

The Third Sunday after Trinity, 16 June 2024, Year B with the licensings of The Revd Dr Michael Dormandy as curate and Frank Sauer PhD as Reader and the Admission of Children to Holy Communion, Readings: 2 Corinthians 5.6-17 and Mark 4.26-34

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our strength and our redeemer. (Psalm 19.14)

This Sunday at Christ Church a number of things are coming together with the admission of six Christ Church children to Holy Communion immediately after the licensing of Frank Sauer as Reader and Michael Dormandy as curate. There is much to be grateful for! Grace abounds!

‘From now on we regard no one from a human point of view’ (2 Corinthians 5:16) writes Paul in one of his numerous letters, this one to the church in Corinth. A church with which he did not enjoy an easy relationship. Last Sunday on the front cover of the pew sheet we read words penned by Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury drawing some two thousand years later on Paul’s teaching. Williams likewise did not enjoy an easy relationship with the Church of England and the Anglican Communion in his time. Williams writes, ‘the gift of the Holy Spirit of God enables us not only to be a new kind of being but to see human beings afresh and to hear them differently.’ Our being Christian will not only challenge us, it will also change us, giving us a new way of being, a new way of seeing, a new way of hearing, a new way of proclaiming and a new way of serving our fellow human beings as we look to God who is our centre in Christ. Through the ministry entrusted to me I see many resist both the challenge and the change required and others take it up.

Let us hear these two Christians speaking side by side knowing that the conversation we are engaged in as Christians is across the expanse of human history. Paul the Apostle, ‘From now on we regard no one from a human point of view’. Rowan Williams: ... ‘the gift of the Holy Spirit of God enables us not only to be a new kind of being but to see human beings afresh and to hear them differently.’ Essentially to my

mind the two church leaders are saying the same thing. As Christians we are forever being changed through the work and teaching of Christ and the giving of the Holy Spirit being grafted into Christ, abiding him to see and hear people differently.

I want to continue with a joke which I heard recently again after some years. The Pope is early for a flight overseas so he asks the chauffeur if he might drive around Rome for a little while to kill time. Not having driven a car since being elected pope he's a bit rusty. His driving isn't great, when he sees in the rearview mirror a police car with blue lights flashing beckoning him to pull over. He pulls over as instructed. When the carabinieri comes to the car and looks in, his eyes go wide. He says to the pope, "Wait a minute. I'll be right back". He returns to his car confused and radios the Commissario. "Commissario, we have a situation. I've pulled over an important figure." "How important? The mayor?" "No sir, he's much more important." "An influencer?" "More important, sir." "Warren Buffet? Elon Musk? Sergio Mattarella ['sɛrdʒo matta'rella]?" "No sir, he's much more important than that." "Who is he?" "Sir, I don't know but he must be a very important person – the pope's the driver!"

Why this joke today? One of the titles of the pope is 'Servant of the servants of God' (servus servorum Dei) and the nature of the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury is to understand yourself as 'one or first among equals' (primus inter pares). We are given to each other to serve each other not counting ourselves better than others whatever our ministry in Christ. But with humility accepting that within the community, the Body of Christ, each and every one has a ministry which serves the whole while seeing people afresh, hearing them differently, which will inevitably lead to speaking and acting differently with respect, humility, compassion and mercy. The cameo of the pope driving someone around Rome of seemingly little importance in the eyes of the world, who like you and me is made in God's image, is apt. It makes sense.

Finally, on hearing the Parable of the Growing Seed, I am reminded of Bishop Geoffrey, our former diocesan bishop. The parable as we heard states:

“The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how”. (Mark 4.26)

Bishop Geoffrey was not known for his managerial skills, but he was known for his confidence in God and in God’s Church. Confident that despite all our human machinations God’s Holy Spirit is at work in the world drawing people to himself from all walks of life and from across the world as we witness here at Christ Church week by week.

Today, God in Christ is drawing Vivienne Tatiana, Sasha, Ryan, Michael, Jason, Frank, and Ethan a little closer to himself and each one of us, as we partake of Holy Food gathered around the Lord’s Table mindful of his life-giving sacrifice while calling us to a cruciform shaped faith the empowered by the Holy Spirit. Do to you hear God’s voice? Do you hear God’s call?

May such grace be given to each one of us that in little ways we know for ourselves even now what it means to ‘the servant of the servants’ as well as one amongst equals in Christ. With Paul may we in Christ come to know what it means to say, ‘From now on we regard no one from a human point of view’. **Amen.**