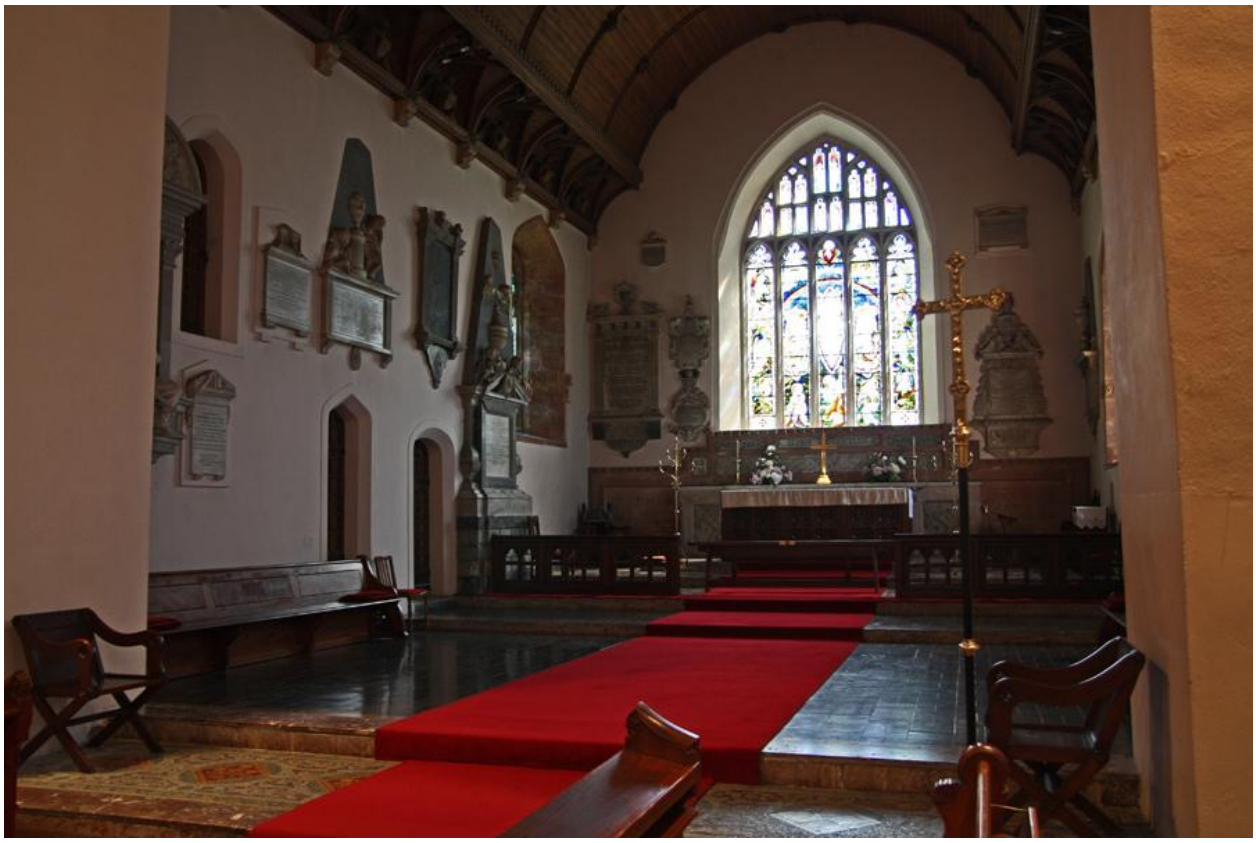
The Messenger

Parish of St Thomas, Tāmaki
Autumn Edition 2025



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The Sovereign's Christmas Message

Noel Cox

The Sovereign's Christmas speeches, commencing in 1932, have been shaped by the unique personality and priorities of each monarch. These speeches reflect their deeply held views on religion, society, and their role as a unifying figure for the nation and Commonwealth. Given the recent discussions surrounding the 2024 Christmas speech, it is timely to offer a broader perspective. By analysing the themes and spiritual reflections evident in the speeches of each Sovereign since 1932, we can discern the following insights:

King George V (speeches 1932-1935)

Themes: King George V's addresses were imbued with messages of unity and reassurance, particularly during the Great Depression and the early signs of rising international tensions. His words sought to provide comfort and stability to a troubled nation.

Religious Views: His faith was firmly rooted in the Anglican tradition. His speeches emphasised Christian values of charity, faith, and hope, which he saw as essential virtues in guiding the nation through challenging times.

King George VI (1936-1951)

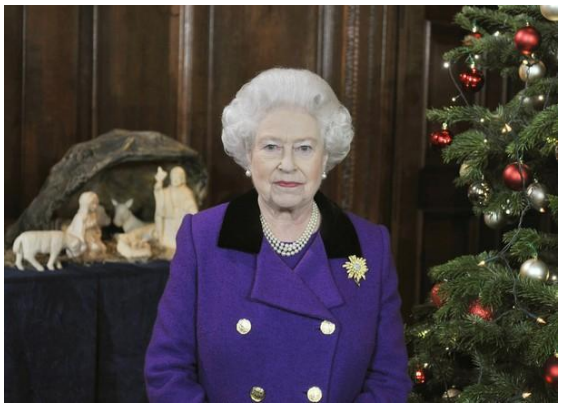
Themes: King George VI's speeches conveyed resilience, particularly during the trials of the Second World War, the aftermath of the conflict, and the need for moral and social rebuilding. He often highlighted the importance of family and a sense of duty as foundational principles.

Religious Views: George VI was a deeply devout man whose faith provided him with immense personal strength, especially as he struggled with a speech impediment. His Christmas addresses often invoked God's guidance and emphasised the moral framework provided by Christianity as a beacon for his subjects during times of uncertainty and adversity.

Queen Elizabeth II (1952-2022)

Themes: Queen Elizabeth II's speeches consistently centred on faith, service, and adaptation to change. She addressed global events, societal transformations, and personal

milestones with a steady voice, reinforcing her role as a constant presence during times of uncertainty.



Religious Views: The late Queen's faith was profoundly Christian, and her speeches frequently reflected her personal relationship with Jesus Christ. She drew inspiration from His teachings on service, forgiveness, and compassion. For Queen Elizabeth II, her role as monarch was divinely ordained, and she viewed her service to her people as a manifestation of her commitment to her faith. Her ability to integrate Christianity's universal values with an inclusive approach was a hallmark of her reign.

King Charles III (2022-present)

Themes: King Charles III's speeches have prioritised themes of inclusion, environmental stewardship, and social cohesion. His addresses emphasise unity across faiths and communities, reflecting the multicultural fabric of modern society.

Religious Views: While deeply Anglican, King Charles is a strong proponent of interfaith dialogue and religious inclusivity. His longstanding commitment to fostering harmony among different faiths is evident in his speeches, which often address the shared moral and spiritual values across religious traditions. Additionally, his concern for global issues such as environmental sustainability reflects a broad interpretation of faith as stewardship of God's creation.

Conclusions about Religious Views

King George V and King George VI: These monarchs epitomised traditional Anglican devotion, emphasising the moral and societal order provided by Christianity in an era of significant upheaval. Their faith underscored their vision of duty as a service to God and country.

Queen Elizabeth II: Queen Elizabeth combined a deeply personal faith with an inclusive approach, focusing on Christianity's universal values while subtly addressing the needs of a pluralistic society. Her speeches resonated with people of all faiths and none, demonstrating the enduring relevance of Christian principles in a changing world.

King Charles III: King Charles represents a modern interpretation of faith that balances Anglican devotion with a commitment to interfaith harmony and pressing global concerns. His focus on environmentalism and social cohesion reflects a monarchy evolving to address contemporary challenges while remaining grounded in spiritual principles.

The evolution of the Sovereigns' Christmas speeches highlights a monarchy that adapts to its times while maintaining a steadfast commitment to faith as a guiding principle. Each monarch's spiritual perspective shaped their vision of duty and service, underscoring the monarchy's enduring role as a moral compass for the nation.

King Charles III's 2024 Christmas speech is no exception. It is neither more nor less political than the addresses of his predecessors, nor is it less Christian in focus. It is certainly not "woke" or reflective of any specific views of his current Ministers of the Crown. Instead, it is a testament to a lifetime dedicated to promoting harmony in both the natural and human

world. In this, King Charles draws on the deep Christian faith he shared with his late mother, Queen Elizabeth II, whose legacy of service and steadfastness continues to inspire his reign.

Ruth's story of faith and redemption

Lizzie Samuel

We Christians believe that God is one and He is love. Love is compassion grace and forgiveness. Love woos us into believing and hoping that goodness is possible even after terrible loss and injustice. Love draws us with the promise that reconciliation are far better possibilities for healing than getting even. God is the power in such love.

Are we looking for God to protect us from bad things happening to us and give us special advantages in our prospering?

Once again that is not how God as love works. Rather it is all about relationship. Here is where a biblical story like Ruth which rarely mentions God by name reveals powerful ways God above is at work in our world.

Perhaps as we learn this story of Ruth and tell it in a certain way we will definitely discover ways God can also work with us.

Why is Ruth's story important in our scriptures? Let us review the story of Ruth. She is the great grandmother of King David and daughter-in-law of Naomi. Ruth said the famous words to her Mother-in Law Naomi – "for whither thou goest, I will go and where thou lodgest I will lodge thy people shall be my people and thy God my GOD".

Ruth was of the women of Moab. and married to the son of an Israelite of Judah when they came to live in Moab after the Famine that took place in Israel. The story of Ruth opens with promise but turns into tragedy. Naomi loses her husband and her sons. Three widows are left in poverty and grief.

Naomi needs security for herself and for her two daughters -in-law, so she focuses on practical matters. She decides that they should go to their family home as she believed that they would be better off and also get remarried. and Naomi will go back to her family land in Judah at least she won.t starve.

But here is the surprise; Ruth adored her Mother-in-law and had great sympathy incredible loyalty and love. Naomi is not only sad but bitter towards God even though Ruth had made such beautiful commitment of love to her. It makes no difference to her, her heart is closed. But the love that was thriving powerfully in Ruth makes Naomi to take Ruth with her to her homeland Judah the city of Bethlehem.

Ruth's testimony of love and faith spread throughout the land. Once they get to Bethlehem Naomi stays at home nursing her grief and resentment towards God. Ruth goes out to find work she is treated generously by the locals and especially by the owner of the local farm

named Boaz, who had heard of her faith. and what impresses Boaz most is not Ruth's physical beauty but the beauty of her commitment to care for her mother-in-law and work to support them both even as Ruth is a foreigner, a refugee and on her own. Boaz and all the workers are blown away by the beauty of Ruth's loyalty and love towards Naomi.

This brings us to Boaz. If Ruth represents the love of God embodied in a human being, Boaz represents the love of God as generosity and kindness. He is not only super generous and compassionate towards Ruth, but he seeks to find ways to support her and Naomi.

He welcomes Ruth to the land of Judah and to the care of their GOD.

Ruth acknowledges that she does not deserve Boaz's favour and care as she is a stranger and a refugee but Boaz blesses her and said to her that she has left her land her family and the people for the love of her mother-in law so the God of Israel will repay her for her great FAITH.

Once they get to Bethlehem Naomi stays at home nursing her grief while Ruth goes out to find work. Naomi also opens her heart slowly but surely to the powerful beauty of love. That makes us see God everywhere in the kindness of strangers and friends. On the first day of work Ruth returns home with a huge bounty of grain and when Naomi finds that Boaz was the generous boss. She not only blesses God, but also finds out. Boaz is a relative and next of kin and hopes that God is opening a door and perhaps good things will come. So she encourages Ruth to woo Boaz, hoping that a marriage will secure a future for Ruth. Boaz promises to do everything he can to secure both Ruth and Naomi to redeem their estate and love Ruth for life. Boaz and Ruth are married and they produce an heir to keep the family line alive.

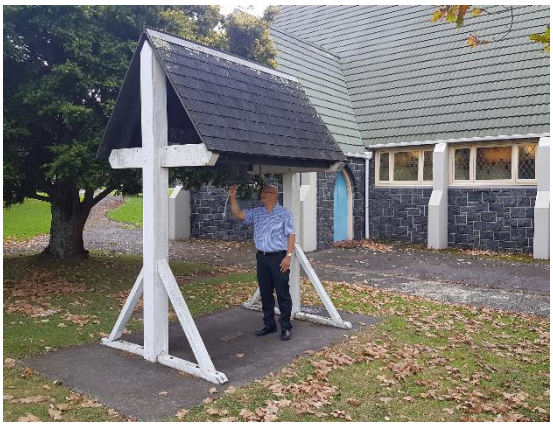
Ruth showed remarkable faith. Ruth's story of faith and redemption tells us to have faith. not to let the past hold us back and that redemption is possible.

Ruth's position as a gentile in the ancestry of King David (and that of Jesus Christ) signifies that all nations will be represented in the kingdom of God. The love of God embodied in the human Ruth, met by the abundant generosity and care embodied in Boaz and flowing in and through a lost bitter human that is Naomi resurrecting her to new life. This is God above at work.

A history of church bells

Noel Cox

At some point in late November-early December someone stole the bell from outside the church. It was a ship's bell, given in 1990. Church bells have a storied history within Christianity, serving both practical and spiritual purposes. From their origins in early Christian communities to their centrality in English parish life, bells have been integral to ecclesiology and theology, symbolizing the unity of the faithful and the presence of God in the community. Although few churches in New Zealand now possess and ring a full peal of bells – St Matthew-in-the-City is the only survivor in Auckland – individual bells can be found in most churches.

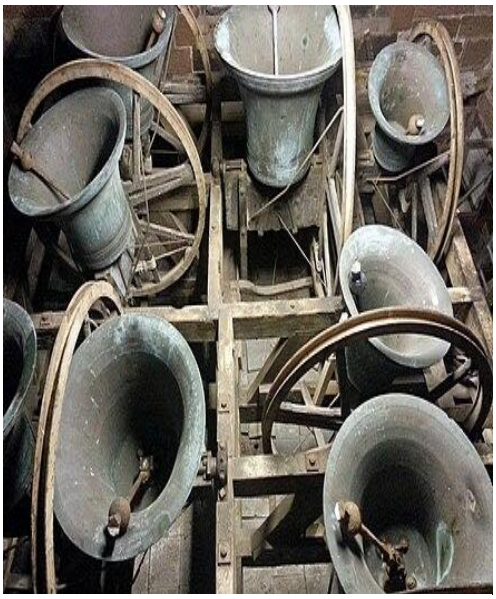


Early History of Church Bells

The use of bells in Christian worship likely originated in the late Roman Empire, influenced by earlier practices in non-Christian religions. The earliest references to bells in Christian contexts date back to the 5th century, with St. Paulinus of Nola often credited for introducing them to the Church in Italy. By the 6th century, Pope Sabinian is said to have encouraged their use in calling the faithful to prayer.

The transition of bells into wider ecclesiastical use coincided with the spread of monasticism. Monasteries adopted bells to mark the canonical hours, thereby establishing a rhythm of prayer and work. This practice became foundational in shaping Christian worship patterns, especially within the Benedictine tradition.

Bells in England: Arrival and Evolution



Christian bells were introduced to England during the early Anglo-Saxon period, likely through Irish missionary activity. The Venerable Bede records the use of small handbells by monks to summon people to worship, marking the earliest known use of bells in English Christianity. By the Norman Conquest (1066), tower bells had become a prominent feature of English churches.

The casting and tuning of bells developed significantly during the Middle Ages. Foundries in cities such as London and Gloucester became renowned for their craftsmanship. Bells were often inscribed with Latin texts or prayers, such as "Vivos voco, mortuos plango" ("I call the living, I mourn the dead"), reflecting their dual role in the spiritual and communal life of the parish.

Ecclesiological and Theological Significance

In ecclesiology, bells symbolize the voice of the Church, calling the faithful to worship and signalling the Church's presence in the world. Theologically, their sound represents the proclamation of the Gospel, echoing the angels' announcement of Christ's birth (Luke 2:14). The tolling of bells during the Sanctus in the Mass is a direct expression of divine praise, aligning with the angelic worship described in Isaiah 6:3.

Bells are also associated with the sacramental life of the Church. The Angelus bell, rung three times a day, calls the faithful to remember the Incarnation and recite the Angelus prayer. Similarly, bells are rung during the consecration of the Eucharist, emphasizing the real presence of Christ on the altar.

Practical Roles and Liturgical Functions

Call to Worship: The primary function of church bells has been to summon the faithful to prayer and worship. The ringing of the "Curfew Bell" in medieval England, for instance, marked the end of the workday and encouraged evening prayer.

Marking Time: Bells have historically regulated daily life, announcing the hours of prayer, work, and rest. The "Great Bells" of English cathedrals, such as Big Ben (though secularized), evolved from this ecclesiastical tradition.

Signalling Events: Bells mark significant moments, including weddings, funerals, and national celebrations. The tolling of bells for the deceased, known as the "death knell," reflects theological beliefs about mortality and the hope of resurrection.

Liturgical Enhancements: Change ringing, a uniquely English practice developed in the 17th century, involves intricate sequences of bell peals. This practice underscores the joy of worship and reflects the harmony of God's creation.

Iconography and Inscriptions

Bells are often adorned with inscriptions and symbols that reflect their sacred purpose. Common motifs include crosses, saints, and the Virgin Mary, emphasizing the bell's role as a holy instrument. Inscriptions often invoke blessings, such as "Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis" ("Holy Mary, pray for us").

Challenges and Modern Use

The Reformation brought significant changes to bell use in England. Puritans viewed bells as remnants of Catholic superstition, leading to their destruction or repurposing in some areas. However, the tradition endured in most Anglican churches, becoming a hallmark of parish identity.

In contemporary England, church bells continue to play a vital role. Advances in technology, such as electric bell-ringing mechanisms, have facilitated their use in urban and rural settings alike. Efforts to preserve historic bells and train new generations of ringers underscore their enduring significance.

When Bishop Selwyn, and the leaders of the early church in New Zealand were founding new churches, provision was generally made for a bell.

The bell tower, a significant feature of the current St Thomas' Church, was a generous gift from Mrs. Barbara and Trevor Cook. It was dedicated on Sunday, September 2, 1990, enhancing the church's architectural presence and serving as a call to worship for the congregation.

Conclusion

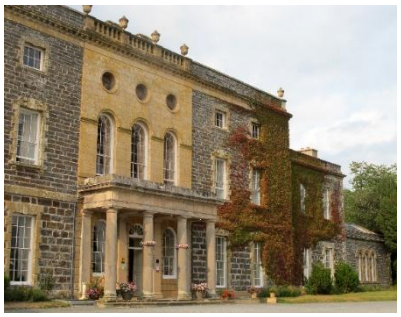
The history and use of church bells in the Church of England, and now the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, illustrate their profound ecclesiological and theological importance. As instruments of worship and community cohesion, bells embody the Church's mission to proclaim the Gospel and sanctify time. Their resonant tones continue to inspire faith and reverence, echoing the timeless call of Christ to His people.

When superstition overwhelms – the tragedy of the Nanteos Cup and the Powell family

Noel Cox

Nestled in the green hills of western Wales, the Nanteos (reputedly one of the most haunted in Britain) was the custodian of a most extraordinary relic: the Nanteos Cup. My wife and I were fortunate enough to visit Nanteos, now a hotel and restaurant, on a few occasions, enjoying the charm of its dining room and even spending the night there twice. But the most compelling draw of the estate was for centuries the sacred cup and the legend that surrounded it.

The Nanteos Cup is a simple wooden vessel, roughly hewn and unadorned, its surface worn smooth by centuries of handling. It is small, humble, and unassuming, a stark contrast to the grandeur of the legends that surround it. According to pious tradition, the Nanteos cup was brought to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea, after Jesus Christ used it at the Last Supper, or possibly a part of the True Cross. This connection, though rooted more in legend than history, captured the imagination of generations. The Grail's association with eternal life and divine power fuelled the belief that the cup possessed extraordinary properties.



It is said to have been safeguarded at Glastonbury Abbey until the dissolution of the monasteries under King Henry VIII, when it was briefly held by the monks of Strata Florida Abbey. The story continues that monks fleeing the abbey entrusted the cup to a devout local family in Wales, and it ultimately came to rest at Nanteos.

Over the years, pilgrims journeyed to Nanteos to seek healing, drinking water from the cup in hopes of curing their ailments – and in some cases nibbling tiny pieces of the cup itself. These visitors were often desperate, and fervent in their faith. The sheer volume of seekers eventually overwhelmed the Powell family, owners of Nanteos. The cup became not just a spiritual focus but also a source of stress and contention. Tales of its miraculous powers grew, as did its reputation, drawing ever more visitors to the mansion. Superstition, at times, seemed to overshadow reality, with some attributing almost mythical powers to the humble wooden vessel.

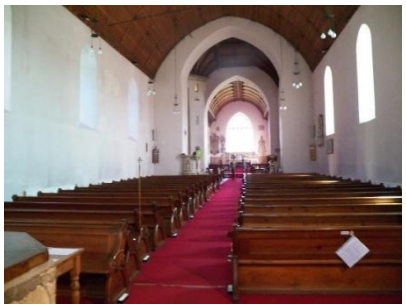
By the twentieth century, the cup was withdrawn from the eyes of the curious, in part because of its increasingly delicate condition. It was, however, still occasionally used by descendants of the Powells, though no longer owners of Nanteos itself.

In July 2014, it was reported that the cup had been stolen from a house in Weston under Penyard while the occupant to whom it had been loaned was in hospital. However, it was recovered in June 2015. Following the recovery of the cup, the owners placed it in the care of the National Library of Wales, where it went on permanent public display in June 2016.

Reflecting on our own visits to Nanteos, I often think about the intersection of legend and lived experience. The house, with its elegant rooms and gracious atmosphere, seemed an unlikely stage for such a compelling saga of faith. Yet, the presence of the cup lent an air of the extraordinary to even the most ordinary moments there. As we walked the halls and enjoyed the warm hospitality of our hosts, we couldn't help but feel the weight of history that permeated the place.

The story of the Nanteos Cup is far from over. Its legacy endures, not just in its physical form, but in the countless lives it has touched and the enduring questions it raises about the nature of faith and miracles. You see, most experts believe that the cup is a mazer cup, a type of communal drinking vessel used in medieval Europe, and used for both secular and sacred purposes. The simplicity of the Nanteos Cup aligns with this tradition, suggesting it may have been a practical object elevated to sacred status by the weight of belief and tradition.

The tale of the Nanteos Cup, and the overwhelming devotion it inspired, is not unique. Religious faith, deeply rooted in tradition, can sometimes lead us to unthinking behaviour. A parallel can be drawn to the practice of parishioners at St Padarn's Church, Llanbadarn Fawr, on the outskirts of Aberystwyth, in Ceredigion (Cardiganshire), a few miles from Nanteos. For centuries, locals would acknowledge, with a small bow or nod, a section of the nave wall just inside the church. There was nothing on the wall to suggest why this was done. However, during restoration work in the late nineteenth century, when old white-washed plaster was being removed, workmen discovered an early medieval painting of the Virgin Mary in that very spot. From pre-Reformation times to the late nineteenth century, locals continued to venerate a picture which was no longer visible, and had long forgotten why they were doing so. Such is the strength of custom, and the effect it can have on us.



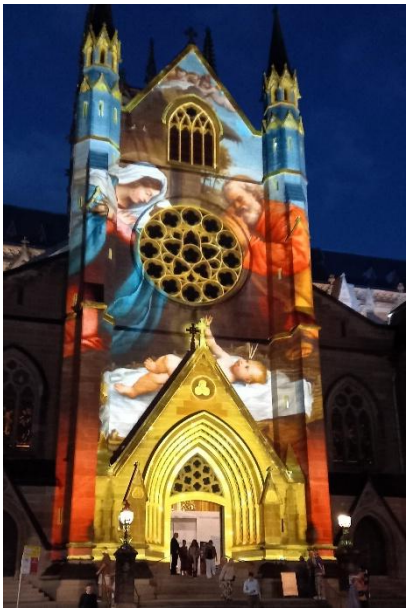
Both the Nanteos Cup and the forgotten bowing at St Padarn's reveal how faith, infused with custom and myth, can persist even when its original context is obscured. These stories remind us of the power of belief to shape behaviour and the fine line between devotion and superstition. The same locals who, out of shear habit, reverently acknowledged a section of blank wall also were willing believers of late nineteenth century antiquarians keen to enhance the reputation of their favoured sites. As we reflect on these examples, let us seek balance in our faith, cherishing its deeper truths while remaining mindful of how tradition and legend can sometimes lead us astray.

Christmas is Alive and Well in Sydney

Jocelyn Whyte

In the week before Christmas, Warren and I spent three days in Sydney. By happy chance – and by using Trivago, of course – we had booked into the Song Hotel, very close to Hyde Park and the Anzac Memorial. It turned out to be a 5-minute walk from Museum Station on the train line from the airport, and within walking distance of all of Sydney's major attractions, including the Opera House, Darling Harbour, the Museum, the Art Galleries, King's Cross and much more. We discovered that the Song Hotel is a profit-for-purpose business where proceeds contribute to the work of YWCA Australia.

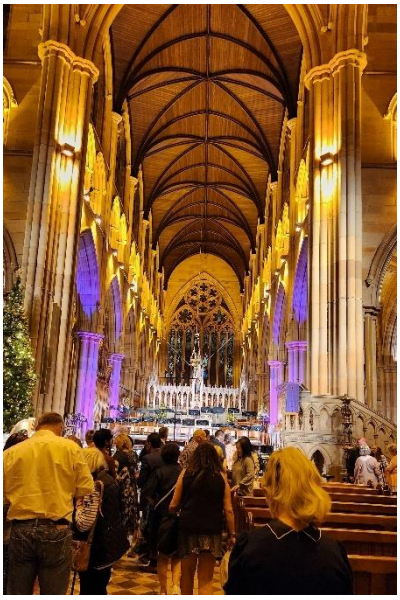
Hyde Park is not huge but it is Sydney's oldest public parkland so it has some really big trees, and, of course, a spectacular fountain. At the opposite end from where we were staying, and across the road from the park, is St Mary's Catholic Cathedral, an enormous, and very



traditional, church building. It is a prominent landmark, with huge volumes of vehicular and foot traffic passing it every day. We found it was making the most of this with its Christmas programme.

Outside the great south entrance was a circle of food carts and a small stage. Each day, from about 5.30, these carts served food, and various groups performed, mostly Christmas carols and songs. And they were well patronized.

The Cathedral was being set up for the Carol Concert, Nine Lessons and Carols performed by a choir and an orchestra. We queued for last minute tickets and, although we had to watch it all on a screen, it was marvellous to sit in this enormous, high, Gothic building and listen to the voices and music soaring through it. After the concert there was a little time to look more closely around the inside of the building as we came out.



Looking back, when we had crossed to the Park, we saw one of the famous old-master nativity paintings (my art knowledge is too scanty to know which one) projected onto the building over the great West door. And at the South end there was a moving projection of more secular Christmas images – Santa, elves, Christmas trees and so on – that ended with a different, still, nativity scene.

I suspect this is an annual tradition at the Cathedral, and it was certainly nice to see such very public advertising of the Christian side of Christmas, in the middle of such a bustling city, and to be able to pause and enjoy it.

The cost of discipleship

Noel Cox

"Whosoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14.33), if taken literally, and without contextualisation, would appear to be imposing a heavy temporal burden on Christians.

In Luke 9:51-13:21 Luke narrates Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. It serves as a literary device to teach discipleship (Luke 9:51-10.24), including the cost of discipleship (Luke 9:57-62). Ultimately discipleship means sacrifice, total dedication (Matthew 5:13), and considered detachment from family and possessions. It is specifically the latter aspects which are part of the message in Luke 14:33.

The context of the Lucan Gospel, according to Talbert, is the teaching of the missionary church. It would follow, then, that the teaching of the seventy (or seventy-two), when Jesus despatched them on their mission (Luke 10:1-12), may be seen as a lesson by way of example to the wider church (Luke 9:57-62 advice to followers generally, and Luke 9:1-6; Lk 10:1-12 that specific to missionaries). They were warned to take nothing which might

impede their physical progress, or detract from their spiritual purpose; they are, in effect, to "travel light". They were also cautioned to not expect hospitality along the road, nor to beg, but to accept the shelter of one house in each town (almost in the manner of the members of the mendicant religious orders in the later Church). However, unlike Luke 14:1-24, which is a meal scene, verses 25-35 are addressed to a crowd travelling with Jesus, and expands upon the former lesson for the benefit of a wider audience. "Disciple" is here used in the wider sense.

Because Christian discipleship essentially involves sacrifice, as is reiterated in Luke 14:1-33, this should not be entered into lightly. Although Luke 14:33 appears to be making a general statement ("Whosoever of you does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple"), it must be read in context. It appears to have two related aspects, at two different levels. The first (narrower) is the warning against riches and reliance upon riches – the need to place reliance on heaven not earth – the second (in the wider context of the passage) is a caution to not hastily follow Jesus, but to take due care that one is aware of the ultimate cost.

This passage (Lk 14:26-35) is unique to Luke, though verses 26-27 are like Matthew 10:37-38 and verses 34-35 are similar to Matthew 5:13 and Mark 9:49-50. Three times (verses 26, 27, 33) the assertion is "cannot be My disciple." One who faithfully follows Jesus must be prepared to "hate" – or more accurately in the hyperbolic terminology of the time, "love less" – his father, mother, wife, and children, as well as his own life. Abraham Rihbany points to the use of "hate" in the Bible as an example of linguistic extreme in an Eastern culture. There is no word, he notes, for "like" in the Arabic tongue " ... [T]o us Orientals the only word which can express and cordial inclination of approval is 'love'". The word is used even of casual acquaintances. Extreme language is used to express even moderate relationships.

Clearly some renunciation is needed. But is it spiritual or physical renunciation which is required? Which has a hold of the heart, possessions or Jesus? Wright interprets the more general warnings as being against riches, and trust in them. The renunciation of possessions is no more literal than is the call to "take up the cross" (Luke 14:27).

The rich members of the church faced a particularly difficulty (Luke 18:18-30, 19:1-10), they could not serve both God and mammon (Luke 16:13). Did their possessions prevent them from being Christians? In Luke 18:18-30 Luke offers two examples. In Luke 18:24-30 we have the example of Peter and the apostles, who gave up everything to follow Jesus (cf Luke 5:11). Levi the tax collector surrenders his lucrative occupation (Luke 5:27-28). In Luke 19:1-10, Zacchaeus is not required to sell all – half is sufficient – so there would appear to be no simple answer. However the rich young ruler could not bring himself to renounce his wealth, and went away sorrowing (Luke 18:22). The command to forsake riches and to follow Jesus appears to have been very specific to this man. We are not told that Jesus said this sort of thing regularly, or even often. The actual giving up of property may not have been a reality for all. For some the material cost of following Jesus was greater, perhaps because their attachment to material things was greater – they could not give their lives to Jesus. This was not a case of giving to others, but of giving up dependence on earthly ties (cf Luke 12:32-34, converting earthy possessions into heavenly).

Verse 26 may be taken to mean figurative renunciation of family links, just as verse 27 may be seen as figuratively taking up one's cross. Verse 33 may likewise be read figuratively – but is stated positively rather than negatively.

It has been said that this verse seems to be addressed particularly to those who were then, and who were to be, preachers of his Gospel; and who were to travel over all countries, publishing salvation to a lost world. However, (as suggested above) it seems more probable that it is addressed to all who would follow Jesus. The true self-denial which the Lord demands from his followers does not consist so much in outward conduct as in the affections (echoing Luke 14:1-24, with its emphasise on the disparity of appearance and reality).

In the context in which it is set, Luke 14:33 also seems to be telling us that we must undertake discipleship deliberately and with caution (cf Proverbs 20:18 "with good advice make war"), rather than hastily, and that this involves placing all we have at the feet of Jesus, figuratively rather than literally.

There must be a degree of planning (cf Romans 12:1-2), a general does not advance upon an enemy without knowing his strengths and weaknesses. Disciples likewise must consider what they will lose if they take up the call; for the consequences of failure are serious (embarrassment, subjugation, or waste).

These parables (Luke 14:28-30; 31-32; 34-35) represent the difficulties of those who undertook to be a disciple of Jesus, without considering what difficulties they were to meet with, and what strength they had to enable them to go through with the undertaking. To succeed he should place no reliance on material things.

The price of discipleship is high (Luke 14:28-32). It must be freely chosen. Jesus is not looking for those with ample resources, but for those who knew they had nothing – or at least no attachment to physical things, or emotional ties. In some cases it might be literally true that the disciple had no possessions; for others it requires the renunciation of the ownership of property for its own sake, and acknowledgement that all belongs to God – for Jesus himself, unlike most pagan gods, wanted nothing for himself. For a rich man the burden would be very great.

To gain all, one must be willing to give all ("If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me"; Matthew 19:21). There can be no room for compromise or concession with God. Paul the Apostle says, "We are not our own. We were bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20).

Successful discipleship requires that God be first; absolute detachment ("If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind; day after day he must take up his cross, and come with me"; Luke 9:23; cf Matthew 16:24; Mark 8:34). This is a more radical break than Luke's source material required, but one which is nevertheless consistent with Luke's Gospel.