



study, of recreation and tranquillity. It is perhaps easier to see their beauty now than in their original inception. But their value to us is not just as a pretty addendum to the work which was their original intent; they too have served a purpose, they have carried us along to this moment of our own. We cannot always see the endgame of our endeavours, and perhaps that is a good thing. The unexpected stranger-angel is often well disguised.

Closer by my urban hermitage, another canal path runs alongside the commercial warehouses and workshops of the city. These industrial landscapes are not to everyone's taste, but there is an undeniable form and dignity in their stark architecture, their massive utilitarian girders, their begrimed and blackening sheds. There is beauty here, too, if we can see it.

SECRET GRACE

Appreciating the secret grace of these spaces does not belittle the grief and the heartache with which they are often protested. Not every project is a prudent or compassionate use of resources, and we need to guard against wielding our creative arm for vain or nefarious or selfish purposes. But even the worst things we do may have hidden within them a grace note of redemption: the least auspicious of projects and schemes, no matter how flawed at their inception, might eventually deliver to us an angel.

For more information on the Season of Creation: <https://seasonofcreation.org>

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

All that you have done to us, O Lord, you have done with true judgement, for we have sinned against you and not obeyed your commandments. But give glory to your name and deal with us according to the bounty of your mercy.

FIRST READING Numbers 11:25-29

PSALM Psalm 18

RESPONSE The precepts of the Lord gladden the heart.

- 1. The law of the Lord is perfect, it revives the soul. The rule of the Lord is to be trusted, it gives wisdom to the simple. R.**
- 2. The fear of the Lord is holy, abiding for ever. The decrees of the Lord are truth and all of them just. R.**
- 3. So in them your servant finds instruction; great reward is in their keeping. But who can detect all his errors? From hidden faults acquit me. R.**

- 4. From presumption restrain your servant and let it not rule me. Then shall I be blameless, clean from grave sin. R.**

SECOND READING James 5:1-6

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia! Your word is truth, O Lord, consecrate us in the truth. Alleluia!

GOSPEL Mark 9:38-43. 45. 47-48

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

Remember your word to your servant, O Lord, by which you have given me hope. This is my comfort when I am brought low.

Next Sunday's Readings:

Genesis 2:18-24
Hebrews 2:9-11
Mark 10:2-16

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ANGELS



A few years ago I spent my exercise for a couple of summers walking the CuckooWay—a long-distance footpath in England from Gainsborough to Chesterfield, following the towpath of the 240-year-old Chesterfield Canal. The path derives its name from the “cuckoos” or narrow boats which used the waterway for transport of goods and materials. The canal stopped functioning commercially in the 1950s and has since been reclaimed by nature, with renovation work in recent years to make it more accessible for recreation. At the same time as I was walking, the national

media were consumed with a very heated debate about the possibility of a massive infrastructure project, likely to improve transport links, but also to cut vast swathes through the British countryside.

It was an interesting juxtaposition. Down by the canal all was calm and tranquil, nature was flourishing, people were relaxed and quietly enjoying themselves; in parts it was wondrously beautiful. Just one hundred years ago it would have been busy, noisy, and polluted with coal and oil fumes: a melee of commerce and industry. One hundred years before that it would have been a building site – a place of confusion, mud, danger and disruption. The parallels with the construction project currently under consideration were quite striking.

I was reminded of the story of St Cuthbert and the angel. St Bede tells us that one day in winter, Cuthbert welcomed a young stranger to the monastery. Cuthbert warmed the young man and helped him to wash and tidy himself after his journeying, then left to go and fetch him some warm bread from the oven next door: “When he came back the youth had vanished. At the door there was a wonderfully fragrant odour coming from three loaves, unusually white and fine. Trembling, Cuthbert said to himself, ‘Now I know that it was an angel.’”

We treasure the building sites of yesteryear – the excavations of Roman forts, the ruins of medieval castles, the industrial heritage of our canals and mills, our beautiful churches and cathedrals built throughout the ages. These once noisy, dirty, brutal or chaotic places have often become oases of relaxation and quiet

Season of Creation



During September we celebrate the Season of Creation: “a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment together”. Rachel Denton is a diocesan hermit and has written these pieces from her urban hermitage, which is dedicated to St Cuthbert.

26 SEPTEMBER 2021

26TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK II