

## **Stewardship Sunday 1/4 – Theme: Buildings**

### **Address by Fr Peter Delaney**

**“In my Father’s House are many mansions”** (John 14. 2).

In today’s gospel Jesus comforts his friends by assuring them that he goes to prepare a place for them and the house has many rooms; in other words it is big enough for all of us whoever we are, entry however is by belief in Jesus Christ.

We are about to welcome the newest Christian into the family of Christ here at St Bartholomew in Monty David Molony’s baptism. So we have celebrated the uniqueness of our fantastic buildings and heard about their significance and purpose we are now a part of its eight hundred year history. We welcome Monty and his Mum and Dad, Damien and Sarah-Jane who were married here and their whole family.

Now we see the historic building doing what it was built to do - welcome the family of God into the realm of worship and praise. After this short second address we will walk through the church to the ancient font and prepare to baptise Monty David. The Sacrament of Baptism has the signs of all sacraments of the church of God: an outward and visible sign, the pouring of water over the child remembering the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist in the River Jordan and the inward and spiritual sign of the love of God welcoming Monty as the newest Christian for a flash of a second!

But we are surrounded by a greater sacrament this ancient monastic church still witnessing over eight hundred years of daily praise. The outward and visible sign is the grey stone the wooden roof the monuments and the symbols of Christian worship, in itself it is a sacrament and within its body are to be found you and me. It is a House of God, a home for the People of

God, a place where the continual sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is offered in Eucharist, prayer and the Word of God.

And when we are not here, not present to absorb its holiness and glory we expect it to continue to be here when next we turn up. How devastated we would be if one day we arrived to find that it had been closed, fallen down, uncared for and barren, as our predecessors have done on more than one occasion. The place had been sold, parts pulled down a different sense of the lack of care and love expressed for our buildings. Likewise over the road at the hospital church there were times when neglect meant that there was no roof, it looked unloved and uncared for. But the few came to the rescue and worked hard to make sure that both buildings were repaired, restored and loved again. That is why we are here because others have spent time and money in keeping these places alive. Now it is your turn again to guarantee a future life for both our loved buildings.

If there are to be future weddings, baptisms, services of prayer and praise, it will only be because you have given generously to make sure that when Monty grows up like his parents before him he will have a place to come to and seek peace and quiet, a place to bring his girlfriend to get married and a place to have his children baptised.

What we ask of our visitors and congregations over the next four weeks is to think hard about not taking either your faith or church for granted and to pledge that you will in some way give of your time your talents and yes your money to make sure this precious heritage is guaranteed a life into the future.

It really is up to each one of you to give thanks to God for Jesus Christ, for our benefactors and predecessors who have given us so great a legacy and to guarantee its future. Zoe McMillan has shared her passion for this place. The family of Monty have

trusted us with the gift of Baptism for their child, our choir, servers, sidesmen and ministers have produced the best they can to honour God and I appeal to you to think hard about how you can help guarantee that in another eight hundred years the two St Bartholomew's will both witness to God's love in West Smithfield and across London. Please go home today, read the Stewardship leaflet, pray and think about our future together, and do something about it!