

EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

PRIESTHOOD

EXPLORING NEXT SUNDAY'S THEME

Introducing the Gospel

Jesus encounters Nathaniel (John 1: 47-51)

Today on the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, the Cathedral is anticipating the Feast of Michael and All Angels, or Michaelmas. For the Anglican Church Michaelmas is a time in the Church's calendar for the ordination of deacons and priests. The Gospel reading appointed for Michaelmas is the passage from John's Gospel that speaks of angels as God's messengers linking heaven and earth.

The image to stimulate reflection on Michaelmas as a time for ordination is *priesthood*.

Core extract from the Gospel (John 1: 51; for reflection throughout the week)

Jesus said to Nathaniel,
'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened
and angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

Gospel prayer (for use throughout the week)

Lord Jesus Christ,
you call people to serve your Church
as deacons, priests, and bishops.
Sustain and inspire all ordained
into this threefold order of ministry,
that your Church may proclaim and display
your active engagement in the world;
for in you heaven and earth are united.
Amen.

READING NEXT SUNDAY'S GOSPEL

John 1: 47-end

When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you get to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

ENGAGING WITH THE THEME

Dwelling with the text (John 1: 47-51)

Begin to explore John's account of Jesus' encounter with Nathaniel by employing the SIFT approach of Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking. You may find that one of these approaches comes easier to you than the others. But it is worth trying all four.

- What details in the passage catch your attention (Sensing)?
- What big ideas in the passage spark in your mind (Intuition)?
- What most touches your heart in the passage (Feeling)?
- What most stretches your mind and makes you think in the passage (Thinking)?

Thinking and talking

Identify topics within the passage that can get you thinking and talking. Here are some ideas to get you started.

- What is really going on in John chapter 1 from verse 29?
- What do you make of Jesus' encounter with Nathaniel?
- How do you understand angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man?
- What does this narrative say for us today?

Using your Bible

Put this closing part of John chapter 1 into context. Explore

- John 1: 29-48

Explore the image of angels linking heaven and earth.

- Genesis 28: 10-17

Explore the image of the Son of Man.

- Daniel 7: 13

Explore other references to angels.

- Psalm 103: 19-22
- Hebrews 1: 5-14
- Revelation 12: 7-12

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Exploring online

Widen your exploration of priesthood by looking up some of the following themes and others of your own choosing.

- Common Worship ordination of priests
- YouTube ordination of priests
- Symbols of priesthood

Drawing on experience

The image to stimulate reflection on the Feast of Michaelmas is *priesthood*. Draw on your own experience of priesthood. For example:

- What are your experiences of ordination services?
- What has been your experience of priests?
- Have you considered a call to priesthood?

What have you learned about priests?

Creating and making

This section offers pointers to some creative activities that may be inspired by the theme of Michaelmas or by the image of priesthood.

- Make a collage of symbols of priesthood.
- Collect images from ordination services.
- Organise a display of eucharistic vestments.
- Create a reflection, poem, or prayer on the Feast of Michaelmas or the image of priesthood.



EXPLORING THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

Each week we are inviting people in their homes to look forward to those Sunday services that follow the Revised Common Lectionary Gospel readings. We employ the SIFT approach (Sensing, Intuition, Feeling, and Thinking) to encourage reflection on the Sunday Gospel. We are suggesting a variety of ways in which people of all ages, and households working together, may engage with the Gospel reading and celebrate that engagement with shared activities.

These materials have been developed by the Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral working in collaboration with the staff team here at the Cathedral, and with sponsorship and support from the St Mary's Centre in Wales.



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