

The Blessing of a Home



Do you take your shoes off at the front door? I'm not very good at this. It is such a faff if you are going in and out all the time. Whoever invented plastic back-door shoes, in my book, deserves a medal. You can just slip them on and off. I always feel a bit uncomfortable when you visit someone's home and you ask if they want you to take your shoes off and they say 'yes, please'. It's a bit ungainly, struggling to get your shoes off and then bending down and struggling to get them on again – sometimes in a tiny porch area – before you leave. If I'm honest, I'm always a bit relieved when someone says, 'It doesn't matter. Keep your shoes on.' You then notice everyone else wandering around in their socks or slippers. As luck would have it, you just happen to have the tiniest bit of mud on your shoe... You flinch with embarrassment when you realise that the proud homeowner has noticed it too! It all becomes a bit agonised and stressful.

In a previous parish I remember visiting a parishioner who was Māori – from New Zealand. He clearly looked offended when I asked the question. His English wife had to explain to me that removing your shoes before entering the home had spiritual significance. It was a mark of respect – not just about not treading dirt into the carpet. Removing your shoes was also about acknowledging that this was a special place, a holy place, a place in which a family lived and loved and nurtured each other. Taking off your shoes was a given. Without question.

What it is to be respectful of a sacred place. The Church of England has recently produced some new worship material that is to be used for the Blessing of a House; a series of prayers including for the blessing of the land on which the house is built, prayers for each room and of course, for the table. The blessing of a home celebrates the sacredness of family life. It is a reminder of the sacredness of the space in which people live within the intimacy of close relationships, and that, above all, a house is not just a building of bricks and mortar but a shared space in which to encounter God in each other.

The Blessing concludes with the following words: *“Lord, abide with all who dwell here. Be their shelter when they are at home, their companion when they are away, and their welcome guest when they return; and let your blessing come down upon them, now and for ever.”*

If you would like your home blessed, do please get in touch.

And don't hesitate to tell me to take off my shoes...

God Bless.

Revd Mark Bailey