

St Mark's Day

St Mark, Evangelist, writer of the earliest Gospel, sparse, sharp as thorns,
Your words well-turned, but of the man we have only glimpses.
On the periphery, watching, noting, not quite sure about himself or Jesus.
Not suited to the rough disciple's life, all that face-to-face witnessing,
Running naked from Gethsemane's angry conflict,
Flight, not fight, on your cowardly lion's golden wings.

But later, still there, complementing bold outspoken Peter,
Writing an action Gospel from his restored memories of that Jesus.
Then gradually finding prayerful spoken words
For your more thoughtful, thought through, faith in Him.

Brief mentions acting with the Apostles, Peter, Barnabas, Paul.
Journeying through words as scribe, companion, preacher, to Egypt,
Chosen as Bishop of Alexandria, great city of library and learning,
Pastor of growing North African flocks. No more shame, no more running.
Martyred, revered across two thousand Aprils by all Christians,
By Coptic Churches through times of flourishing, persecution, perseverance,
Now so needing our prayers and support.
Translated, in that other sense, your holy relics crossed the sea
Finding refuge in Venice, foundation of the gold domed Basilica di San Marco.
Fulfilling Pax tibi Marce, evangelista meus. Hic requiescet corpus tuum.

Likewise for me, your holy God-sent day in 1974 made such a mark on me,
Not a Damascus Road but a renewed recognition
That I needed and had that faith based in beauty, forgiveness and longing,
And He was giving me St Mark & St Andrew as guides on the way.

Richard Barnes – Mon 25 April 2016

The Month of May

Now is the month of Maying when all around are playing,
Fa-la-la-la-la-la-lah, fa-la-la-la-lah, la-lah.

The young land grows its bright greeny grass,
The elder land wears a comfortable Tweed jacket,
Its fifty shades of green flecked with dashes
Of yellow rape-seed flower and red-brown earthiness.

This fine May morning all seems clearer, closer,
The villages and estates, the high mounts and moors,
The pastures and flocks, the smooth-flowing river and cataract,
And trees short and tall with sap rising, newly bursting into leaf.

The May Queens and their acolytes of all diversities
Adorn our worship and walk with Pride for the Incarnate God,
Exploring the Gospel message of fullness, abundance, overflowing love.

This month of Mary, flower bedecked statues
Hiding the confusions of her human life.
As the Annunciation took hold, how to love faithful Joseph?
Caring for and cared for by young John in their bereftness;
Post-Ascension, what the disciples expect her to be or say?

Love in its manifold forms is the godly Way.
Not dry doctrine but practice and process,
Faithfully carrying our crosses and kisses of love and hurt.
The cross that says you got it wrong, accept forgiveness, try again.
The kiss that says I love you still, receive abundance, let love reign.

Richard Barnes – Sat 7 May 2016 – Exe Valley on the Train.