

Revd Michael Burns
Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon :
December 31, 2017 ~ “New Year’s Eve”

I hope you all had a good Christmas and that everything for which you so carefully prepared made it all worthwhile. What Christians have been celebrating over these past days is the images of love and hope that can transform our world. However, as soon as Christmas Day is over, the Christian Church is plunged into the stark truth of real life by the festival days that immediately follow:

On 26 December we remembered St Stephen – the first ever Christian martyr – who died asking forgiveness for his killers.

On 27 December we remembered St John the Evangelist – who gave us words of power and courage in the Fourth Gospel.

On 28 December we commemorated the Feast of the Holy Innocents when we remembered those who were murdered as innocents – horrors which still fill our papers to this day.

And then 29 December was the Feast of Archbishop Thomas Becket– when the clash of religion and politics reached a high pitch of tension which resulted in bloodshed on the steps of the Cathedral altar, when Thomas a Becket was murdered for defending the Church and its ideals and jurisdiction.

No, it cannot be said that all the post-Christmas days in the Christian calendar are particularly filled with love and peace and joy. Yet this really is the message that our world still desperately needs to hear - the Christian message of **love** and **hope**; the same message today as it did over 2,000 years ago.

This New Year’s Eve is a very good time for us to pause and reflect, looking back to the past as we look forward to the future. Maybe we can ponder what have we learnt from this past year and what we are going to try to promise for the

coming New Year? It may be something quite small and insignificant which we want to change in our lives. It may be something much bigger. But whatever it is we are resolved to do, we must always remember that, all together, we can make a huge difference by sharing a little bit of **love** and **hope** with others in our world – or at least in that small part of God’s world which we are privileged to inhabit today.

There are lots of things published in paper and on the internet, giving us lots of good advice as we prepare to move from one year to the next. For me, I have always liked the Rule of Conduct which was penned by John Wesley way back in the 18th century but which I think has stood the test of time. It is a very simple rule of life which we might choose to adopt for the forthcoming New Year:

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, As long as ever you can. Amen.

And a very happy New Year to you all.