

Saturday 10 February 2023

St Scholastica



Scholastica was the sister of St Benedict but remains a shadowy figure. She may have been born in 480 AD in Nursia, central Italy. At an early age she chose to consecrate herself to God, but probably continued to live at home. She moved to Plombariola when Benedict moved to Monte Cassino, to join (or maybe found) a nunnery there. As abbess she sought to follow his Rule.

Scholastica died in about the year 543. Benedict is said to have had a vision of her soul as it rose up to heaven and, collecting her body, buried her in the tomb prepared for himself.

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The liturgy assumes the service is Eucharistic. The prayers of consecration appear at the end.

The hymns are YouTube links. To hear the hymns please click on the links.

To see service transcripts from previous weeks, please visit the page,

<http://www.medlockhead.co.uk/resources/index.htm>

Introduction and welcome

HYMN 1 All glory laud and honour

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The Welcome

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit

All Amen.

The Lord be with you

All And also with you.

The Preparation

**All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.’

And the second is this: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

All Amen. Lord, have mercy.

God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world,
that we should be holy and blameless before him in love.

Let us confess our sins and failings

and ask him who is rich in mercy for forgiveness and peace.

All Almighty God, our heavenly Father,
we have sinned against you
and against our neighbour
in thought and word and deed,
through negligence, through weakness,
through our own deliberate fault.
We are truly sorry
and repent of all our sins.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,
who died for us,
forgive us all that is past
and grant that we may serve you in newness of life
to the glory of your name.
Amen.

Almighty God,
who forgives all who truly repent, have mercy upon you,
pardon and deliver you from all your sins,
confirm and strengthen you in all goodness,
and keep you in life eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen.

The Gloria

All Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

**For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.**

The Collect for the St Scholastica

As we celebrate anew the memorial of the virgin saint Scholastica,
we pray, O Lord,
that, following her example,
we may serve you with pure love
and happily receive what comes from loving you.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

All Amen.

First reading

A reading from the First Book of Kings.

Jeroboam said to himself, 'Now the kingdom may well revert to the house of David. If this people continues to go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, the heart of this people will turn again to their master, King Rehoboam of Judah; they will kill me and return to King Rehoboam of Judah.' So the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold. He said to the people, 'You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.' He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one at Bethel and before the other as far as Dan. He also made houses on high places, and appointed priests from among all the people, who were not Levites. Jeroboam appointed a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month like the festival that was in Judah, and he offered sacrifices on the altar; so he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places that he had made.

Even after this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but made priests for the high places again from among all the people; any who wanted to be priests he consecrated for the high places. This matter became sin to the house of Jeroboam, so as to cut it off and to destroy it from the face of the earth.

1 Kings 12:26–32; 13:33–end

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

Second reading

The Book of Philemon

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in your house:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith towards the Lord Jesus. I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me. I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back for ever, no longer as a slave but as more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self. Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the

Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ. Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

One thing more—prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be restored to you.

Epaphras, my fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends greetings to you, and so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my fellow-workers.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Philemon

This is the Word of the Lord

All Thanks be to God.

HYMN 2 All creation worships you

[\(click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Gospel reading

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark

All Glory to you O Lord.

In those days when there was again a great crowd without anything to eat, [Jesus] called his disciples and said to them, 'I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. If I send them away hungry to their homes, they will faint on the way—and some of them have come from a great distance.' His disciples replied, 'How can one feed these people with bread here in the desert?' He asked them, 'How many loaves do you have?' They said, 'Seven.'

He then ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd. They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed. They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full. Now there were about four thousand people. And he sent them away. And immediately he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the district of Dalmanutha.

Mark 8:1–10

This is the Gospel of the Lord

All Praise to you O Christ.

Sermon

The readings above are not specifically for Scholastica but are those set for the principal service on Saturday 10 February.

Scholastica was a woman of great faith and was sister to her famous brother, Benedict of Nursia. Otherwise, we know very little about. In many periods of church history, she would simply have vanished without trace. So why do we still remember her?

Scholastica was probably born in about the year 480 AD. It was a time when the old Roman Empire was under attack and its political class disintegrating or fleeing. The countryside saw great movements of people, both those seeking asylum after escaping from persecution and pillage, or leaving for other more distant lands. And each day, the news reported Goths and Vandals attacking Rome, seizing booty and destroying everything. That's why many from the Imperial court fled, for example to the new Imperial Court in Constantinople.

This political flight created a power vacuum in the Government; in fact, one of the few leaders to remain in Italy was the Bishop in Rome, with the result that his power grew if only because no one else was left. And this growth in his power had the unintended result that he became a *political* leader as well as a leader of faith. It was into this context that those who remained and wanted help or security looked to the Church for safety rather than to a distant Emperor and the usual, secular forms of protection. For all these related reasons, the church was growing in power at this time. It was also growing numerically, and therefore needing to explore new ways of protecting its members. It needed all the help it could get.

At this time, life in Italy would have been by turns stressful and scary, explaining why the Bishop in Rome needed support and good administrators. He would therefore have lauded anyone who helped in this time of fear-filled chaos. That's how quiet men of faith, like Benedict, could grow in influence yet would have been more-or-less ignored during other, quieter times. Benedict's influence also helps explain why we know about shadowy figures like Scholastica: she would have been altogether invisible at other times in church history but, because she and her companions supported Benedict, and his reforms supported the Bishop, history recognised her contribution with much gratitude.

So we know Scholastica as a result of the trauma of the traumatic times in which she lived. But those painful times also explain her choice of life. She wanted God and had to do so safely.

In this late chapter of the classical period, women would have been more vulnerable than others, explaining why communities of women were always 'enclosed'

to maximise protection. That insight alone helps explain why Scholastica's small community allowed only women members: the only alternatives would have been unthinkable, such as a community of women that also included guards and fighting men, or was open to military attack.

It's altogether possible that this analysis is back-to-front. It's fascinating when we look at siblings such as Benedict and Scholastica—asking which was the more dominant, who had the greater emotional strength, who was the more intelligent, perceptive, intuitive, and so on. So we can think of Benedict 'putting away' his sister into a community to ensure her safety, but maybe it was all her idea, and he was merely a facilitator. It's not at all unlikely that Scholastica was in fact the more spiritual of the two, and that she suggested a community for local women as one way of ensuring her own relationship with God and providing physical safety; and that Benedict was a means to that end: she was the spiritual genius and he was a well-connected enabler in a patriarchal society. Maybe he took the credit, or did society give him the credit although she was the innovator, and her community was not so much the 'trial run' for the better advertised male-centred community under Benedict but that his simply copied hers.

Whatever. Being enclosed and thereby protected, the new community was severely restricted in terms of its interactions with the outside world. It therefore had to 'look' inwards, both socially but also spiritually. It became a community of prayer and worship. We know nothing of its content but if it was similar to her brother Benedict's Rule for religious life in community—which seems extremely likely—then it would have looked like early Benedictine spirituality from this same period. We surmise it probably comprised times of Christian worship throughout the day, each distinctive in form but with an overarching aim of liturgical order.

New liturgical movements require spiritual vitality. They also need variety to minimise boredom and elements of rigidity to avoid ambiguity (which is why St Benedict codified his 'Rule'). From the start, the Benedictine system included scripture and formal prayer, and choices of psalms and scripture, interspersed with intervals for personal piety (such as prayer and reading).

To reiterate, we know virtually nothing about Scholastica's primitive community—its structure and spirituality or even its size—so the detail here is conjecture. But a great many Christian communities at that time certainly did evolve into something similar to her experiment. The close bond between Scholastica and her brother Benedict suggest their respective communities possessed strong complementarities. *And their spirituality evolved into these forms because they worked ... and did so spectacularly.*

Our own society demonstrates many disturbing parallels to what we know about the Roman Empire in the fifth-century, and those similarities can feel extremely uncomfortable. Today, great empires are waxing and others are waning with the result that very little is certain. Those changes (social as well as political) cause enormous instabilities that no one can control. Many pretend to possess certainly; others actually believe that certainly is possible; while yet others respond to promises of certainty. We struggle to comprehend the scale of population movement they cause; some imagine they can control it.

Some differences are obvious: today we must also address climate change. We no longer live in a society for which a majority of people want faith to take centre stage. But for those who do want faith, that faith needs to accommodate the changes, responding in ways that are meaningful which, in practice, means both scriptural but adapted for today. Genuine Christian faith is always communal to some extent so, if it's really of God, that faith will be communal insofar as it lives its 'love of God' in terms of 'love of neighbour'. And our faith will need structure.

Which all brings us to today's Gospel reading, which describes a small amount of bread being blessed and changing from insignificance into something the world continues to discuss. The story of Scholastica above tells us that when people of faith obey the Holy Spirit and give their lives to God then, like the bread in today's Gospel, the blessings multiply. Even if much in our host societies look uncertain, God can use us to cause long-lasting blessings, and ensure our eternal destiny.

The Creed

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
the source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

We believe and trust in one God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Prayers of intercession

In every age you have raised up holy men and women
to reflect the light of Christ and to teach us the way of holiness.

We thank you for those who have been teachers in the school of Christ:
give understanding to those who study the faith the Church has handed on,
and clarity to those who communicate the gospel in a changing world ...

Lord, hear us.

Lord, graciously hear us.

We thank you for those who have been Christian rulers in the world,
and for those who carried the good news to lands where it had not been before:
give wisdom to all who have power and influence among the nations,
and establish God's sovereignty among people of every race ...

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

We thank you for those whom you have called to live in communities of faith:
establish mutual love among those drawn into fellowship in your service,
and bless with Christ's presence all the communities to which we relate ...

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

We thank you for those who have brought wholeness
through the medicine of the gospel:
give skill to all who minister healing and reconciliation in your name,
and comfort all who cry out to you from any sort of distress ...

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

We thank you today for St Scholastica.

As we celebrate her memory and rejoice in her friendship,
we ask you to bless ...

Keep in one communion and fellowship all those for whom Christ died.

Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

Hasten, Lord, the day when people will come from east and west,
from north and south,
and sit at table in your kingdom,
and we shall see your Son in his glory.
Lord, hear us.

All Lord, graciously hear us.

Merciful Father,

**All accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

The peace

Jesus says, 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.
I do not give to you as the world gives.'

The peace of the Lord be always with you,

All And also with you.

HYMN 3 Behold the lamb

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

The liturgy of the Communion Service appears below.

The Dismissal

God give you grace to follow his saints
in faith and hope and steadfastness;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

All Amen.

HYMN 4 And can it be

[\(please click on this link to hear the hymn\)](#)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

**All In the name of Christ.
Amen.**

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Eucharistic Prayer (prayer E)

The Lord be with you

All and also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

All We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All It is right to give thanks and praise.

It is truly right and good,
our duty and our salvation,
always and everywhere to give you thanks,
holy Father, almighty and eternal God,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This day we honour you in Saint Scholastica,
who consecrated his/her life to Christ
for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

In him/her you show us your saving love
as you call the human race back to its first holiness,
and invite us to taste on earth
the gifts of the world to come.

In communion with angels and archangels,
and all who served you on earth
and worship you now in heaven,
we raise our voice to proclaim your glory,
for ever praising you and saying:

**All Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We praise and bless you, loving Father,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord;
and as we obey his command,
send your Holy Spirit,
that broken bread and wine outpoured
may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son.

On the night before he died he had supper with his friends
and, taking bread, he praised you.

He broke the bread, gave it to them and said:

Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

When supper was ended he took the cup of wine.

Again he praised you, gave it to them and said:

Drink this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

So, Father, we remember all that Jesus did,
in him we plead with confidence his sacrifice made once for all upon the cross.

Bringing before you the bread of life and cup of salvation,
we proclaim his death and resurrection
until he comes in glory.

Great is the mystery of faith:

All Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

Lord of all life,
help us to work together for that day
when your kingdom comes
and justice and mercy will be seen in all the earth.

Look with favour on your people,
gather us in your loving arms
and bring us with Scholastica and all the saints
to feast at your table in heaven.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory are yours, O loving Father,
for ever and ever.

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

All **Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.

All **Though we are many, we are one body,
because we all share in one bread.**

All **Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.**

**Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.**

Draw near with faith.

Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.

Eat and drink in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us. Amen.

Communion is distributed.

Prayer after Communion

Merciful God,
who gave such grace to your servant Scholastica
that she served you with singleness of heart
and loved you above all things:
help us, whose communion with you
has been renewed in this sacrament,
to forsake all that holds us back from following Christ
and to grow into his likeness from glory to glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All Amen

All Almighty God,
we thank you for feeding us
with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Through him we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work
to your praise and glory.
Amen.