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ST STEPHEN, THE FIRST MARTYR

ACTS CHAPTER 7

Through the life of Stephen we witness a life of selfless commitment to the risen Christ. We know from the records of the early Church – Acts 2,43-45 that Stephen like most in the early church put to one side a bourgeois lifestyle. Instead they guided people to becoming reconciled, forgiving and being generous. These Christian communities learnt to be patient with one another, and also stand by each other through all the disappointments, humiliations and fears, which no one is spared from. They knew they needed to learn to deal with suffering and accept it, for if you do not learn this, failure is inevitable.

St Stephen reveals in his life what St Paul will write in his letter to the Corinthians – for St Stephen knew he was an ambassador for Christ which was only possible if you know Jesus intimately, learned to understand the Living Christ and love him. Furthermore, we see in Acts chapter 7 (do read it!!) that he leaves the outcome of his life to the Lord, and does all he can without worrying, freely and happily, secure in his relationship with the Living Christ.

Like Julian of Norwich (who is a woman!) St Stephen's central message is that Jesus Christ is on an equal footing with the Living God himself, and this is what the strictly monotheistic faith of the Jews were unable to accept. Furthermore, like Julian, St Stephen knew that knowing, day by day that God is love, then step by step our fears and deepest anxieties are transfigured, for God's promises are ever greater than our expectations. So to-day like Julian and St Stephen let us pray that we may believe that all manner of things shall be well".

Stephen