

Richard Chartres
Tree of Knowledge, Tree of Life
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That this should be the first book not from the pen but from the lips of the Bishop of London is surprising. We are fortunate that these sermons and addresses were scripted and preserved.

'...to open the daylight world, where decisions are made about the conditions and institutions which influence our lives, to the transforming power of spiritual awareness is the challenge which is a central theme of the reflections gathered in this book.' (From the back cover). So, Part 1 is a single address to lawyers on this central theme.

Part 2 takes us through the Christian Year - Lent, Holy Week, Easter, Whitsun, Christmas.

Part 3, inevitably, from a Bishop of London, sermons preached on occasions of general or national interest.

What is special about something so unfashionable as a book of sermons? It is that on every page there is something memorable, fresh, something which connects. Here are two tasters:-

'Desire which arises from a sense of deficiency, and a desire to fill that black hole, in the end leads to desperation. Desire awakened by the love of the risen Christ transforms our lives into the gold of selfless joy'. Easter 2004, St Paul's Cathedral.

'At this service we give up our food and drink at the offertory into the hands of Jesus so that we become his guests and receive our life from him. The elements become charged with a new potential because they are no longer our possessions but gifts. In every eucharist the meaning of the material world is changed from the kind of possession which inevitably gives rise to conflict, to gift which creates the conditions for reconciliation between human beings.' Easter 2002, Much Hadham.

Elsewhere, Ignatius the Martyr is quoted - 'A bishop never more resembles Jesus Christ than when his mouth is shut'. This reviewer hopes that Bishop Chartres will continue to open his, and that his first book of sermons is not also his last.

Anselm SSF