

A topsy turvy day

Kathryn Fleming *reflects on*
Philippians 2:5-11

One of the entertaining things about working in a cathedral is the business of getting people lined up for processions. It's all about knowing your place and sticking to it, but the interesting thing, of course, is that in church precedence the further back you find yourself, the more important you probably are. There are often sound practical reasons for this, but it's good theology too, reflecting the Gospel order of things.

I do sometimes wonder if we should choose one Sunday in the calendar to become "Topsy Turvy Sunday" – but how would we choose? Would it be when Mary sings of a God who has put down those who are mighty and exalted those who are humble? Or when the Gospel reminds us that "first shall be last and the last shall be first"? Or perhaps it might be today, when we celebrate a king on a donkey, and when St Paul reminds us of just what Jesus gave up to enter our world.

A whole theological tradition, "*kenosis*", has emerged from this, as writers have marvelled alongside Paul, that Christ "emptied himself", and became obedient to all the laws that bind the created order. In this as in all things, he sets a pattern for us, as we try day by day to triumph over ego and to empty ourselves in total obedience to God. 😊

Loving God, touch us afresh with your transforming Spirit. May Christ's life grow in us. May he become greater as we become less. This we ask in the name of he who, through his death and resurrection, turned the world upside down. Amen.



Things you wished you knew about church history

Part 3 – Alcuin

by Stephen Backhouse

When Charlemagne inherited the powerful Frankish kingdom in AD 771 he sought to re-establish a common culture in the West – a revival of learning, language, administration and theology that is known as the Carolingian Renaissance. At the forefront of this campaign was Alcuin (c. 735-804), an English scholar and priest who wrote in a letter to his king that "it may be that a new Athens will arise in Francia [and] our Athens, ennobled by the teachings of

Christ will surpass the wisdom of the Academy".

Alcuin was invited from York to run the palace school of Aix-la-Chapelle in 782. A prime focus was the education of the clergy. Alcuin wrote biblical commentaries and led the scholarly reworking of the Latin Vulgate Bible, fixing many corruptions of translation that had crept in. The clerical renaissance had effects beyond the walls of the Church. In an effort to make reading easier, Alcuin helped to develop "Caroline minuscule": today's system of writing using capital and small letters. 😊

Where does your palm cross come from?

by Caroline Hodgson

In the UK, many palm crosses come from charities such as African Palms, in the Diocese of Masasi in Tanzania. The project was founded in 1965 by an Anglican priest, Fr Alan Talbot, who served in Africa as a missionary for six years. The aim is to give people an opportunity to earn extra money by making the crosses. Importantly, however, this shouldn't interfere with their daily work of planting maize, millet and ground nuts to feed themselves

and their families. If there is any money over after all the costs have been paid, it is covenanted to a charitable trust set up to help schools and provide medical aid in the region.

The project has grown from very small beginnings, and many churches in Europe and North America now buy African Palm crosses for their Palm Sunday service.

Today you might want to hold your cross and pray for the community from which it came: <https://africanpalms.co.uk> 😊

“ Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord.”

Psalms 118:25-26