

What we wear

Richard Greatrex *reflects on* Romans 13:8-end

What we wear can express so much about our personalities – our role, social status, values, aspirations, freedoms, beliefs. As embodied creatures, our identity is, rightly or wrongly, invested in and conveyed by our appearance. So Paul's strikingly powerful image in today's epistle, inviting us to "put on" Christ like a garment, ignites something very tangible in our imaginations. We all know the dramatic effect clothing can have upon us; our attire affects not only our physical bearing, posture and breathing, but also our image of ourselves and therefore how we interact with others. Paul understands that by clothing ourselves in Christ's love we actively define and illuminate our identity in Christ – a timeless, rooted, spiritual identity – being empowered from the outside when our inner resources alone prove insufficient.

The "outward vesture" (of prayer, scripture reading, worship) draws out our inner soulfulness, and the more we cultivate and practise the art of "putting on" Christ, the more we will grow into Christ's likeness and transform our way of being present in the world. When clergy who wear vestments prepare for worship, they accompany the putting on of each item – alb, stole, chasuble – with a special prayer relating to that particular part of the body.

May we similarly use our imaginations to dress ourselves in Christ's majesty and vulnerability, becoming more equipped to serve as disciples appropriately fashioned in Christ's own image. 🙏



Lord Jesus Christ, equip us to live as you lived, open to the needs of others as well as the promptings and urgings of your Spirit, that we might keep growing into the people you created us to be. Amen.

Foraging

Crab apples

by Caroline Hodgson

There are several theories about the origin of the name, one being that it derives from "crabbed", referring to its bitter taste. The small apples ripen from late summer into autumn, turning orange-red or yellow-green. But even the green varieties make the most incredible, sunset-coloured jelly. I've made plenty of crab apple jelly but I confess I've never tasted the raw fruit. What a wonderful metaphor that is, though – that something so

bitter-tasting is transformed into something so sweet.

You've probably guessed where I'm going with this – but it's not only a metaphor for the bitterness of crucifixion becoming the sweetness of resurrection. Every unpalatable moment in life, no matter how bad the taste, has within it the potential to transform into something delicious and sweet. Really understanding and living that is fundamental to faith.

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Holy Cross Day

by Caroline Hodgson

Holy Cross Day, sometimes called Exaltation of the Holy Cross, is celebrated in various Christian traditions on September 14. In Eastern churches the feast dates back to the dedication of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in around 335 AD. It was adopted by the Roman Catholic Church in the seventh century and is also observed in various other traditions, including Anglicanism and Lutheranism.

Tradition has it that the true cross was discovered in Jerusalem in 326 AD by St Helena, mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was then built at the site of the discovery, using a portion of the cross.

As the universal symbol of the Christian faith, the cross represents Jesus' victory over death. The feast celebrates the redemptive transformation of an instrument of torture into a divine "tree of life", that brings hope to humankind. 🙏

“It is easier to know God than our own soul, for God is nearer than that.”

Julian of Norwich (c. 1343-1416), English mystic and anchoress