



SAINT JAMES'
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Fremont, California

SERMON

12. November, 2008.
Feast of Charles Simeon

J.J.

Today we observe the Feast Day of the Rev. Charles Simeon. We had a number of choices this week: Leo the Great, Bishop of Rome (November 10th), or Martin, Bishop of Tours (November 11th) or the Consecration of our very first Episcopal Bishop, Samuel Seabury (November 14th). When I looked at all of these names, I thought, you know, not many of us know very much at all about Rev. Charles Simeon, and after all, today is his day . . . and so . . . we observe his feast day, as the calendar suggests.

I found a wonder, but brief article about him written by James Kiefer. Some two hundred Two hundred years ago, students at the English Universities were required to attend church regularly, and to receive the Holy Communion at least once a year. This latter requirement often had bad effects, in that it encouraged hypocrisy and an irreverent reception of the sacrament. Occasionally, however, it had a very good effect, as with the Cambridge student Charles Simeon. He wrote: "On 29 January 1779 I came to college. On 2 February I understood that at division of term I must attend the Lord's Supper. The Provost absolutely required it. Conscience told me that, if I must go, I must repent and turn to God."

By this experience his life was transformed. Upon finishing his college work he was ordained, and shortly appointed chaplain of Holy Trinity, Cambridge, where he remained for 55 years, until shortly before his death on 12 November 1836. His ministry helped to transform the lives of many undergraduates, of whom we may mention two in particular. Henry Martyn (see 19 Oct), inspired by Simeon, abandoned his intention of going into law and instead devoted his life and his considerable talents to preaching the Gospel in India and Persia. William Wilberforce (20 July), also led in part by Simeon's ministry of teaching and example, devoted his life to the abolition of slavery throughout the British Empire. Simeon's enthusiasm and zeal brought him much ridicule and abuse, which he bore uncomplainingly. Though he himself remained in one place, his influence extended through the Anglican world.

Today, you and I partake of that very same Eucharist that was so transforming for Charles Simeon. Indeed, God is with us in this holy celebration, which gives us strength for the journey to which God has called each one of us. As we just prayed, may God that we may see God hand in all things, so that we, following the example and teaching of your servant Charles Simeon, may walk with Christ in all simplicity, and serve him with a quiet and contented mind. *Amen*

S.D.G.

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