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Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : March 1st, 2020
“St David’s Day”

SERMON – 1 MARCH 2020
ST DAVID’S DAY AND BAPTISM OF ANDERSON AYLEN

There is a story that surrounds today and why the leek is the national flower of Wales. Many centuries ago there was a fierce battle as the men of Wales fought for hours to protect their land from the Saxon invaders. But despite their heroic efforts, the Welsh were slowly losing. In the heat of the battle it was difficult to tell friend from foe. The fact that both sides wore similar clothing made the fight all the more confusing.

A monk noticed that this was becoming a real problem. As the Welsh lost more and more ground, the monk cried out to them, "Welshmen, you must mark yourselves so that you can better tell who is Saxon and who is Welsh. The monk plucked a leek plant from the ground and continued, "Here, wear these so you will know that any soldier who does not have a leek is your enemy." Of course, many of the soldiers thought this was a very odd idea, but the monk was one of God's men so they went along with it. Soon every Welsh soldier was wearing a leek on his helmet. They carried on attacking the invaders and before long, the Welsh had won the battle.

The monk who came up with the idea of wearing a leek was named David, the man who died on this day in about the year 601, quickly becoming a saint and being made the patron saint of Wales. Today the 1st March is celebrated as a patriotic and cultural festival by the Welsh in Wales and around the world and the leek is the

national flower of Wales and Welsh people all over the world proudly wear the stalk, flower or a bit of leaf from a leek plant. But the leek also has a flower much like a daffodil (which is quite a bit easier to find around the world in March), so many wear daffodils instead.

What sort of man was David? It is said he was a very spiritual man but was also renowned for showing compassion to others, particularly the poor and the sick. He is believed to have founded the monastery at St David's as well as at least a dozen more. His monastic rule had an emphasis on hard work, abstaining from alcohol and restraining from unnecessary speech. Whether all those from Wales exhibit the same characteristics today might be open to debate. But it was for his kindness and generosity that David was particularly noted. Kindness. Generosity. Those are two such precious characteristics for any human being to possess. I haven't asked Richard and Danielle what they hope for as Anderson grows up – but for him to grow into a boy and man who is full of kindness and generosity would be a pretty good aim. So it is wonderful today that we are all here to join in the celebration of Anderson's christening – his 'Christing' – when he is brought to be baptised here at Christ Church, a church which has a long association for the Ayles family and wearing the traditional family christening robe – so lots of continuity all round. Give thanks for Anderson. Celebrate his birthday each year – 24 July – but also remember 1 March, St David's Day, when we pray that God may give Anderson the gifts of kindness and generosity, wonderful qualities which God bestowed on David over 1400 years ago. Amen.