to be served by one another.

A minute's silence

All **We believe that God forgives us
and sets us free;
at the day's beginning
we commit ourselves
to following where Christ calls:
to loving ourselves
and to loving one another.**

**With the whole church we affirm
that we are made in God's image,
befriended by Christ and
empowered by the Spirit.
That God's goodness at the heart of
humanity is planted more deeply
than all that is wrong.
We celebrate the miracle and wonder of life
and the unfolding purposes of God
forever at work in us and in the world.**

one voice?

If yours is the only voice in the room, speak aloud all of
these words. Imagine the different voices as you read the
leader's words and the words in bold. You might picture
someone else in your mind as leader or follower.

Psalm 84 as interpreted by Leslie F. Brandt is read aloud

O God, the centre of your will is truly the place of fulfillment.
I long continuously for the peace and security of walking with You.
Therein lies the sole purpose and meaning for my life.

Even the birds of the air and the animals that inhabit land and sea abide within Your orbit and plan for them. Thus it is that people who follow Your course for them are forever blessed.

How enriched are those who draw their power from You, whose hearts are focussed on You! Even as they wend their way through this fractured world, they become springs of healing, reservoirs of strength to the sick, weak and empty lives they touch around them.

O Lord, look with loving mercy upon those who have placed their lives in Your hands. Just one day in the centre of Your will is incomparably better than a thousand spent in the pursuit of self-centred aims and objectives. It is more fulfilling to be an underpaid clerk in the service of my God than to be the owner and director of some huge, wealthy enterprise.

O God, nothing that is truly good and worthwhile is withheld from those who walk within Your will. The person who trusts you is very rich indeed.

whose voice?

We might all imagine the voice of God leading us, calling us. We might remember we are all followers.
Who are we following? How does this change us?



Leader

O Christ, you are within each of us.
It is our own inner being you renew.
We are your temple not made with hands.
We are your body.
If every wall should crumble and every church decay,
we are your habitation.
Nearer are you than breathing, closer than hands and feet.
Ours are the eyes with which you mysteriously
look out with compassion on the world.
We thank you for this space, for your directing of us,
your redeeming of us, and your dwelling with and in us.
Open our hearts and lead us into that mysterious silence
where your love is revealed to all who call.

Amen.

A minute's silence

Lord, set your blessing on us as we begin this day together.
Confirm us in the truth by which we rightly live;
confront us with the truth by which we wrongly turn.
We ask not for what we want,
but for what you know we need,
as we offer this day and ourselves for you and to you,
through Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

Amen.

Leader
All

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Sanctuary - a place

Reflection resources 1: the transcript of the reflection is found on pages 24-25



11.00 - 11.45 am

It's time to hear or to read the first reflection.
Once you have done this, how might you respond?

Draw a 'plan' of your life; include your home, the places you like to visit, the places you go to regularly. Special places you have spent time in during your life. It might look a bit like this one - or if you don't or won't draw, it might look like a list of words!



Once you have done this, ask yourself the following questions as you think about each place in turn:

1. Where do I feel closest to God? Why is this?
2. Where do I feel furthest from God? Why might this be?
How could this change?

sanctuary

refuge or safety from pursuit, persecution or other danger
a place in which to flourish
the holy of holies
the part of the chancel of a church containing the high altar

Where can I go from your spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast."

[Psalm 139:7-10]

3. What are the blessings of being in this place?
4. What are the challenges of being in this place?
Try looking at the challenges from God's perspective...

Now, imagine yourself journeying from place to place.

Who is walking the path with you?
Are you looking forward to arriving?
Who will be there to greet you?
How is it when you arrive?
How might others feel about being in this place? How might others feel about you being in this place?



Where do you find sanctuary?

work it out write it down walk it off

Write down your thoughts to all of these questions... doodle on the 'plan' your joys, frustrations, hopes, fears... there is no 'right' answer!

In the silence what do you hear?

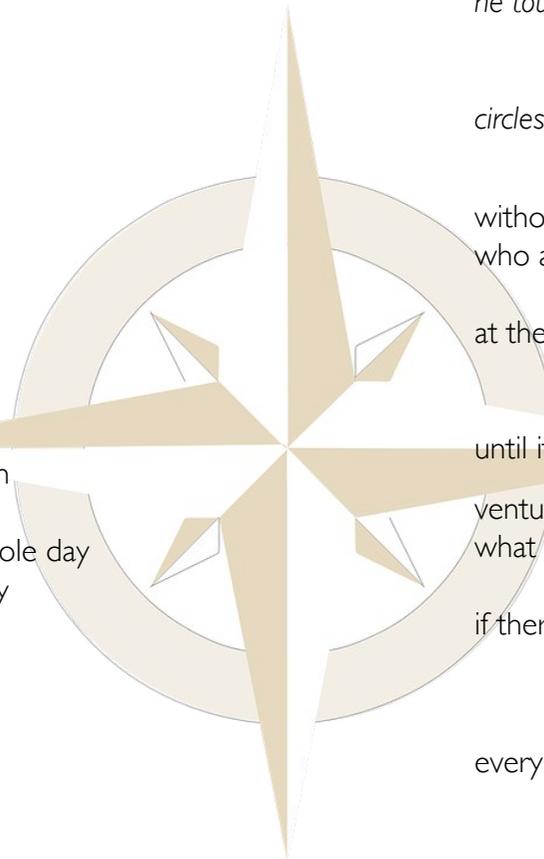
[how much of the map]

by Francine Sterle (STER-lee)

how much of the map
could be labeled
terra incognita

how much unknown invisible to others
how much of myself could I shake off
abandon those undiscovered places
[I barely know] exist

though the map is not the territory
how I am drawn to leave behind the pattern
for the path for a minute
an hour for one whole day
I'd be like a Wintu describing the body
using cardinal directions



he touches me on the west arm

the river is to the east
when we return his east arm
circles around me and the river
stays to the west

without that landscape to connect to
who am I apart from what surrounds me

at the edge of the unknown dirt
unceasingly does my thinking
in bonam/malem partem
until it is a smooth stone in my mouth

venturing forward doubling back
what I see depends on where I am

if there be death
if the dark night of the soul
O, I know what is waiting

every threshold is sacred
the eternal allure
of what comes next

poetry

What do you make of this poem?

Can you see it meandering through different places in life...
places and experiences shaping you, calling you in a particular
direction? Spaces reflecting pauses where life seems to standstill?

what next?

You've mapped the places in your life... what places or experiences
of significance might lie ahead? Ask yourself where God will be in
those places. Where do you foresee blessing?
How might you prepare for challenge?

Sanctuary - a people

Reflection resources 2: the transcript of the reflection is found on pages 26-27



11.45 am - 12.30 pm

It's time to hear or to read the second reflection.
Once you have done this, how might you respond?



You have been invited to think about the faces: faces you have sifted through - those you settle comfortably with and those which you might discard more easily. Revisit that challenge - especially the faces of people you find more difficult. Ponder why this is.

what now?

At a loose end? Go back and read Psalm 84 from our opening worship. Think about people's faces - those you know. Those you love, those you struggle with, those you are indifferent to. How do you respond to them knowing that Psalm 84 is true for both them and for you?

.....
Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me" [Matthew 25:34-36]
.....

Communities and people working to provide sanctuary to others can find it helpful to score themselves - not as a way of comparing themselves with others or to give themselves cause to berate others... rather, as a starting point - from there you will be able to see and give thanks for growth and change as you as you become a people of sanctuary.

My community:

- /10 allows others to 'be'
- /10 is compassionate and forgiving towards others
- /10 is non-judgmental towards others
- /10 is patient, unhurried, calm
- /10 listens to others
- /10 respects difference
- /10 is impartial – holds no agenda
- /10 trusts in others' capacity to recover, to learn and grow
- /10 assumes others have done their best
- /10 seeks not to blame others
- /10 promotes safeguarding and safe environments for the vulnerable

Try scoring different groups: your household, your wider family, your neighbourhood, your church, various community groups around you. How would you score them? How do you improve the score?

Know too that groups are made up of individuals.
Be honest - try scoring yourself against this list!
Put your name at the start of each statement.
We will no doubt all fall short...
but how do we change our behaviours and attitudes?

It is soon time to eat. God is with us. Always.
But perhaps especially when we gather at the table to eat.

Leader Lord, who wished to stay present among us through
Your Holy Eucharist, the mystery of your love,
we unite ourselves to all those who come to adore You
in spirit and in truth.

Praying day and night,
we would like to offer our presence to Your Presence.
Allow us to listen to You in silence,
as You wish to reveal Yourself to us
in the secret of our hearts.
Help us to abandon ourselves to You:
may the praise and supplication,
and the confident gift of our lives
raise up from our hearts.

May Your Sacred Heart, source of all mercy,
establish our hearts in peace and inner joy.
May it strengthen our faith,
renew our love and sustain our hope.

All Amen.



*'The Sanctuary Prayer'
The Basilica of the Sacré Coeur, Montmartre, Paris*

We we share together the words of The Lord's Prayer.

**All Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

As you enjoy your lunch, give thanks for your 'daily bread': for spiritual
and physical nourishment. For the unseen guest at the table with you.
If you are eating in silence you are in the company of many others.

We begin again at 1.30 pm.

Grace

For food and faith we give thanks.

Amen



Sanctuary - a heart

Reflection resources 3: the transcript of the reflection is found on pages 28-29



1.30 - 2.15 pm

It's time to hear or to read the final reflection.
Once you have done this, how might you respond?

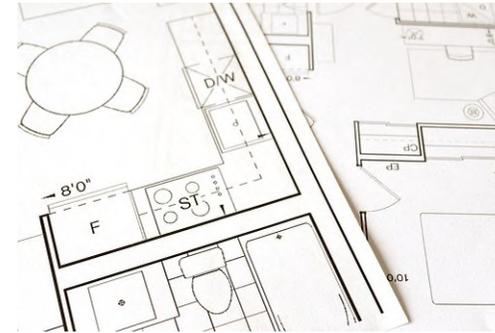
Exercising the spiritual heart muscles takes daily practice.
Having thought about places of sanctuary and people of sanctuary -
how might we care from day to day for the sanctuary of our hearts.

Mary Oliver's poem entitled 'Prayer' might help us to consider how the
simplest of things might lead us to ponder the things of every day life in
our sanctuary of our hearts, listen for wisdom, hope and peace.

**It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones; just
pay attention, then patch**

**a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest by the doorway**

**into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak**



My dwelling place shall
with with them; and I will
be their God and they
shall be my people"

[Ezekiel 37.27]

Consider now your home. This is where you have spent your quiet day.
I wonder how far you have ventured away from the sanctuary space you
created this morning?

I wonder if you might consider a permanent place of retreat in your
home. A place to treasure in your heart and in God's company the
things of life.

Go on a journey around your home... enter each room, each place in
which you ordinarily dwell from day to day. Notice how God is in that
space. If you have a garden or outdoor space, explore there too... how
do you connect each space in your home to God? As you move from
one place to the next, passing through each threshold, allow the
ordinary things you see to lead you to contemplate the things of God.

Signposts

What might you find in each room that will draw your heart and
mind to an awareness of God's presence with you in the
ordinariness of everyday life? Perhaps it would help to leave
something in each room today... when your eyes fall on it
tomorrow, perhaps you will again find a moment of 'Sanctuary'.

Closing worship



2.15 pm

Before we begin, sit quietly in the place you have prepared, listen to a piece of

reflective music or light a candle.

Hymn

**God is our strength and refuge,
our present help in trouble,
and we therefore will not fear,
though the earth should change!
Though mountains shake and tremble,
though swirling floods are raging,
God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore!**

**There is a flowing river
within God's holy city;
God is in the midst of her
she shall not be moved!
God's help is swiftly given,
thrones vanish at God's presence
God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore!**

**Come, see the works of our maker
learn of his deeds all-powerful
wars will cease across the world
when God shatters the spear!
Be still and know your creator,
uplift God in the nations
God the Lord of hosts is with us evermore!**

words: Richard Bewes b. 1934
tune: Dambusters

Sing!

The audio file includes a simple piano accompaniment for you to sing along to. Or simply enjoy singing acapella!

Leader
All
Leader
All
Leader
All
Leader
All
Leader
All

Love and faith come together,
to live together in unity.

Love and faith come together,
justice and peace join hands.

If Christ's disciples keep silent
the earth would shout aloud.

How good it is, how wonderful,
to live together in unity.

Open our lips, O God,
and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Leader
O God our Creator
your kindness has brought us the gift of this day.

A minute's silence

We thank you for the gift of sanctuary,
for the company we have enjoyed,
for what we have learned
about ourselves,
about other people
and about You.

A minute's silence



All **Saviour,**
teach me the silence of humility,
the silence of wisdom,
the silence of love,
the silence of perfection,
the silence that speaks without words,
the silence of faith.
Lord, teach me to quieten my own mind,
that I may listen to the gentle movement
of the Holy Spirit within me
and sense the depths which are of God.
Amen

Leader O Christ, you are within each of us.
All **It is our own inner being you have renewed.**

Leader We are your temple not made with hands.

All **We are your body.**

Leader If every wall should crumble and every church decay,
we are your habitation.

All **Nearer are you than breathing,**
closer than hands and feet.



Leader Ours are the eyes with which you mysteriously
look out with compassion on the world.

All **We thank you for this space,**
for your directing of us.

Leader For your redeeming of us, and your dwelling with and in us.

All **As we follow you into the world,**
open our hearts
that we might reveal your love to all who call.
Amen.

A minute's silence

Lord, set your blessing on us as we end this day together.
May freedom, love and life flow into both our
conscious and hidden life bringing your peace,
your healing and your Word.

As we offer this day, our tomorrows
and ourselves for you and to you,
may your blessing, the blessing of God,
sustainer, creator and redeemer,
dwell in our hearts and minds
every moment of every day for evermore.

Amen.



This is a transcript of the audio file available in the 'Learning' section of St Edmundsbury Cathedral's website: www.stedscathedral.org

Hello. I'm Sarah, Curate at St Edmundsbury Cathedral and this is the first reflection in a series of three, as we spend today thinking about the idea of 'Sanctuary'. Over the next few minutes our first reflection will explore the idea of sanctuary as a place.

Think for a moment about a favourite story: picture it in your mind's eye... it might be from a fiction book, a film or a TV programme... one of the soaps even! I expect that your story is set in a place, a particular location or series of locations, in a particular context...

If you were asked to tell the story of your life... I think it's almost impossible without including a sense of place. Where you have lived. Where you were born. The places you have visited.

The same seems true of our faith story... from the very earliest of days we hear about particular places... God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden. We hear about the holy of holies... the inner sanctuary, the place where God dwelt in the Temple. We hear too of Jesus being born in Bethlehem, of regular journeys up to Jerusalem... the promise of a Holy City, a new Jerusalem - the place we might dwell forever in the presence of God. I'm sure you can think of many more examples... stories that tell us about where God is to be found... how we find God in different places. God's presence here on earth, as it is in heaven.

These stories themselves become a place of sanctuary... they bring us hope and consolation.

Sometimes we set out to search for God: and we go to the places where we expect God to be... places where we hope to find sanctuary (maybe we are disappointed when we don't find what we

hoped for). We might try, for example, to find God by choosing to attend a quiet day, or praying in Church... perhaps we go to Church to visit, or perhaps to worship. We might look forward to going on a particular walk, or to the mountains, to a river or the sea. Perhaps these places are the 'thin' places, the places where something of God's presence with us breaks through in a more tangible way than perhaps it does elsewhere. Places where we feel that God is with us. Where heaven and earth become visible simultaneously.

Yet if we consider Psalm 139 wherever we go, to the highest heights or the deepest depths, God is there. There is nowhere to flee from his presence, nowhere we can be without God. So why is it we notice God's presence with us more in some places than in others? Perhaps it's because we set out to look for God... we go to God... to find sanctuary with God... when actually God is with us all the time it's just that we're not great at paying attention to this.... Jonah found God dwelling with him in the belly of a great fish... a place he least expected to encounter the presence of God... just as God was there for Daniel in a lion's den, for Ruth in a foreign land, for the widow with her mites and for Onesimus in a letter.

We search for places of sanctuary with God... when all the time God comes to us... in unexpected ways and in unexpected places - offering us moments of refuge as well as physical places of sanctuary. I wonder if we can practise noticing places of sanctuary in our lives. Not only be physical spaces - perhaps a piece of music or a quiet cup of tea enjoyed in the company of the one who loves us, who sustains us and who gives us life.

Map out the places you spend your time... and notice the places of sanctuary... where you might least expect to find God? Think about how God is already present in those places. And see the moments of sanctuary you experience in life as you journey from place to place.

This is a transcript of the audio file available in the 'Learning' section of St Edmundsbury Cathedral's website: www.stedscathedral.org

Hello again. I wonder how this day is taking your thoughts and prayers on the theme of Sanctuary. If you've still got lots to think about from the first reflection, keep coming back to those thoughts throughout the day. This is the second reflection in a series of three, as we spend today exploring the concept of 'Sanctuary'. This time we'll think a little about sanctuary in relation to people, and what it might mean to be a sanctuary people.

In the first reflection I asked you to think about places. Now, I'd like you to think about faces. Recollect the faces of people in your life. Your community. Were you not spending this quiet day alone, imagine who you might have been spending the day with. Friends or strangers, what do they look like? What are they doing? Where are they? Allow one of them in particular to come into focus, slowly... then slowly notice them. Notice their features, their expressions, their reactions. Go more deeply. Notice all that they are carrying. Their joys, their fears, their burdens, their hopes. Notice God's love for them. Notice the love of God in them.

Do the same for another... someone else's face. What do they look like? What are they doing? Where are they? Notice them, their features, their expressions, their reactions... go more deeply... notice all that they too are carrying... Their joys, their fears, their burdens and their hopes. Notice God's love for them. Notice the love of God in them.

I wonder whose faces have you sifted through? And whose image you have discarded along the way... think for a moment about one of those other faces. Someone who is on the periphery... someone you have to look hard to notice. Are they on the edge of your world? Or perhaps their face that doesn't quite fit your world? Maybe their reactions, their

expressions, their hopes and fears are different. Very different to yours. Maybe there's a conflict?

To be hospitable is to be open to the offer of sanctuary to all people. Not just those whose face fits. Because each face is made in the image of God... in his book, *Here and Now*, Henri Nouwen helpfully says this: "The God who dwells in our inner sanctuary is also the God who dwells in the inner sanctuary of each human being. Intimacy with God and solidarity with all people are two aspects of the indwelling presences of God. These two realities can never be separated." He goes on to say that Solitude serves as a fertile ground from which community grows. "With solitude... we learn to depend on God, who calls us together in love. With solitude we are protected against the harmful effects of mutual suspicions, and our words and actions become more joyful expressions of an already existing trust, rather than a subtle way of asking for proof of trustworthiness. With solitude we can experience each other as different manifestations of a love that transcends all of us."

As a community we continue to create outsiders... and strengthen the insiders. Expecting the stranger to conform to our ways. Perhaps Jesus most subversive activity was to spend time with the outcasts of his day offering sanctuary, company, acceptance and love to those whose faces didn't fit. Yes, we prayerfully give thanks for those in our communities who encourage us and among whom we find comfort and sanctuary – pray that these relationships do not become barriers to including others.

So too, do we prayerfully ask God's wisdom in our silence and solitude today to guide our thoughts and reflections towards those who we might struggle to love as God loves them... yet to whom we are called to offer sanctuary. This is silent, prayerful work that we do when we are apart from one another... in the hope that we grow as people of sanctuary, so we become a community of people that offers sanctuary to all.

This is a transcript of the audio file available in the 'Learning' section of St Edmundbury Cathedral's website: www.stedscathedral.org

Hello again. Welcome back. I wonder where your thoughts are taking you today? We have thought about Sanctuary as a place.... and sanctuary as a people... and now, in this third and final reflection we bring the two together as we think about how Sanctuary is a matter of the heart: that because of an overwhelming love for us, God enters into his creation to create a people and a place for his presence in each of us. The voice of God heard in the book of Ezekiel 37.27 might be familiar to you 'My dwelling place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people'.

Say to yourself... I am God's dwelling place. Tell yourself. Repeat it. I am God's dwelling place. Let me tell you... you are God's dwelling place. I wonder what your response is to that? How you feel about that?

There is a gentle knocking at the door of our hearts... how do we respond? If you open the door, your heart is being made into a dwelling place for God. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow me... [a paraphrase of Ezekiel 26.27]

Just think about your heart... your complicated heart with all its tangles... hope and fears, faith and doubt, honesty and deception, openness and guile: by dwelling with us, God knows our heart in ways we can never know and it is God alone who truly knows the secrets of our hearts. Is that liberating? Or terrifying? A relief that you don't have to carry the burden? Or an invitation to offload the burdens in God's presence. The book of Proverbs tells us, above all else, to guard our hearts, for out of them flow the issues of life' (Proverbs 4:23).

Consider Mary after the angel Gabriel's visit: Mary pondered all these things in her heart: the complicated matters of life... troubling challenges ahead... places she would go... things she might deal with. People she could encounter who might be less than kind to her. Everyday life, that was navigated by pondering these things in her heart... pondering these things in the place where God dwells... seeking the still small voice, the wisdom, the peace that can emerge from the prayerful sanctuary of the heart.

I wonder if you have noticed that you have been building and strengthening your inner sanctuary today?! Perhaps you've made a few notes... maybe you've written or uttered a few prayers for places or people in your life. Perhaps in your mind, through the stillness you've found today you've begun to untangle a knotty problem, or identify a different approach to dealing with a frustration, or considered how a change of attitude might be needed to a situation you're facing, or how you are a sanctuary for others.

As we've firstly reflected on the places in our lives... and then the people... we've been exercising our spiritual heart muscles... allowing God to work in us, to transform us and through us, the lives of those around us. So often we make things complicated. We go to places to find God. We rely on people to help us to see and experience God's presence with us... we set aside quiet days... and we forget that God dwells with us, always, in every moment of every day. In the ordinary-ness of life. If only we remind ourselves to notice.

Spend some time thinking about ways in which you can remind yourself to pay attention to God's dwelling place: a permanent space in your home with flowers, a candle, images or items that encourage you to pray? A prayer when you eat... when you wake... when you lie down to rest. A favourite piece of music. A silent prayer as you put the phone down at the beginning or end of a difficult call. A statue or ornament in the garden to remind you to cultivate an open heart. Spend some time thinking about how you create a sanctuary of the heart in your life.



Source materials with occasional adaptations taken from and inspired by:
'A Wee Worship Book', Wild Goose Publications
Iona Abbey Worship Book
'Psalms Now', Leslie F. Brandt, 1996
'Here and Now', Henri Nouwen, 1994
'What Thread?' Francine Sterle, 2015
'Thirst', Mary Oliver, 2007

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With grateful thanks to Theo Geileskey for the piano accompaniment.*

This resource was first produced for the Great Barton Mothers' Union Quiet Day 2020. Due to take place as a quiet day retreat - the Covid-19 lockdown necessitated a different approach. A community quiet day necessarily dispersed and spent physically distanced at home.

*Materials first compiled by Revd. Sarah Geileskey, Cathedral Curate, June 2020.
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