

The Blessing of the Bicycles



The Feast Day of Saint Caroline Chisholm

Saturday May 16, 2009

Red Wing, Minnesota

The Blessing of the Bicycles By the Quicker Vicar, Matthew Cole

Collect & Blessing

Vicar: Remember Lord, that many of our bicycles have risen from the dead, much like yourself. Bless these our bikes, let not our hubs spew forth their gears, protect and shield our tyres from flats, let our cotter pins remain without blemish, save our thighs from unquenchable fire on the Maiden Rock Hill, and though we are not worthy, in thy mercy protect us from undue headwinds.

Congregation: Amen

Reading of the Commandment

Vicar: Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor his Rudge, nor his Higgins, nor his Dunelt, nor his Raleigh, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Congregation: What about Jon's Robin Hood?

Vicar: Neither shalt thou covet the Robin Hood, lovely though it is, nor shalt thou covet its 650B wheels.

The Cyclist's Lamentation

Vicar: O St. Rudge hear my prayer
And may my cry goeth up to thee.
For I am the most fortunate of Nutters.

Ladies: Lo, was not my disappointment manifest
When that Rudge Sports didst slippeth from my grasp
Even though I didst bid upon it most valiantly?

Men: In truth I didst keep faith with thee,
And also in St. Miller
who is like unto a lighthouse
To the bicyclist.
I did not pay heed to the fallen angel
Lucas, the Prince of Darkness,
But didst instead remain true of heart.

Ladies: Thou dost know that I in weakness
Was beguiled by the honeyed words
Of Shimano the Temptress;
Who didst promise me much,
But instead did gift me disappointment.

Men: Grant unto me the wisdom to know
When I hath strayed;
So that I might return unto the Joy that shall not Fade.

Ladies: O St. Rudge I hath lit unto thee
Many a candle.
And for Lo, many hath said in this hour,
'Is it the day, Or is it the night?'
For such were the numbers of the candles I didst light unto thee.

Men: Knowing in truth that I was good of Heart;
And honouring all that was wrought of British Steel;
Thou hast sent unto me a 'Wearwell' three-speed bicycle.
And for Lo, the work of it is good.

Ladies: Teach me in this hour the true path;
And guide my wheels upon it.
For many are the works of the Ungodly,
And those who hath made a hash of it.

Vicar: St. Williams pray for me,
and ever guide my chain upon thy sprockets.

Ladies: St. Miller pray for me,
and illumine my path all my days.

Men: St. Sturmey pray for me,
and ever may thy bearings turn freely within thy hub.

Noel: St. Brooks pray for me,
and may thee ever be a comfort to me as I ride upon my way.

Men: St. Dunlop pray for me,
and ever mayest thou keep me from punctures.

Ladies: St. Pawl pray for me,
And ever mayest thou engage my hub.

All: British Steel, forged for me,
Grant that I may always ride
A bike made from thee.
Amen

The Hymn

Please join in singing:

Amazing Gears

A - - - maz - - - ing _____ Gears _____ how
As we help us _____ ride _____ up Lord Bay to
Oh we help us _____ ride _____ up Lord Bay to

sweet the sound as they tick a _____
Ci - - - ty Hill As but cend - - - ing _____
be - - - come good but please _____ Lord _____

long in third. It is just a _____
Lord t'wards thee. we wish _____ that _____
not too soom! There's man _____ y a

bout the sweet _____ est _____ sound, that
we had low _____ er _____ gears, than
bar before Wa _____ ba _____ sha, and

I have _____ ev - - - er heard.
just these _____ blood - - - y three.
cock - - - tails _____ start - - - y at noon!

Music: New Britain, from Virginia Harmony, 1831; adaptation attributed to Edwin Othello Excell (1851-1921) Transcribed from The Hymnal 1982, Hymn 671
Words: Matthew J. Cole (b. 1957)

The Psalm

Adapted from King James Bible, 23rd Psalm

Please read responsively

Vicar: The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

Congregation: He maketh me to lie down at lunchtime:
he leadeth me beside back waters.

Vicar: He restoreth my bike:

Congregation: he leadeth me in the bikepaths of righteousness
for his name's sake.

Vicar: Yea, though I ride through the valley of the Mississippi,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;

Congregation: thy rod brakes and thy Dynohub™ they comfort me.

Vicar: Thou preparest a table before me in the Eagle's Nest
Coffeeshop:
thou anointest my chain with oil;

Congregation: now my chaincase runneth over.

Vicar: Surely goodness and Sturmeiy
shall follow me all the days of my life:

Congregation: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

Dismissal

Vicar: Make straight roads for our feet,
Congregation: so that the feeble may not be turned out of the way, but may be made strong.
(*Hebrews 12:13*)

Vicar: In the name of the Trinity, High Gear, Direct Drive and Low, go forth and ride.

All: RAmen

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Service adapted by Matthew Cole, the Quicker Vicar, 2009.

Lamentation adapted by Jon Sharratt and Matthew Cole from "I am the most fortunate of women", by Annie Welborn from New Zealand.

What Would Jesus Ride?

Notes on Today's Service

Three Speed Tourists who have attended my regular services (once a year) will recognize many elements of the Blessing liturgy. One has to scrape around a bit to find a saint for today. In 2007 it was St. Dunstan's day; in 2008 it was Whitsuntide, Pentecost, as early as it will be until 2160; this year it is the Feast Day of Saint Caroline Chisholm. Chisholm was born in 1808 in England and emigrated to Australia (by way of India, they did get around) with her soldier husband, where she engaged in many charitable works, primarily with destitute

emigrant women. There were many more men than women in Australia and the British government encouraged girls ("Sheilas") to emigrate to redress this imbalance. Chisholm met these ships and made sure the girls were well-treated. She also encouraged settling in the bush and sponsored outings with horse-drawn drays where the participants would ride part of the time and walk part of it and undoubtedly stop for tea. Sounds like our Tour! She and her husband lived in London towards the end of their lives and Caroline died in poverty and obscurity in 1877. Her grave in the Billing Road Cemetery, Northampton, simply says "The emigrant's friend". There remain Caroline Chisholm schools, charities and streets throughout Australia. She is recognized as a saint in the Anglican church, for whom this is St. Caroline Chisholm day, and the Roman Catholics are thinking about it.

In keeping with this Antipodal theme, the Lamentation at the core of today's service comes to us from Annie Welborn, known to many of you as Annie from New Zealand on the Bicycle Restoration list where she used to post fairly frequently. Annie is also engaged in good works as a lay person affiliated with The Little Company of Mary, a religious order started in the late 19th century, where she prays for and works with people in the final stages of life. Health issues forced an early retirement from her former social worker position. She says she is a semi-hermit now but still gets around by bicycle (a Hercules C frame) which "is great because it enables me to meet and talk to sooooo many people in a way I couldn't do if I drove a car". Doesn't sound very hermit-like to me! She does note that after writing "I Am the Most Fortunate of Women" (the original title, we've adapted it slightly) she did come into a Rudge, a gents model with Dunlop alloy rims, but now wears long skirts so it is not really suitable and she'll probably end up passing it on to some lucky chap. I told her we'd be thinking of her this day, and she said she'd say a prayer for us.

The Lamentation makes reference to many aspects of 3-speed cycling; the Rudge of course is a model that prided itself on being 'handmade' and had a hand in the crankset, as in the image on the front cover of this bulletin and embodied in our Crankifix. Lucas was a brand of famously intermittent electrics for bicycles, motorcycles and cars, hence the Prince of Darkness. Miller made headlights until the early 1960s, Williams made steel cranks and chainrings for most English bikes and Dunlop invented the pneumatic tire and made the alloy rims on Annie's Rudge. Sturmey was one of the founders of Sturmer Archer, whose 3-speed hubs dominate today's ride. Pawls are the little teeth that engage your hub when you pedal but which allow your rear wheel to freewheel when you don't. And as I like to note, the Bible talks about Saint Paul a lot but never even mentions Minneapolis.

Go forth, ride boldly and with joy, and may the winds ever be at your back!

-Matt Cole, Saint Paul, Minnesota May 2009