

Charles Simeon 12 November

Priest, 1836 — Commemoration

Charles Simeon was an Anglican priest who died in 1836 after fifty-four years of ministry at Cambridge University, where he was a spiritual guide for innumerable students and a shining light in the Evangelical Revival of his day.

Simeon went to Cambridge as a serious young man who imposed such burdens on his own conscience that he experienced the eucharist as an occasion of guilt, not gladness. Then, as he prepared to make his Easter communion in 1780, he came to know worthiness in Christ alone, and when he received the Sacrament on Easter morning he experienced the sweetness and beauty of the risen Christ in his own life. From that moment he devoted himself to helping others know the same joy.

After his graduation Simeon remained at Cambridge, took Holy Orders, and was appointed Vicar of Holy Trinity, the University church. His enthusiasm for Christ was considered vulgar by academics and townspeople alike, and rowdy students often disrupted worship in his church. But his faithfulness as a pastor, especially towards those who suffered during a local famine, finally outmatched the hostility and by 1800 his spiritual authority was unrivalled.

Simeon won his greatest fame in the pulpit, where he preached sermons which were passionate in their delivery and powerful in communicating the vibrant joy of salvation in Christ. But he exercised his most enduring influence at "conversation parties," where he entertained undergraduates and provided them with tea and serious discussion as an alternative to the drunkenness, idleness, and bullying which beset their peers. These parties formed several generations of students and gave them a fervent commitment to Christ, so that Simeon had an truly evangelical impact which reached far beyond Cambridge and was felt in all corners of England long after his death.

See Readings, page 728.

Sentence

You gave him bread from heaven, containing in itself all sweetness. *Cf. Wisdom 16.20*

Collect

God of grace and compassion,
whose providence is unerring wisdom
and whose wisdom is unbounded love,
grant that, like your servant Charles Simeon,
we may walk with Christ in all simplicity
and in all things know your mercies;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Readings

Isaiah 26.1-9 Psalm 145.8-13

Refrain The Lord is loving to everyone.
John 21.15-17

Prayer over the Gifts

Maker and Giver of our banquet,
whose minister Charles Simeon
nurtured the seed of your gospel
in young and old alike,
renew the work of our hands
with the gift of your new creation,
that we may be nourished for your service
and strengthened to accomplish your praises.
We ask this in the Name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Preface of a Saint

Prayer after Communion

God our Saviour,
you restore us to the new and living way
and strengthen our lives to do your will.
Grant us, like your servant Charles Simeon,
so to abound in the fruits of this sacrament
that we may light the paths of many
to the gateway of your household.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.