

Living humbly

Julian Smith *reflects on* Philippians 2:1-13

The Canadian crime writer Louise Penny created the character Armand Gamache, who is as much a philosopher as a detective. Gamache was given "four sentences that lead to wisdom" by his mentor, which he passes on to new colleagues. Gamache has taken these sentences to heart, lives them out and has found them life-changing. They are – "I'm sorry", "I was wrong", "I need help" and "I don't know". Each of them requires humility.

Paul urges the Philippians to follow the example of Christ's humility: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." He tells them to put others before themselves and reminds them that Jesus' humility led to his exaltation. Although Paul's words are uplifting, they offer little practical advice. Gamache's "four sentences" offer us a practical guide to humble living that we can make an active part of our daily lives. To say "I'm sorry" and mean it can enable us to move on and recover. To admit "I was wrong" can free us from pretence and the fear of loss of face. To ask for help is to open one's life to others and the potential for grace. To confess "I don't know" is liberating.

Following Christ's example of humility is demanding not demeaning – it is open and honest, and offers healing to the self and others. 🙏

Lord Jesus, you set us an example of humble obedience and service. Help us not to cling to self but to put others first, that we may do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. Amen.

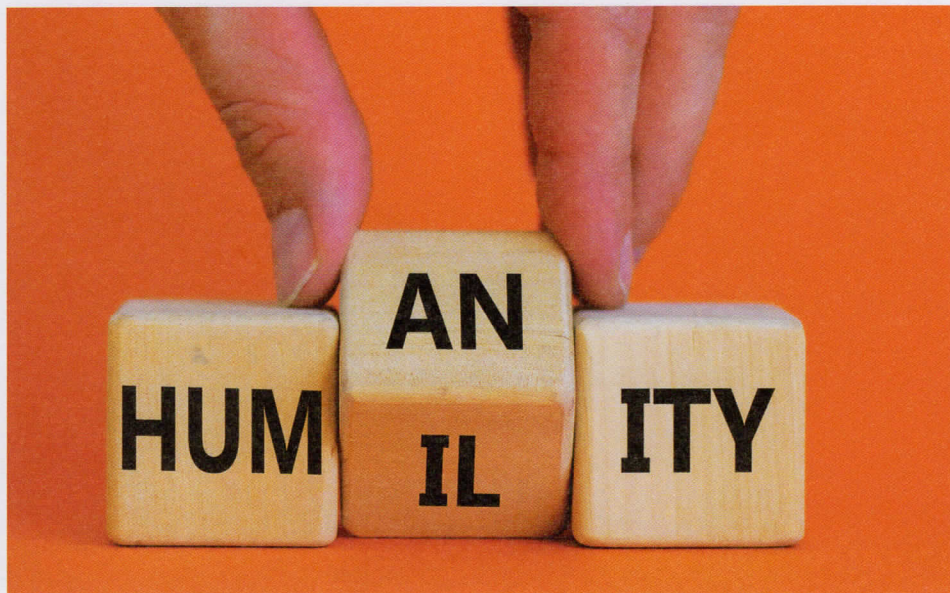
Christian art

by Fr Denis McBride

In the first of an occasional series, Fr Denis looks at some great artworks. He starts with The Marriage of the Virgin, by Raphael of Urbino.

The Marriage of the Virgin is part of an altarpiece created for a church at Citta di Castello, Italy, showing the marriage of the Virgin Mary and St Joseph. In the middle of the portico, above the arch in the front of the temple door, is the artist's signature "Raphael Urbinas" (Raphael from Urbino) and the date "MDIII" (1504).

Thanks to Raphael, we are the privileged spectators of the moment Mary and Joseph exchange wedding rings in front of the high priest. It is a scene of ideal beauty, perfection and harmony. Above all, it is an intimate moment. Unlike the figures in the background, who walk around the colonnaded Temple precinct and the plaza, we are witnessing a moment in history that is at the root of the Christian story. And our presence has not gone unnoticed by one of Mary's attendants and by one of Mary's suitors. Their gaze recognises that we are part of this glorious moment. 🙏



Creation Season

Part 5 – the cry of creation

by Alan Jefferies

St Paul writes (Romans 8:22) that "the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now". The groaning of creation is not difficult to hear – the ice is melting, the air is polluted, species are becoming extinct at an alarmingly rapid rate, communities are displaced by climate change.

The emphasis of Creation Season is on repentance and action. We are invited to listen – not with guilt but with compassion, including self-

compassion. The earth's groan is a prayer that awaits our response. We cannot fix everything, but we can take practical action – in, for example, reducing our own wasteful consumerism, supporting green initiatives and speaking out for climate justice.

Christian hope doesn't deny pain, but it does look for the light of resurrection beyond. As we face the world's groaning, we do so in hope.

www.churchofengland.org/about/environment-and-climate-change/season-creation 🙏

“Some things are too great to come at directly... we may think we have come back to the same spot, but always, if we press on, it is a little higher, a little closer to the truth.”

Malcolm Guite (born 1957), English poet, singer-songwriter and Anglican priest