

## Thomas Traherne, priest and poet (1636-1674)

*Observed 27 September*

Born in 1637, Thomas Traherne, joins his more famous predecessors such as John Donne and George Herbert (both of whom died shortly before his birth) in the ranks of the so-called 'metaphysical poets'. Like them he was a priest caring for his flock, who wrote eloquently and passionately about spiritual life. He is less well known than the others because so much of his work was generally unknown until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His short lifetime saw the publication only of his *Roman Forgeries*, published the year before his death. Two prose works were published in the quarter century after his death. In 1896 many of his manuscripts were discovered, parts of which were published over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Another manuscript, his *Selected Mediations*, came to light in 1964 and was not published until 1997. This work focused on the way to heaven and true 'felicity' was written during the dark years of England's civil war, and contains much to challenge and inspire. Also in the 1960s his *iii* was discovered among burning rubbish and five more manuscripts were found in the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lambeth Palace Library in the 1990s. There remains much of the elegant and thoughtful writing of this gifted man to be published and shared with the world. Traherne is best remembered for his appreciation for the child's relationship to God's creation, commending us all to reclaim that joyful, appreciative, and grateful attitude, which characterizes a true and healthy spirituality.

"Your enjoyment of the world is never right, till every morning you awake in Heaven: see yourself in your Father's palace; and look upon the skies, the earth, and the air as celestial joys: having such a reverend esteem of all, as if you were among the angels.

The picture is a modern stained glass window in Hereford Cathedral, created by Tom Denny in memory of Traherne.



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*Lessons*

Jeremiah 20:7-9; Psalm 119:129-136; Revelation 19:1-5; John 3:1-8

*Collect*        Creator of wonder and majesty, you inspired your poet Thomas Traherne with mystical insight to see your glory in the natural world and in the faces of men and women around us: Help us to know you in your creation and in our neighbors, and to understand our obligations to both, that we may ever grow into the people you have created us to be; through our Savior Jesus Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in everlasting light. Amen.