

The Blessing of the Bicycles



Feast Day of Saint Cassius of Clermont
Saturday May 15, 2021
Red Wing, Minnesota

*Wherever two or three speeds are gathered in my name,
there shall I be also*

The Blessing of the Bicycles

By the Quicker Vicar

Collect & Blessing

Vicar: Dearly beloved, I humbly pray and beseech you as many as are here present to accompany me with a glorious thirst and some ready cash unto the taverns of Wisconsin and grant further that we may hereafter lead a goodly, riotous and inebriate life to the glory of thy most perfect ride.

Congregation: Hear, hear!

Vicar: Remember Lord, that many of our bicycles have risen from the dead, much like yourself. Bless these our bikes, let not our hubs spew forth their gears, protect and shield our tyres from punctures, save our thighs from unquenchable fire on the Maiden Rock Hill, and though we are not worthy, in thy mercy protect us from undue headwinds. This we ask not for others' sake but for ourselves.

Congregation: Amen!

The Reading *(from Genesis, Chapters 2 and 3)*

*Men and Women please read responsively where indicated in **Bold**.*

Vicar: In the beginning God created the bicycle, saw that it was good, and on the Seventh day He went for a nice ride on the bike lanes He'd made the day before, and they were good, too, because they were new and He had the angels keep them clear of debris. And God said to Himself,

Noel: Let us create man, because cycling is too much fun to keep to Myself

Vicar: and so God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul, and began watching football on the telly and drinking beer. But God put man in paradise, and commanded him, saying,

Noel: Glideth upon the earth anywhere thou wisheth, except for that big hill over there. For on the day thou goeth down that hill, thou shalt surely die.

Vicar: And God said,

Noel: Man needs a companion to keep him from spending too much money on new bicycles.

Vicar: So God caused man to fall into a deep sleep by asking him if he wanted to go clothes shopping at the mall, then took a rib from him. Then God said to Himself,

Noel: Who am I kidding, I'll never hear the end of it when she finds out she was just a rib,

Vicar: so He created woman from frankincense and myrrh and a certain je ne sais quoi. And God said,

Noel: Let man have dominion over table saws and metric socket wrenches, and let woman have dominion over everything else, and as long as thou art naked and unashamed, thou might as well be fruitful and multiply.

Vicar: Lastly, God created the chicken and the egg, in that order, which should clear up that matter. Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which God had made, and the serpent said to woman,

Men: Yea, hath God said you may cycle anywhere but down that hill?

Vicar: And woman said unto the serpent,

Women: That's about the size of it: go downhill and die.

Vicar: And the serpent said,

Men: Ye shall surely not die, you probably won't even fall off. For God doth know that on the day you go downhill, you shall be as gods and will not need to pedal for a long time. Go on, give it a try.

Vicar: And the woman saw that the hill was good, she did not need to pedal for a long time. She told the man about it, and he also went downhill. The eyes of them both were opened and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves into padded cycling shorts because sometimes it got bumpy going downhill.

And they heard the voice of God in the cool of the day, as He was offroad, fully suspended of course, and they hid their bicycles at the bottom of the hill and started whistling nervously.

Men: *(whistle nervously)*

Vicar: And God called unto the man, and said,

Noel: Where art thou?

Vicar: And the man said,

Men: We art down here.

Noel: Hast thou cycled downhill, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not cycle?

Vicar: And man said,

Men: It was her idea (*point to nearest woman*)

Vicar: And God said unto the woman,

Noel: What is this that thou hast done?

Vicar: And the woman said,

Women: The serpent beguiled me, and I did ride downhill.

Vicar: And God said unto the serpent,

Noel: Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel, and one day thou wilt be sunning thyself on the roadway and a bicycle shalt run thee over, to the surprise of all concerned.

Vicar: And God said unto the woman,

Noel: I will greatly multiply thy sorrow whilst climbing hills; in pain shalt thou perch upon thy saddle.

Vicar: And God said unto the man,

Noel: Because thou hast harkened unto the voice of thy wife, cursed is thy regular bike maintenance. The inner workings of thy hub gear will be beyond thou to repair. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou service thy freewheel.

Vicar: Here endeth the reading.

All: Thank God!

The Hymn "I Sing a Song of the Chaps on Bikes"



I sing a song of the chaps on bikes; _____ pa - tient and brave and
 They loved their three speed tour so well, and _____ this love _____ made them
 They lived not on - ly in a - ges past, there are gen - tle - men cy - clists



true, who ate and drank and _____ rode real slow on the
 strong. They stayed and well right for _____ safe - ty's sake for the
 still. The world is bright with the cy - cling chaps who _____



ride they _____ loved and knew. _____ One's name was Noel and an -
 whole of the two days long. _____ And _____ one was a sai - lor and
 love to ride Bri - tish steel. You can meet them in pubs, or in



oth - er was Jon, and _____ then there was Dave and _____
 one was a priest and _____ one was _____ chased by a
 lanes, or at sea, or in church, or in trains, or in



don't for - get Ron! They are all of them Gen - tle - men and I mean, chaps,
 fierce, wild _____ beast! And there's not a - ny rea - son, no, not the least, why
 shops, or at tea. For those chaps on _____ bikes are Nut - ters like me, and



help me to be one, too.
 I should n't be one, too.
 I mean to be one, too!

The Psalm

Adapted from King James Bible, 23rd Psalm

Please read responsively

Vicar: The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Congregation: He maketh me to lie down at lunchtime:
he leadeth me beside back waters.

Vicar: He restoreth my bike:

Congregation: he leadeth me in the bikepaths of righteousness for his
name's sake.

Vicar: Yea, though I ride through the valley of the Mississippi,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;

Congregation: thy rod brakes and thy Dynohub™ they comfort me.

Vicar: Thou preparest a table before me in ~~the Eagle's Nest Coffee~~
~~shop~~ Slippery's:
thou anointest my chain with oil;

Congregation: now my chaincase runneth over.

Vicar: Surely goodness and Sturmeys
shall follow me all the days of my life:

Congregation: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Prayers for Strength

Vicar: Lord, teach thy ways unto the wicked:

Congregation: and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.
(Psalm 51 if you squint a bit)

Vicar: I lift up mine eyes unto the hills;

Congregation: from whence cometh my help?
(Psalm 121)

Vicar: Make straight roads for our feet,

Congregation: so that the feeble may not be turned out of the way, but
may be made strong.
(Hebrews 12:13)

Dismissal

Vicar: Remember that life is short and we do not have much time
to gladden the hearts of others, so be swift to love, make
haste to be kind and go forth and ride with joy.

All: RAmen

† † †

Service adapted by Matthew Cole, the Quicker Vicar, 2021.

Apres Moi, le deluge

Notes on Today's Service

Saint Cassius of Clermont is, I would say, one of your less well-known saints, but today is his feast day! He was a Senator who was converted to Christianity (that sounds weirdly contemporary) in the 3rd Century AD. Cassius was killed with Victorinus (a pagan priest who had also been converted and who probably liked cool knives with toothpicks and scissors and shit) and others at Clermont by Chrocas, the chieftain of the Alemanni (Germans), who were invading Roman Gaul (France) at the time (that also sounds familiar). According to tradition, Chrocas is said to have killed a weirdly specific total of 6,266 Christians at Clermont at this time. The reason St. Cassius caught my eye is because Clermont is the town featured in the superb 1970 film *Kelly's Heroes* starring Clint Eastwood, Donald Sutherland, Telly Savalas, Don Rickles, Carroll O'Connor, Gavin MacLeod and others. One day in 2012 Karla and I were driving across France, as one does, and I saw an exit for Clermont. This Clermont would be on the way to Nancy, as in the movie, so I had to go have a look. The real Clermont is a sleepy little village with a neglected regional railway stop and looked nothing like the Clermont in *Kelly's Heroes*, not totally surprising since that was filmed in Yugoslavia with an extravagant amount of explosives, but I have a lingering soft spot for the town. It would be unlikely that you could kill 6,266 Christians there these days, the population looked more like maybe 250 (121 Celsius). The 23rd Psalm is adapted from the **King James Version** of the **Bible** (first issued 1611, most commonly cited edition is the 1769). This was an update of the first translations of the Bible into English using the new medium of print, a controversial political as well as religious act at the time, by William Tyndale. The Roman Catholic authorities looked upon this with disfavor and had him strangled *and* burned at the stake, just to make sure I guess, on 6 October 1536. The final "RAMen" at the close of the service is our interdenominational nod to **Pas-tafarians**, those who believe in the **Flying Spaghetti Monster** and think they have been touched by **His Noodly Appendage**. The chainring on the front cover is from a **Rudge**; this particular image is from **Bike Cult's** website (www.bikecult.com) and its excellent Chainring Archive. The actual **Crankifix** that we would have used in today's service if the Vicar hadn't dropped it earlier this morning was created by the ingenious **Peter Martin** using a **Rudge** crankset. **The Vicar** Matthew Cole was ordained by the **Universal Life Church** following a rigorous screening process consisting mostly of making sure he had a valid email account. The shirts he bought at the Luther Seminary back when they still had a bookstore. The Vicar is available for weddings ~~and Bar Mitzvahs~~. In actual life, Matt's wife Karla is the Music Director at Saint Christopher's Episcopal Church in Roseville, Minnesota, where Matt sings tenor in the choir most Sundays in season, early September to early June, except tomorrow and also most of the last 14 months.