



## Come and See for Clergy

### Introduction

The diocesan Come and See course this Lent focuses on the invitation to ‘see’ and encounter Jesus in the Eucharist – a beautiful and meaningful invitation which it is our privilege, as priests, to extend to the people of God. As priests, we encounter Jesus in the Eucharist in a distinctive way, as we are called to stand between the people and God, offering to God the gifts and prayers of the people and offering to the people the things of God, made holy by our actions and words. Yet despite this position of potential intimacy and privilege, our experience and encounter can easily be clouded by our more practical concerns as we lead worship. Can it be that, even as we invite others to ‘come and see,’ to touch and taste the gifts of God, Christ invites us to come deeper, to see more clearly, and to meet him more intimately?

These supplementary weekly *Come and See* notes build on the themes of the diocesan course. They pick up on the readings and images chosen, and the reflections shared. And they invite priests in particular to enter into the Eucharist afresh, whether you have been ordained for a year, a decade or half a century, and to encounter our living Lord Jesus who makes all things new.

*Philippa White*

## Week 1: The Servant (who welcomes us)

*Being a servant in the pattern of Jesus*

### Reading

Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow.' Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there.

But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a solitary broom tree. He asked that he might die: 'It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.' Then he lay down under the broom tree and fell asleep. Suddenly an angel touched him and said to him, 'Get up and eat.' He looked, and there at his head was a cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. He ate and drank, and lay down again. The angel of the Lord came a second time, touched him, and said, 'Get up and eat, otherwise the journey will be too much for you.' He got up, and ate and drank; then he went in the strength of that food for forty days and forty nights to Horeb the mount of God.

*1 Kings 19: 1-8*

### Reflection

'Get up and eat,' says the angel, 'otherwise the journey will be too much for you.'

There is something healing about being cared for – about having our needs and wants provided for, without our even having to ask. God hears Elijah's misery and responds, not with judgment but with care – simple, practical, a response to his needs which gently and undramatically gives the despairing Elijah strength and hope. And the angel is a minister of God's care, a messenger not of words but of wordless understanding, comfort and hope. Like the description of deacons in the ordination service, the angel is an 'agent of God's purposes of love.'

As clergy, we spend much of our time telling people to get up and eat – literally and metaphorically, at coffee mornings and lunch clubs, in pastoral visits and post-service conversations, and above all as we invite them to the altar. As we begin this journey of Come and See, let's see that deacon's role – welcoming, serving, offering – in the light of Elijah's angel. When we begin the confession,



share the peace and dismiss the people, when we prepare the altar and offer the bread and the wine, we are like angels: ministers of God's care, messengers of wordless comfort. And we are like Jesus, the Servant King, who calls his disciples friends and washes their feet.

But although called and commissioned, we are neither angels nor Jesus. We are also like Elijah: prone to desolation, needing care. And God offers us the same care that he offers Elijah. Before we feed our people, God feeds us; and when we offer God's love, we do so as God's beloved children.

### **Something for the road**

*The Jacob's Ladder (Denise Levertov, 1923-1997)*

The stairway is not  
a thing of gleaming strands  
a radiant evanescence  
for angels' feet that only glance in their tread, and need not  
touch the stone.

It is of stone.  
A rosy stone that takes  
a glowing tone of softness  
only because behind it the sky is a doubtful, a doubting  
night gray.

A stairway of sharp  
angles, solidly built.  
One sees that the angels must spring  
down from one step to the next, giving a little  
lift of the wings:

and a man climbing  
must scrape his knees, and bring  
the grip of his hands into play. The cut stone  
consoles his groping feet. Wings brush past him.  
The poem ascends.

## Week 2: The Lamb (who redeems us)

*Pointing to Jesus in the pattern of the saints*

### Reading

Jesus said: 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'

*John 10: 11-18*

### Reflection

The imagery of sheep runs through the whole Bible. In the Hebrew Bible, God is the shepherd and his people are sheep; in the New Testament, Jesus too is the shepherd. But – fully human as well as fully God – he is also a sheep, or more specifically a lamb for the sacrifice. John the Baptist identifies him in the first chapter of St John's Gospel: 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' Iconography of John the Baptist often depicts him pointing – to Jesus, or to a lamb. He prepares the way for Jesus and he points to Jesus, and the Jesus to whom he points is the shepherd who is also a sheep, the Saviour who will suffer, the sacrificial lamb.

We may recall those words of John's when we invite people to receive Communion, saying 'Jesus is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Blessed are those who are called to his supper.' At this point of the liturgy, we are invited to hold up the bread and the wine – a remnant of the medieval laypeople's spirituality that valued **seeing** Jesus in the host almost more than receiving Communion, but also a profound gesture of offering. Like John, our ministry is not about ourselves. As we stand at the altar, holding up bread and wine and speaking words like John's, our role is to point people to Jesus; to give

them a glimpse of heaven and a vision of grace; and to share with them the food with which Christ feeds us.

## Something for the road

In this seventeenth-century Italian image of John the Baptist, consider eyes and hands. Who is John looking at and what are his hands doing? Where is your gaze drawn?



## Week 3: The Bread of Life (who feeds us)

*Breaking the bread of Jesus*

### Reading

Jesus said: 'I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live for ever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.'

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live for ever.' He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

*John 6: 48-59*

### Reflection

St John's gospel has no narrative of the Last Supper – but the theme of the eucharist runs through the whole gospel. Jesus is the bread of life; his flesh is true food and his blood is true drink; he is the one who breaks and shares bread and fish, and the one who is himself broken and shared.

When Jesus talks about himself as heavenly bread, he does so by comparing himself to the manna given to the Israelites in the wilderness. Manna appeared like the dew, wholly a gift from God, and any attempt to hoard, guard or monopolise it failed. The bread of life, the body of Jesus, is his gift to us. We are ministers of that gift, not its originators or its gatekeepers. As one of our offertory sentences prays: '*All things come from you, and of your own have we given you.*' It is our privilege to break and share the bread of Christ, his body and blood; and it is our responsibility to remember that although we offer it in worship, and share it among God's people in service, we can do nothing without God's gracious gift.



The Common Worship rubric for Communion tells us that *'The president and people receive communion.'* The Book of Common Prayer is more specific: *'Then shall the Minister first receive the Communion... and then proceed to deliver the same.'* Sometimes it can feel inhospitable to receive Communion first – as if we are claiming a place of honour, or ignoring the convention that the host serves themselves last. But these rubrics make the point that we are not the host. Like the whole congregation, we are guests at God's table, and Jesus wants to feed us too.

### **Something for the road**

*In Persona Christi*, Jay Hulme.

The priest is texting me at 2am.  
The priest is texting me, and he is lonely,  
and he is lovely, and it is dark.  
The priest is texting at 2am  
and remembering when he wasn't a priest,  
remembering when he didn't believe.

The priest is texting me and saying,  
*tomorrow I have to be Jesus, that's*  
*what they say about priests, you know?*  
*They say we stand in for Jesus.*  
*Can you imagine the pressure?*

I imagine him becoming Jesus.  
Imagine him slipping into scarred skin,  
hands curling gently around a chisel,  
around another hand,  
around the edges of the dying.  
I imagine him reaching out and up  
and lifting the death clean out of us.

I imagine that the edges of his  
vestments are lined with dirt,  
from the walk, you know?  
From the journey.



And I imagine him holding himself  
in his own palms, broken now and whole,  
putting himself into himself into himself;  
breaking himself into pieces in front of a crowd.

He tears his body in two,  
saying: these crumbs, they are me,  
and these hands, they are me,  
and these people, they are me,  
and this Spirit, it is me,  
and this God, it is me,  
and this me, I am me.  
I am more me than me  
but not less.

And he holds himself at the altar  
placing himself into others,  
placing himself into others,  
placing himself into himself,  
every piece of himself;  
until there's a moment –  
where he stands in a sea of silence  
and knows it has all been consumed.



## Week 4: The Vine (who offers rest and life)

*Refreshed by the life of Jesus*

### Reading

Jesus said:

‘I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.’

*John 15: 1-11*

### Reflection

Two liquids dominate the Gospels – water and wine, appearing both in the reality of the Gospel narratives and in the symbolic language of Jesus. Water is for baptism or washing, and for Jesus a symbol of new life. Wine is for rejoicing, for sharing, and for Jesus a symbol of the heavenly banquet.

The two are held together in the wedding at Cana, where Jesus turns water into wine as a sign of the abundance of God appearing in human life. As we have seen, John’s gospel does not tell the story of the Last Supper – the echoes of the Eucharist in the wedding at Cana are deliberate, becoming a foretaste of communion. But wine, at the Last Supper, also means the blood of Jesus. When John tells the story of the side of Jesus pierced, and water and blood flowing out, he is also thinking about the water and wine at the wedding at Cana.



In the catholic tradition, a little water is mixed with the wine to be consecrated at Communion. When we do this, we are thinking of these images: the water turned to wine at the wedding at Cana, the water mixed with wine at the Last Supper, the water and blood flowing from the side of Jesus. The traditional prayer that goes with this action brings in another theme: ‘by the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.’ Water mixed with wine: Jesus who is both God and human, the one who could change water into wine, the one whose blood is the only thing that can wash us clean, the one who calls himself the true vine and yet is both vine and vintage. As the vine, we ‘abide’ in him, and as wine, we feed on him – and as both, we are incorporated into his body, supported by his strength, and nourished to bear fruit.

### **Something for the road**

*Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* is a 1971 composition by Gavin Bryars based on a loop of an unknown homeless man singing the chorus of a gospel hymn. Watch it on YouTube:

[25-minute version](#) | [3-minute version](#)

The text is:

‘This one thing I know, for he loves me so: Jesus’ blood never failed me yet.’

Bryars writes: ‘I left the tape copying, with the door open, while I went to have a cup of coffee. When I came back I found the normally lively room unnaturally subdued. People were moving about much more slowly than usual and a few were sitting alone, quietly weeping. I was puzzled until I realised that the tape was still playing and that they had been overcome by the old man's singing.’



## Week 5: The Son of God (who draws us into the worship of heaven)

*Worshipping the glory of Jesus*

### **Reading**

You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. (For they could not endure the order that was given, 'If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death.' Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, 'I tremble with fear.') But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.... Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe.

*Hebrews 12: 18-24, 28*

### **Reflection**

Throughout the Hebrew Bible, the presence of God is indicated with terror: earthquake, thunder, a burning bush, a voice that shakes the cedar trees. Holiness, to fallen humanity – even to God's chosen people, even to Moses – is deadly; too bright to see, too radiant to grasp. In the Temple in Jerusalem, the holiness of God was enclosed in the Holy of Holies, curtained off, accessible only to the High Priest and only once a year.

But in Jesus, all those barriers are broken down. The holiness of God becomes purifying – like the coal taken from the Temple which is touched to Isaiah's lips, burning, purifying, and making him ready to speak God's words. Our hands, as priests, have been touched with that same holiness, making us ready to serve God's people. And when we stand at the altar, we are standing between heaven and earth. Like Moses, or like the priests of the Temple in Jerusalem, we see God's glory as far as we can grasp it, but unlike them we can do so without fear.



And still more unlike them, we are able to take that holiness – that presence of God – from the altar.

Jesus calls us to make his holiness present in the sanctuary set apart for his worship. Whether the sanctuary where you stand is medieval, or Victorian, or modern; whether you face east or west; whether your altar is made of stone anointed with oil, or a Go-Pak table in a church hall, or a bedside table in a home or a hospital: it is a sanctuary, a holy of holies, the place where God – however briefly – comes to dwell. And in that sanctuary, as we speak the words of Jesus, Jesus gives himself into our human hands, trusting us to take the bread and wine of his holy presence to his people.

### **Something for the road**

*Aaron, George Herbert (1593-1633)*

Holiness on the head,  
Light and perfections on the breast,  
Harmonious bells below, raising the dead  
To lead them unto life and rest:  
Thus are true Aarons drest.

Profaneness in my head,  
Defects and darkness in my breast,  
A noise of passions ringing me for dead  
Unto a place where is no rest:  
Poor priest, thus am I drest.

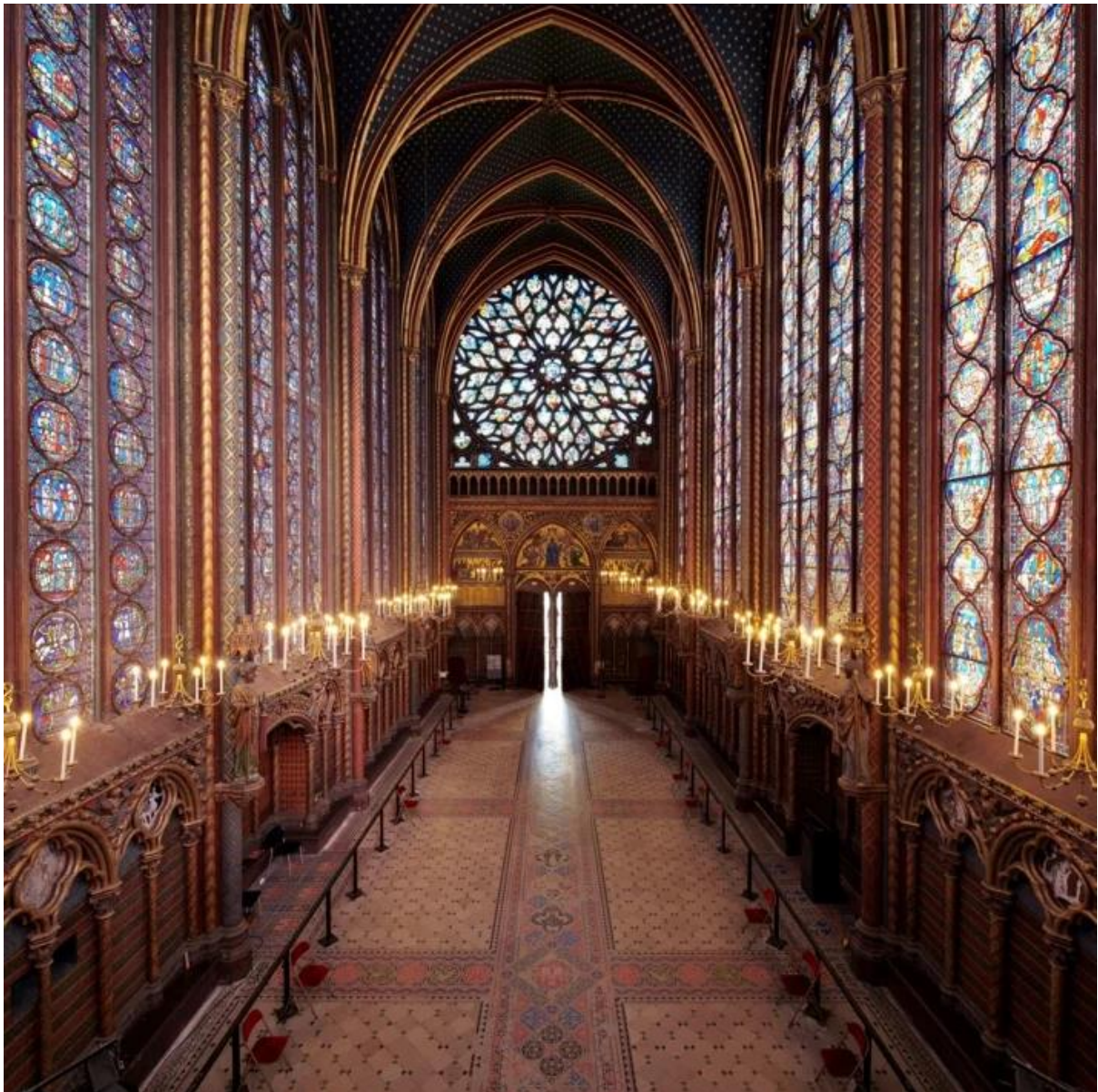
Only another head  
I have, another heart and breast,  
Another music, making live, not dead,  
Without whom I could have no rest:  
In him I am well drest.

Christ is my only head,  
My alone-only heart and breast,  
My only music, striking me ev'n dead,  
That to the old man I may rest,  
And be in him new-drest.

# COME AND SEE

So, holy in my head,  
Perfect and light in my dear breast,  
My doctrine tun'd by Christ (who is not dead,  
But lives in me while I do rest),  
Come people; Aaron's drest.

As you look at the image of the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, think about the careful design to bring light into the chapel, and the symbolic meaning of light as the presence of God.







## Week 6: The Apostle (who sends us)

*Sent in the power of Jesus*

### Reading

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him....

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.' So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?' That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, 'The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!' Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

*Luke 24: 13-16, 28-35*

### Reflection

The invitation to 'come and see' is only half of the dynamic of discipleship – the other half is 'go forth and tell.' That's an easy dynamic to see in the Sunday gathering of the church: the congregation comes together, sees and hears and touches and tastes the presence of Jesus, and leaves at the end. We tell the congregation to 'go in peace to love and serve the Lord,' and we hope that what they have seen and heard, touched and tasted as we have worshipped together will give them strength to do so. It is as if the congregation is the breath of God – breathed out of church into the world, to be the presence of God all around.

If the congregation are the breath, breathed in and nourished and breathed out to nourish the world, then the church building is as much heart as lungs, and its heartbeat is worship. Maintaining that heartbeat is the particular calling of priests – as the Ordination Service (CW) says:

‘Priests are ordained to lead God’s people in the offering of praise and the proclamation of the gospel. They share with the Bishop in the oversight of the Church, delighting in its beauty and rejoicing in its well-being. They are to set the example of the Good Shepherd always before them as the pattern of their calling. With the Bishop and their fellow presbyters, they are to sustain the community of the faithful by the ministry of word and sacrament, that we all may grow into the fullness of Christ and be a living sacrifice acceptable to God.’

Our being sent, then, looks different from the way we send our congregations. They are to be oxygen for the cells of the world; we are to be the heartbeat that allows them to circulate. Like Jesus on the road to Emmaus, we come alongside our brothers and sisters to open the Scriptures, to make their hearts burn, and above all to break the bread in which they recognise Jesus and run to share his good news.

### **Something for the road**

This image is sometimes called ‘Christ and his Friend.’ What is the relationship between the two figures? Where are they looking? What is Jesus holding and where is his other arm?





## Credits

Week 1 – The Jacob’s Ladder *from* Denise Levertov, *New Selected Poems* (Bloodaxe Books; New Directions, 2003), administered by Bloodaxe Books  
[www.bloodaxebooks.com](http://www.bloodaxebooks.com)

Week 2 – John the Baptist, *Saint John the Baptist*, painted in 1650 by Jusepe de Ribera (1591–1652). The image is by English Heritage and the picture is part of The Wellington Collection, Apsley House.

Week 3 – *In Persona Christi*, Jay Hulme. From *The Backwater Sermons* (Canterbury Press, 2021). Used by permission.

Week 4 – *Jesus’ Blood Never Failed Me Yet* (1975), Gavin Byers/ Orbital

Week 5 – 1. *Aaron*, George Herbert. From *The Temple*, 1633. 2. Image of Sainte-Chapelle, Paris (the nave of the upper chapel, looking west). Photograph by Benjamin Gaudou, *Centre des monuments nationaux*

Week 6 – 1. The Ordination of Priests, *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, The Archbishops’ Council 2000/ 2010. 2. Icon of *Christ and Abbot Menas* (in Taizé called ‘*Christ and his Friend*’), Coptic icon from the Apollo monastery in Bawit, Egypt.