

The Blessing of the Bicycles

*Wherever two or three speeds are gathered in my name,
there shall I be also*



The Feast Day of Saint Caroline Chisholm
Saturday May 14, 2022
Red Wing, Minnesota

The Blessing of the Bicycles

By the Quicker Vicar, Matthew Cole

Collect & Blessing

Vicar: Dearly beloved, I humbly pray and beseech you as many as are here present to accompany me with a glorious thirst and some ready cash unto the taverns of Wisconsin and grant further that we may hereafter lead a goodly, riotous and inebriate life to the glory of thy most perfect ride.

Congregation: Hear, hear!

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 punctures, 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. This we ask not for others' sake but for ourselves.

Congregation: Amen!

The Lenton Observance

Selected bicycles are brought forward and sprinkled from the holy water bottle

Vicar: Remember that thou art rust, and to rust thou shalt return.

**The Cyclist's Lamentation, or
eBay, eBay, why hath thou forsaken me?**

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

Vicar: Here endeth the reading

Congregation: Thank God!

The Hymn "I Sing a Song of the Chaps on Bikes"

I sing a song of the chaps on bikes; pa - tient and brave and
 They loved their three speed tour so well, and this love made them
 They lived not on - ly in a - ges past, there are gen - tle - men cy - clists
 true, who ate and drank and rode real slow on the
 strong, They stayed well right for safe - ty's sake for the
 still. The world is bright with the cy - cling chaps who
 7
 ride they loved and knew. One's name was Noel and an -
 whole of the two days long. And one was a sai - lor and
 love to ride Bri - tish steel. You can meet them in pubs, or in
 10
 oth - er was Jon, and then there was Dave and
 one was a priest and one was chased by a
 lanes, or at sea, or in church, or in trains, or in
 12
 don't for - get Ron! They are all of them Gen - tle - men and I mean, chaps,
 fierce, wild - beast! And there's not a - ny rea - son, no, not the least, why
 shops, or at tea. For those chaps on bikes are Nut - ters like me, and
 15
 help me to be one, too.
 I should n't be one, too.
 I mean to be one, too!

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 Cof-
 feeshop:

thou anointest my chain with oil;

Congregation: now my chaincase runneth over.

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

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

Dismissal

Vicar: Lord, teach thy ways unto the wicked:

Congregation: and sinners shall be converted unto Three.
(*Psalm 51 if you squint a bit*)

Vicar: I lift up mine eyes unto the hills;

Congregation: from whence cometh my help?
(*Psalm 121*)

Vicar: Remember that life is short and we do not have much time to gladden the hearts of others, so be swift to love, make haste to be kind and go forth and ride with joy.

All: Ramen!

† † †

Service adapted by Matthew Cole, the Quicker Vicar, 2022.

Donations to the Vicar's Poor Children's Beer Fund are accepted in small unmarked bills and will be put to good use. Please give generously to myself or my fetching assistant.

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; it is the Feast Day of Saint Matthias, the replacement disciple for Judas after what whole kissing Jesus thing ("So, why did the last guy leave?"). However, my name is Matt and it seems a bit self-aggrandizing because I'm all modest and shit so we're going with Caroline Chisholm, whose feast day is Monday. She was born in 1808 in England and emigrated with her soldier husband to Australia by way of India, they did get around in those days, where she engaged in many charitable works, primarily with destitute emigrant women. Much like North Dakota today, 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. 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 Monday is St. Caroline Chisholm day, and the Catholics are thinking about it.

The Lamentation at the core of today's service comes to us from Annie Welborn, known to many as Annie from New Zealand on the Bicycle Restoration list where she used to post fairly frequently. In 2013, Annie was 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 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.

Because the funniest jokes are those you have to explain: The Lamentation makes reference to many aspects of 3-speed cycling; the Rudge of course is a model that prided itself on being 'hand-made' 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 Sturmey 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.

The chainring on the front cover is from a **Rudge**; this particular image is from **Bike Cult's** excellent Chainring Archive (www.bikecult.com/works/chainring.html). The actual **Crankifix** was created by the ingenious **Peter Martin** using a **Rudge** crankset. It used to have a cool three-candle mount as well until the Vicar dropped it last year. **The Vicar** Matthew Cole was ordained by the **Universal Life Church** following a rigorous screening process consisting mostly of making sure he had a valid email account. The email account still works; I had an email from ULC two weeks ago congratulating me on 15 years of ordination! The shirts I bought at the Luther Seminary back when they still had a bookstore. The Vicar is available for weddings and Bar Mitzvahs. In actual life, Matt's wife Karla is the Music Director at Saint Christopher's Episcopal Church in Roseville, Minnesota, where Matt sings tenor in the choir most Sundays in season, early September to early June, except tomorrow and also most of the last two years.