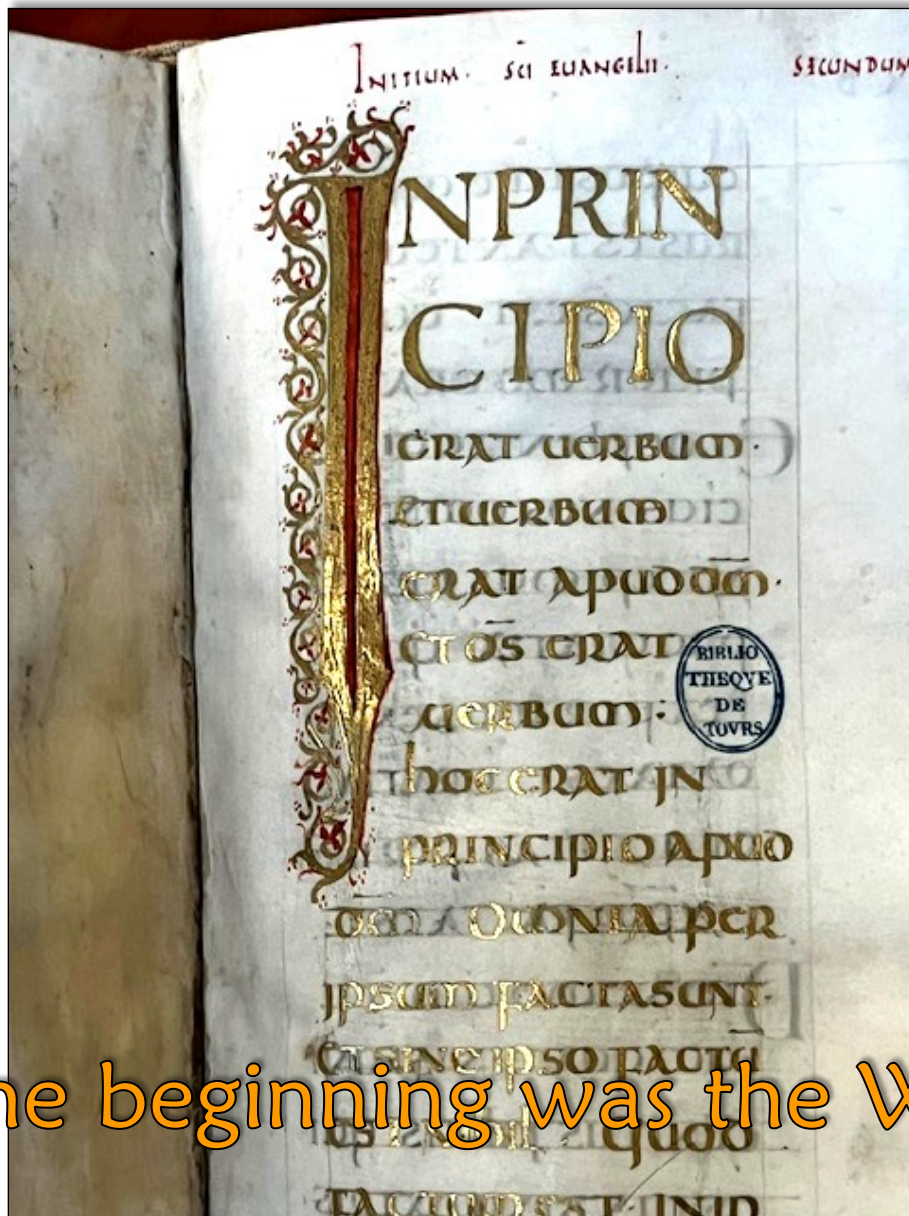


Number 39
February 2025

ALCUIN NEWS

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM SAINT ALCUIN OF YORK
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND CHAPLAINCY IN TOURAINE



In the beginning was the Word

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AT THE HEART OF OUR LIFE



SUNG EUCHARIST

with Junior Church

11.00 am
on the 4th Sunday of the Month

in the Parish Church of St Michel
Savigny-en-Véron

HEROES OF THE FAITH

George Herbert

Priest

Born in 1593 into the aristocratic Pembroke family, George Herbert went up to Cambridge in 1614, eventually becoming a fellow of Trinity College. At the age of twenty-five, he became Public Orator in the University and then a Member of Parliament, apparently destined for a life at court. To everyone's surprise, he decided to be ordained and, after spending a time with his friend Nicholas Ferrar at Little Gidding, he was made deacon in 1626. He married in 1629, was priested in 1630 and given the care of souls of the parish of Bemerton, near Salisbury, where he spent the rest of his short life. He wrote prolifically, his hymns still being popular throughout the English-speaking world. His treatise, *The Country Parson*, on the priestly life, and his poetry, especially *The Temple*, earned Herbert a leading place in English literature. He never neglected the care of the souls of Bemerton, however, and encouraged attendance at the weekday recitation of the daily office, calling to mind the words of his hymn, 'Seven whole days, not one in seven, I will praise thee'. He died on 27th February 1633.

*Look graciously upon us, Holy Spirit,
and give us for our hallowing thoughts that pass into prayer,
prayers that pass into love,
and love that passes into life with you for ever.*

FR JOHN WRITES



IN THIS SECULAR AGE THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND DOES NOT OFTEN MAKE HEADLINE NEWS. However, its recent newsworthiness has been for all the wrong reasons.

Shockingly, it was because it has been in turmoil since the Makin Review was published. This dealt with the abuse committed by John Smyth, a worker in youth camps for public school boys and a Reader in the Church. His abuse was called by the Review 'prolific, horrific and brutal'.

The scandal has led to the resignation of no less than the Archbishop of Canterbury, though he was by no means alone in being accused of being culpable in covering things up. Others have been named as bearing differing amounts of responsibility in the situation.

As might have been expected, the findings of the Review have brought out bloggers and other commentators in their hordes, each with their different points to make,

It is, of course, a time of feelings running very high. My own thoughts have been changing almost daily.

Apart from hoping that all who bear responsibility in the matter will show full and open contrition, I do not wish to be among those pointing fingers or of those who think they have the formulae to set things right. After all, I can only view things from my own small corner.

'The past is a foreign country: they do things differently over there', so wrote L.P. Hartley at the beginning of "The Go-between".

Let us pray that that will be able to be said of our beloved Church of England as we move into the future, hopefully with lessons learned. May our attitude to safeguarding continue to improve so that we can be well and truly a safe and open Church.

Fr John

THE ST ALCUIN CALENDAR

Our worship in the coming months

SERVICES ARE AT SAVIGNY-EN-VÉRON. WE ARE VERY WILLING TO EXPLORE OTHER POSSIBILITIES: PLEASE ASK FR JOHN

February 23rd	<i>2nd Sunday before Lent</i>	11.00 am	Sung Eucharist
March 23rd	<i>Lent 3</i>	11.00 am	Sung Eucharist
April 20th	<i>Easter Day</i>	11.00 am	Sung Eucharist with First Communion
May 25th	<i>Easter 6</i>	11.00 am	Sung Eucharist

Good Christians all Rejoice

IT IS ALWAYS A DELIGHT TO MEET CHRISTIANS FROM OTHER CHURCHES, PERHAPS ESPECIALLY THOSE FROM DIFFERENT TRADITIONS. For the past few years it has been the custom for Roman Catholics and Anglicans to have a joint Carol Service to share the good news of the birth of Jesus. Carols and readings alternate between French and English, proving that the birth of our Saviour transcends all barriers of language and culture.



together we met round some excellent “apéros”. Just because we worship differently doesn’t prevent us being friends.

But this was just the first time Christians of different traditions came together this winter.

This Christmas the celebration was more widely shared and included the Eglise reformée in Saumur and the Eglise protestante évangélique in Chinon.

The venue was the chapel of St Louans Priory, which is set in beautiful surroundings on a hill outside the centre of Chinon, which is now a rest home. It was a particular joy to welcome some of the sisters from the priory and even a few residents of the home at the service.

As we followed the traditional English format of nine readings interspersed with popular carols it was important that everyone could participate even though the service was bilingual.

We made sure that everybody had the readings in front of them in their own language. And as far as the carols were concerned we tried to ensure that, even if the words were unfamiliar, the tunes were well-known.

However, it was not just a celebration in word and song: after we had rejoiced

Barely a month later it was the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, an annual event which runs from 18th to 25th January.



This time we, the Anglicans, invited our neighbouring Christians to join us for Morning Prayer to mark the start of the Week.

All four local Churches took part again and it was our delight to welcome Pasteur Georgia Roehrich, the Protestant Hospital Chaplain in Touraine as our preacher. She gave us a thought-provoking sermon which centred on the story of “doubting” Thomas.

Once again, we had not only gathered for worship: “apéros” followed again. And they too were ecumenical. Hosts and visitors both brought delicious tidbits to eat, not just we Anglicans.

May the real joy we feel of being together grow into a an impatience for that unity which is the will of our Lord.

Taking Counsel Together

THE QUARTERLY MEETING OF OUR CHAPLAINCY COUNCIL AT THE BEGINNING OF DECEMBER WAS LARGELY TAKEN UP WITH ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY.

We welcomed the news that Fr Andrew Norman is to be ordained bishop to serve in the diocese and looked forward to meeting him.

We also agreed that, following our usual practice, that we ask permission for our churchwardens, Louise Taylor and Charlotte Field, to be authorised as ministers



of Holy Communion.

For some time we have been considering having a charitable project. We have to do this within the French association law. We discussed the progress being made in this and the steps we need to continue to make.

Alcuin of York

“The most learned man anywhere to be found”

WE, THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN TOURAINE, ARE VERY PROUD TO HAVE SAINT ALCUIN AS OUR PATRON. Chosen because he was an Englishman who ended his life in Tours, we rejoice that he made such a great contribution Christian life and liturgy, not least whilst he was Abbot of St Martin’s. Here we offer a snapshot of some of his achievements.

ALCUIN AT YORK

Born in or near York sometime between 732 and 740AD, Alcuin spent much of his life at the cathedral school. Starting as a pupil, he stayed on as teacher, and finally, in 778, rising to become headmaster. It was a school renowned as a centre of learning in the liberal arts, literature and science as well as in religious matters.

ALCUIN MEETS THE EMPEROR

In 781 Alcuin was sent to Rome to petition the Pope for the Diocese of York be raised to an archbishopric. Here he met the emperor Charlemagne, not for the first time, and reluctantly accepted his offer to become Master of the Palace School at Aachen. Until Alcuin’s arrival, the school had been mostly a place for teaching royal children manners, but he brought assistants over



from York and completely transformed it. He revolutionised its educational standards and introduced Charlemagne himself to the liberal arts. The atmosphere of scholarship and learning he created led to it being known as “the school of Master Albinus”.

ALCUIN THE SCHOOLMASTER

Alcuin settled well at the Palace School, although he did return to York for a time. He had nicknames for his pupils and is credited with having written a set of mathematical exercises, or propositions, called “*Propositiones ad acuendos juvenes*” or “*Propositions for Sharpening Youths*.” for them. There were 53 of these problems, all with solutions. They give us a valuable insight into what mathematical education was like at the school. We print two of them here and you will find the solutions on page 6.

ALCUIN AND THE CAROLINGIAN RENAISSANCE

Alcuin was not solely the Master of the Palace School, but was also the foremost of an illustrious group of scholars Charlemagne had gathered round him, to foster an intellectual revolution.

Many of the reforms he carried out concerned the Church and its worship. First was the Eucharist itself. The liturgy used in Rome was ordered to be used throughout the empire. And although it had been used before, it became mandatory

to sing the Nicene Creed every Sunday, except in Advent and Lent. However, his greatest legacy in the reform of worship was in the beautiful prayers that he wrote. One (*Eternal light, shine into our hearts*) has been newly put into Common Worship and is in regular use by us. But his best known is the one we print on this page—a personal preparation for celebrating the Eucharist.

ALCUIN AND CHARLEMAGNE

In his role as adviser, Alcuin had Charlemagne’s ear and it was he who caused the emperor to abolish the death penalty for paganism. “*Faith is a free act of the will, not a forced act. We must appeal to the conscience, not compel it by violence. You can force people to be baptised, but you cannot force them to believe*”, he said.

RETIREMENT IN TOURS

By 796 Alcuin wanted to retire, so he left Aachen to become Abbot of St Martin’s in Tours. He was just as active here. His biggest achievement was the development of a scriptorium, where manuscripts were meticulously copied. Over the door he had written “*Let those who reproduce the oracles of the sacred law sit in this place, let them beware of all frivolous words, lest their hands also wander among frivolities; let them strive to make the books they execute correct, and let their pen follow the right path.*” His memory lingers on in the Charlemagne Tower under which Charlemagne’s fourth wife, Luitgarde, was buried in 800 whilst Charlemagne was visiting his mentor. Alcuin himself died here in 804AD.

IS ALCUIN A SAINT?

Alcuin features in the calendars of several Anglican provinces, including that of the Church of England. He is also considered a saint in some parts of the Orthodox Church. But there is an Alcuin sized gap in the largest Christian denomination in the world—the Roman Catholic Church. Let us pray that his wisdom and piety may one day be recognised there too.

Two of Alcuin’s Propositions

Problem 18: A farmer with a wolf, a goat, and a cabbage must cross a river by boat. The boat can carry only the farmer and a single item. If left unattended together, the wolf would eat the goat, or the goat would eat the cabbage. How can they cross the river without anything being eaten?

Problem 43: A certain man has 300 pigs. He ordered all of them to be slaughtered in 3 days, but with an uneven number killed each day. What number were to be killed each day?

A prayer of Alcuin

Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleans the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

We believe in one God

WHAT DO YOU MOST LOOK FORWARD TO WHEN YOU COME TO CHURCH? Surveys have shown that it is the sermon—but also that people are often disappointed with what they hear. Even if that is not what you would put at the top of your list, I doubt if you would choose the Creed.

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The origins of this statement of Christian belief go back 1700 years, to 325AD when the emperor Constantine called a council of bishops from all over Christendom, in the city of Nicaea, now Iznik in Turkey.

This Council of Nicaea was the first council of its kind. Constantine called it to resolve some divisive issues that had arisen in the Church and preserve its unity.

The main point he wanted to discuss was the conflict caused by a presbyter from Alexandria in Egypt, called Arius, concerning the divine nature of Jesus. Arius was critical of the bishop's teachings on Christology. The bishop, Alexander, taught that Jesus as God the Son was eternally generated from the Father, while Arius and his followers asserted that the Father alone was eternal, and that the Son was created or begotten by the Father, had a defined point of origin and so was subordinate to the Father.

The emperor and the Church in Rome tended to support Arius' view, but the council did not go their way. The assembled bishops came down strongly in favour of Jesus Christ being eternally divine.

The outcome was a statement of faith which was the first version of what we now know as the Nicene Creed. It reflects the issues resolved by the Council, with its strong emphasis on the person of Christ.

Although orthodox theology became what we recognise today, three Persons in one God, the divisions were not healed—something which was to have a profound effect on the fourth century Church in Tours.

As he started his Christian life, Martin was

fiercely anti-Arian, as was Hilary of Poitiers. So Martin went to Poitiers to seek out his mentor, and then established a monastery in Ligugé, just south of the city. It was there that his fame grew, which led to him becoming Bishop of Tours by popular acclaim.

At that time the Nicene Creed was a statement of faith, but not part of the liturgy. Its use started some two centuries later and did not become universal until the end of the eighth century, under the influence of (yes!) Alcuin.



Why do we say it together when we meet for worship? The answer lies in the first word: 'We'.

Unfortunately, the Latin Mass used the singular, 'Credo' which for centuries affected translations into other languages. But this creed is not about individual belief, rather it is about being part of a Church which is on the right lines.

Our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who loves each one of us individually, is not just like God, but is God himself. That is something to rejoice in: something which makes reciting this seemingly very dry technical statement of belief come alive for us today.

SOLUTIONS TO ALCUIN'S PROPOSITIONS

Problem 43: This problem seems to be composed for rebuking troublesome students, and no solution is given. (Three odd numbers cannot add up to 300.)

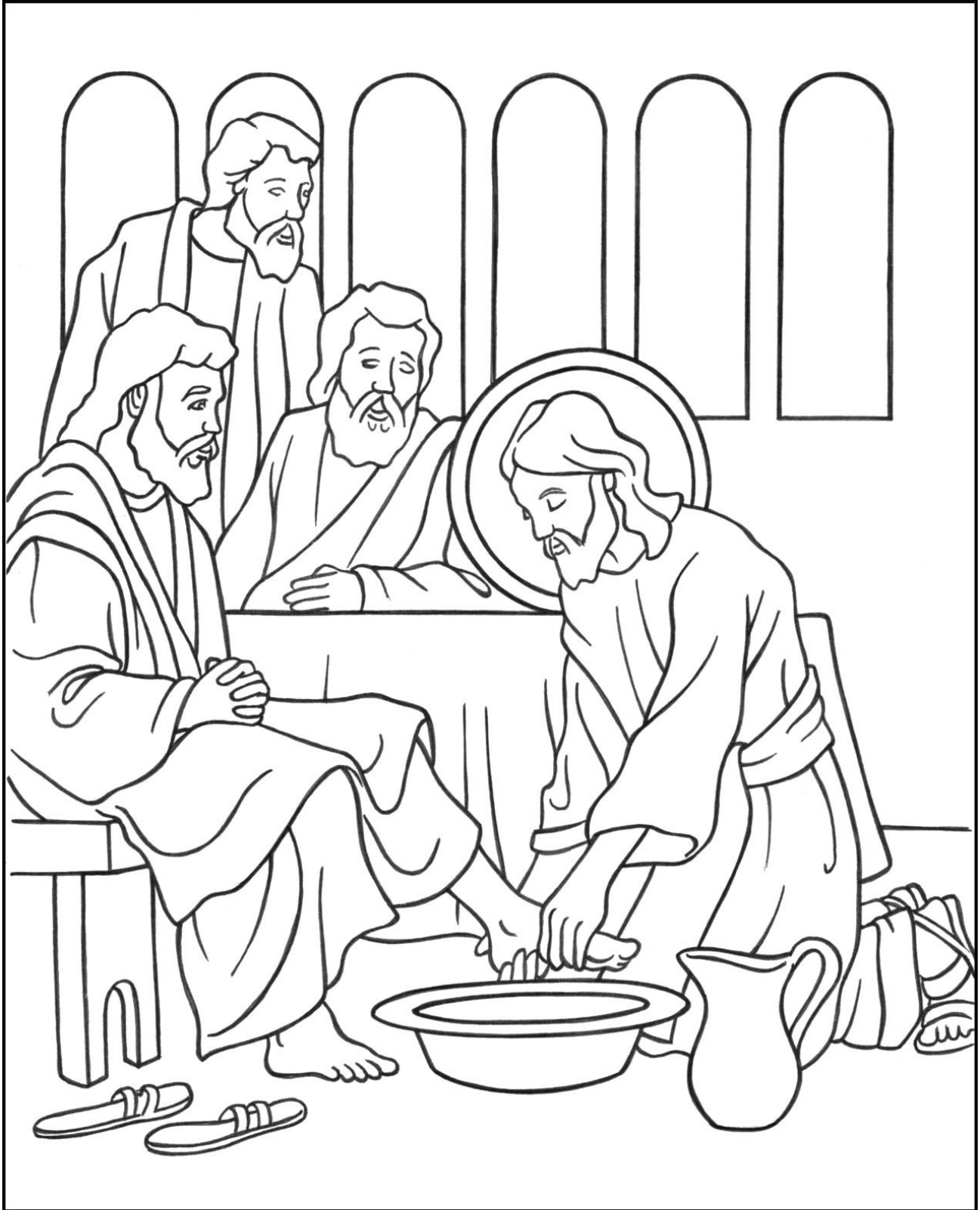
the goat. The dilemma is solved by taking the wolf (or the cabbage) over and bringing the goat back. Now he can take the cabbage (or the wolf) over, and finally return to fetch the goat.

Problem 18: The first step that must be taken is to let the goat go across the river, as any other actions will result in the goat or the cabbage being eaten. When the farmer returns to the original side, he has the choice of taking either the wolf or the cabbage across next. If he takes the wolf across, he would have to return to get the cabbage, resulting in the wolf eating the goat. If he takes the cabbage across second, he will need to return to get the wolf, resulting in the cabbage being eaten by

FOR OUR YOUNGER READERS

On the night before he died, Jesus had supper with his friends. Before the meal he knelt down to wash their feet. He knew what was going to happen to him, so he must have felt very scared. But that didn't stop him wanting them to feel comfortable.

It is always good to do kind things to other people, no matter how we feel.



In the beginning was the Word

IT WAS WITH A SENSE OF EAGER ANTICIPATION THAT A SMALL GROUP FROM ST ALCUIN'S WENT TO TOURS CENTRAL LIBRARY IN MID DECEMBER. The Chief Conservator of the city's heritage collection of documents, Monsieur Régis Rech, had granted us a private viewing of the library's oldest and one of their most precious documents, the "Charlemagne Evangélaire".

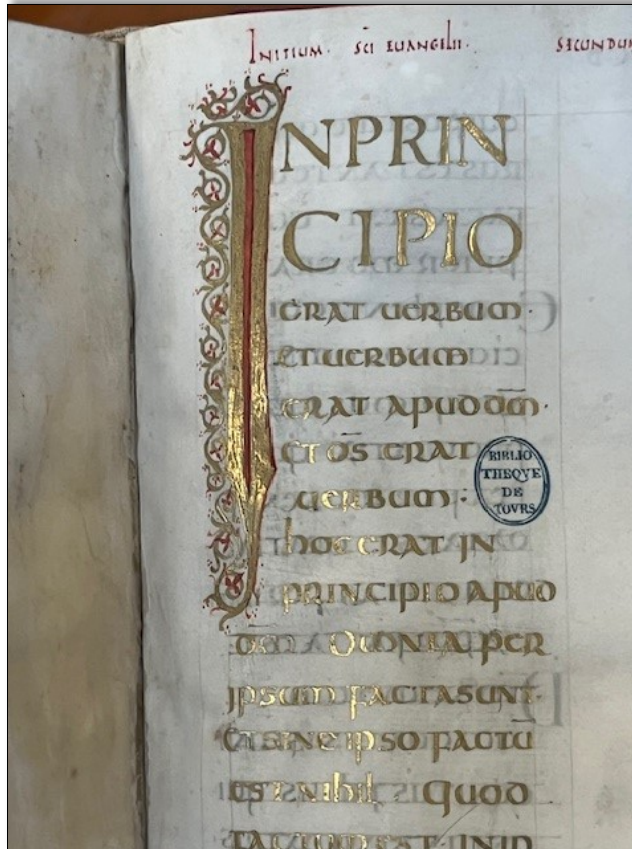
The Evangélaire is a Book of Gospels and what made the occasion very special for us was that it was written in the early ninth century, probably under the direction of Alcuin, when he was Abbot of St Martin's in Tours.

When it was uncovered from its protective wrapping, our first sight was of a very thick tome (which we later experienced as heavy, too) covered in red velvet. The only ornamentation on the cover was, in fact, for a practical purpose: a few diamonds to prevent the velvet being spoiled on an unsuitable surface.

But its interest does not only lie in its age and local origin. Written entirely in gold ink, and using the cursive script newly-developed under the influence of Alcuin, it is a complete copy of the four gospels, still legible today.

That it had been a working document was evidenced by the marks on the pages indicating how it should be chanted. We were looking at something used to proclaim the Christian message, to build up worshippers in their faith.

The text is the Latin translation of the bible, commonly known as the Vulgate, which was completed by St Jerome at the end of the fourth century. However, after centuries of copying by hand, errors had crept into the text. So Alcuin, and to



a lesser extent Theodulf, Bishop of Orleans (author of the well-known Palm Sunday hymn 'All glory laud and honour'), produced a revised version, freed of as many errors as possible. This evangélaire is a copy of that corrected version.

Scholars attribute the fact that this was the most influential version of the Vulgate largely to the productivity of the monks of the scriptorium which Alcuin

had founded at the Abbey of St Martin.

As well as including Jerome's preface to the Vulgate, two other features make this manuscript particularly interesting.

The first is that it contains a form of concordance, which shows where equivalent events and teaching come in each gospel. It is arranged in columns, separated by what look like architectural pillars.

The other feature shows how this Book of Gospels, which remained the property of the Abbey, was used in later centuries.

The kings of France bore the name of Capet which people believe had a connection with the cloak of St Martin. Perhaps because of this, they were honorary canons of St Martin's Abbey in Tours. On their accession they were required to swear an oath to protect the privileges of the abbey. This book of Gospels contains a copy of the oath in

Latin and in French, which strongly suggests that it was used when the oath was sworn.

We had spent a fascinating hour in the presence of this precious document. Our thanks are due to the generosity of Mr Rech and the conservation team of Tours city libraries for making this wonderful visit possible.

