

Dean's Letter, 23 August 2020

Dear Cathedral family, Brothers and Sisters in Christ

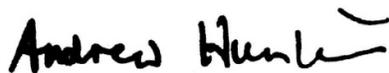
The Christian apologist and author, C.S. Lewis, describes the moment he surrendered to a faith in God. Ken Green notes that it “would be a few years before Lewis acknowledged Jesus Christ as Lord. Like all of us, he was a work in progress”:

“You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms. The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape? The words ‘compel them to come in’ have been so abused by wicked men that we shudder at them; but properly understood, they plumb the depths of the Divine mercy. The hardness of God is kinder than the softness of men; and His compulsion is our liberation” (Surprised by Joy, p 182f.)

I read and re-read the story of Lewis’ journey to faith in the living God, with fascination, puzzlement and also longing. I don’t always follow his argument or the steps in understanding that he took. His search for Joy – which (as far as I understand) brought him to the source of all Joy – is close to my heart. Yet my faith journey has been very different. I was baptised into the life of Christ and the Church as a baby, confirmed at the age of 14 – and I took that seriously; then a prayer of repentance and personal commitment to Christ as Lord at the age of 19, in my first year at UCT. I have never known the active resistance to God that Lewis writes about; nor his very strong desire to be “left alone”. I am probably a bit more like the Elder Brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son; always there, always (up to a point) faithful.

Yet this journey of faith, which included a call into the ordained ministry, has had its bumps and its times of despair. I still long for joy, for delight, for wonder; my conversion at the age of 19 was very real, but it was hardly a ‘Damascus road’ experience, which saw St Paul move from an active opposition to Jesus Christ to belief and faith. Perhaps it was more like a move from being in the shadows into the sunlight. It brought into life the smouldering coals and embers of faith that had been there from childhood. I continue to read and think and pray and wonder.

My love to you all

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Hunt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.