

When we visit All Saints to celebrate our Sunday Eucharist, we are already two thirds of the way back to St Augustine's arrival in England to bring, not the first Christianity here, but a more direct Roman jurisdiction. As Dermot McCullough points out, the Cathedral Church built on the ruins of a previous Roman Church in Canterbury 'was dedicated as Christ Church in direct imitation of the Lateran Cathedral in Rome...', and, later, the Cathedral Church of Rochester was dedicated to St Andrew, after the basilica and monastery on the Caelian Hill, and also in Rome. Pope Gregory had, indeed, planned for two metropolitan Cathedrals, one in London the other in York, with each metropolitan bishop administering a further twelve bishops in imitation of the way Roman Britain had been administered under imperial rule. This vision of a restored Roman rule, albeit in ecclesiastical terms only, was far too ambitious, of course, for its time – there was a Celtic tradition still to deal with and much Anglo-Saxon opposition, too. But a seed had been sown and, today, we still live with its consequences: that delicate tension between what a Roman mentality might see as the most fitting way to celebrate our Christian inheritance and a more evolved view because we necessarily live in a world that has evolved greatly since, not least in language and custom. It's a matter of balance, knowing that delicate tension between the demands of unity and the demands of diversity which is at the heart of what it means to love. Whether this balance is being successfully maintained at the moment should be obvious in the liturgical language we are now being asked to use. How freely, indeed, does it leave us to worship God without fear of punishment or the desire to merit reward? Does it merit, indeed, God's approval, or is it merely imbued with an anachronistic spirit, a desire to control? Which begs the question: who are the wolves, and who are the lambs, in our present scenario?

Br John Mayhead
Monastery of Christ Our Saviour