

St Chad's Day Festival Service

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2018 – Durham Cathedral

The Revd David Rushton, Chaplain and Outreach Officer

Fellow Chadsians, it is a real honour and pleasure to be asked to address you all on this highlight of our college year, and I would like to thank Dr Masson and the Dean of Durham for inviting me to address you today.

I promise it won't be a sermon type speech or something so theological that only the theology students amongst you stay awake! As a Chadsian myself I never expected to be back here in Durham gathered with you all, a new generation of Chadsians doing some of things that my contemporaries in the 1990's used to get up to on Chad's Day! There was indeed green milk, green porridge and even green butter and for some bizarre unseasonal reason, the early morning wake-up call was softened with Pimms on the lawn, I seem to remember there was a lemonade shortage on Chad's Day but the past is the past!

So, what is so special about Chad, and why did the founders of our college decide on this man who died on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 672? Well Chad, as we have heard studied and lived for a large part of his life in Northumbria and North Yorkshire and was deeply rooted in the Celtic traditions of the North East as well as being influenced by teachers from Ireland. Chad was known to be a man who lived a very simple life with a gentle nature. He encouraged the monks that he led and indeed the people of his Diocese of Mercia to serve each other with a real sense of love for those in need around them. He in many ways was a forerunner of what we now think of as out-reach. I chose the reading that Ashley read specifically as one that summed up Chad's way of living.

The college motto *Non Vestra Sed Vos* – not what you have but what you/who you are is fundamental to our common life together. For me, the reason I was so thrilled to be offered the chance to work here in Chad's is that sense of continuity with the founding principles that our founders laid down for us. They purposefully avoided building lavish college buildings and focused their modest endowment to ensuring that the education offered would be the best possible and to ensure that each individual scholar could thrive. They were, like now concerned with enabling each and every member of the college to flourish, whatever their background, social or family status. The gifts that each student brought were those of a willingness to learn and grow together as a community.

We often refer to the family of Chad's and we all know that family life, in all its many forms has its ups and downs and we have to work hard at times to remain patient with one another. It is sometimes hard for us to be heard and test out our voice in such a bustling college life, especially if our voice doesn't seem to be heard amidst the range of voices all wanted to be heard.

With this in mind, I am reminded of the quote from Dead Poets Society that is so often related to the late Robin Williams in his role as an inspirational teacher:

“You must strive to find your OWN voice, because the longer you wait to begin, the less likely you are to find it at all”.

Living out our college motto today can perhaps be summed up in enabling each and every voice to be heard. University is, I think the perfect place to test out our voice, a time to work out who and what we are, and believe me, some of us are still on that journey!

The varied voices and talents that are summed up in the symbols brought to the heart of the cathedral, the singing and instrumentalists who make this service what it is, are a reflection of the varied voices of each of us here today. None of us think and look alike, we are not clones of each other and celebrating our own particular voice, our own style and what I like to refer to as “fabulousness” is one of the great joys of being part of the Chad’s family. We celebrate today all the differences, variety and richness of our college family and as I have been welcomed so warmly back into college life by you all, it is to this that we can truly celebrate today. On a very personal note, I want to say a huge thank you to all of you for making me feel so much at home again upon my return to Chad’s.

The lasting legacy we lay down for those who will come beyond us, to start their journey of discovery is to ensure we have secured a unique college community that, whilst being the smallest in Durham, is one of the richest in its diversity.

Let’s be honest, if you can all welcome a chaplain who doesn’t know whether he should be wearing a cassock or his running shoes then you can welcome anyone into our great and wonderful college of St Chad’s.

I think St Chad and our founders would agree that our motto to celebrate who and what you are can be summed up in these words, which is my hope for all of you....to live your life to the full, be true to who you are: Tell *your* Truth, Find *your* Voice, Sing *your* Song.