

The Blessing of the Bicycles



Feast Day of Saint Dunstan

Saturday May 20, 2023

Red Wing, Minnesota

*And cyclists everywhere now-a-bed
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here*

The Blessing of the Bicycles

By the Quicker Vicar

Collect & Blessing

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 flats, let our cotter pins remain without blemish, 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.

All: Amen

**** Remembering Noel Robinson ****

The Reading *(Adapted from Shakespeare's Henry V)*

Vicar: O that we now had here
But one ten thousand of those men in England
To ride with us to-day!

Jon: What's he that wishes so?
My clergy The Vicar? No, my fair Vicar
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
No, wish not a man from England.
Rather proclaim it, through my host,
That he which hath no stomach to this ride,
Let him depart; his passport shall be made,

We would not ride in that man's company
 That fears his fellowship to ride with us.
 This day is call'd the feast of Dunstan.
 He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
 Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
 And say 'To-morrow is Saint Dunstan's.'
 Then will he raise his leg and show his scars,
 And say 'These wounds I had on Dunstan's day.'
 And he'll remember, with advantages,
 What feats he did that day. Then shall the names,
 Familiar in his mouth as household words-
 Maiden Rock Hill, Bay City Plummet,
 Sturmey and Archer, Raleigh and Dunelt-
 Be in their flowing cups freshly rememb'ed.
 And Saint Dunstan's Day shall ne'er go by,
 From this day to the ending of the world,
 But we in it shall be remembered-
 We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
 For he today that rides his steed with me
 Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
 This day shall gentle his condition;

All: And cyclists everywhere now-a-bed
 Shall think themselves accurs'd they were not here,
 And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
 That rode with us upon Saint Dunstan's day.

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 well right for safe-ty's sake for the
 still. The world is bright with the cy-cling chaps who
 ride whole of the two days and knew. One's name was Noel and an-
 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 in one church, 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 Cof-
feeshop:
thou anointest my chain with oil;

Congregation: now my chaincase runneth over.

Vicar: Surely goodness and Sturme
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

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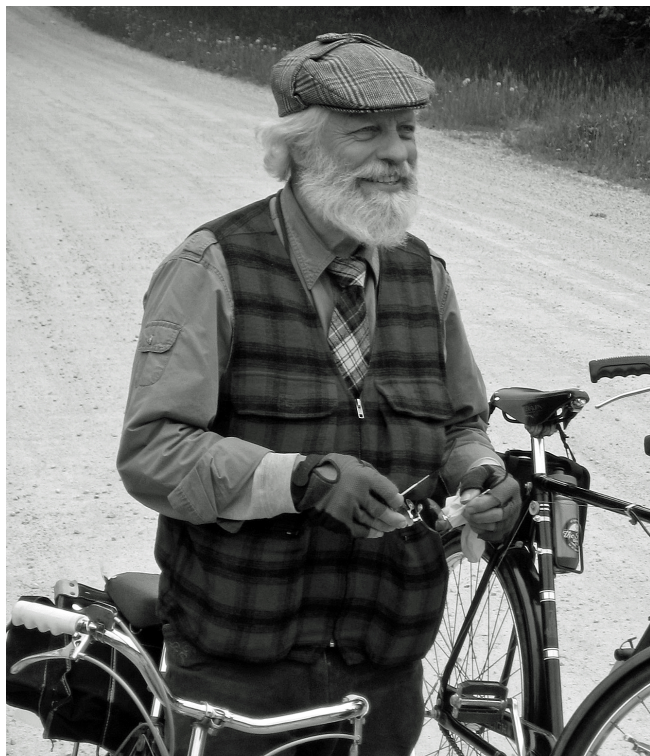
Service adapted by Matthew Cole, the Quicker Vicar, 2023.

*It never gets easier, you just get slower.
-St. Gregory of Le Monde*

Notes on Today's Service

Noel Robinson at the base of Hill Road in 2006. We miss him immensely.

In the liturgical churches (Roman Catholic, old-line Protestant) the Lectionary specifies the cycle of readings for each Sunday throughout the year on a three-year cycle known as Years A, B & C. I've adopted this excellent practice, with the exception of feast days, such as today's Saint Dunstan's Day, where we have a special secular reading: the **St. Crispin's Day speech** from the play **Henry V** (properly, *The Cronicle Hiftory of Henry fift*) written by **William Shakespeare**, who you'd think could spell better, around 1600, nearly 200 years after the battle of **Agincourt** (1415) which it depicts. At Agincourt an exhausted and retreating English army beat a vastly larger French army while suffering only light casualties. It is considered one of the glorious achievements of English arms and is celebrated in the medieval **Agincourt Hymn**, thanking God ("Deo Gracias") for helping in the slaughter. This was part of the **Hundred Years War** and took place between the Somme River and Calais on the Channel coast, territory still fought over in huge, bloody battles 500 years later. The Agincourt battle happened on St. Crispin's Day, October 15, thus the common name for the speech. Westmoreland (played here by The Vicar) wished for more men to help their small army; Henry (Jon) said, No! We will win a great battle today and more's the glory for those of us who are here! Those bums back in England will feel like a bunch of losers as long as any of us are around!, although it's put a little more eloquently. You can see the speech on film delivered by **Lawrence Olivier** (1944) or **Kenneth Branagh** (1989). It has often been referenced in other productions, including the title of the HBO World War II series **Band of Brothers**



and in the final **Black Adder** episode parodied as "We few, we happy few, we band of ruthless bastards." You can catch it next March - May at Minneapolis's Guthrie Theater where they are doing *Richard II*, *Henry IV* and *Henry V* in a sequence called *A Brittle Glory*. Pro tip: don't go on April 8th, the day of the total eclipse. Anyway, I shortened and adapted the speech for the Blessing and May 19 happens to be St. Dunstan's Day, which fits nicely into the rhythm and rhyme of St. Crispin. **St. Dunstan** was the Archbishop of Canterbury from 960 to 988AD. He had doubts about religious orders because he didn't think the celibate life would suit him, but then he came down with a horrible skin disease and, it being easier for ugly people to remain celibate, became a priest. He served several English kings ending with **Ethelred the Unready**, wrote the service for crowning the monarch in much the same form it's used today (including for **Charles III**, who doesn't have a cool nickname yet, a fortnight ago), worked as a blacksmith, goldsmith, painter and jeweler and is the patron saint of goldsmiths. While **St. Crispin/Crispinian** (thought to be twins, both shoemakers, preached Christianity in Gaul and beheaded for their efforts in 286AD) were removed from the Roman Catholic sainthood by the Vatican II council due to doubts as to their existence and suspicions that they actually represented a pagan Celtic diety (Lugus-Mercurius), St. Dunstan persists. The Psalm (23rd) 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 be sure, on 6 October 1536. The hymn "**I Sing a Song of the Chaps on Bikes**" is an adaptation of "**I Sing a Song of the Saints of God**" by **Lesbia Scott**, the wife of a Royal Navy officer who wrote the song for her own children. She published a book of her own hymns for children in 1929. This tune was written by a retired American Episcopal priest, made it into the American Armed Forces hymnal and the Episcopal 1940 hymnal and became a much beloved hymn although it is virtually unknown in the UK despite all the lanes and tea stuff. The chainring on the front cover is from a **Rudge**; this particular image is taken from **Bike Cult's** website (www.bikecult.com) and its excellent Chainring Archive. The actual **Crankifix** used in today's service 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 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 in the choir most Sundays in season, early September to early June, except tomorrow.