



8 April 2018 – Easter 2
Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Reading: The Acts of the Apostles Chapter 4 verses 32-35

Given by Rev'd Juliette E C Robilliard

When I prepare a sermon, if the message doesn't speak to me then there would be no integrity in me standing here addressing you. The reading from Acts was just 4 verses but the message hit me right between the eyeballs! We heard:

“Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul.”

How many times in our island or, our own homes or, our church can we say that we are of one heart and soul? If we're honest, the answer is not always, so why not?

For one thing God didn't make us clones of each other. Hurrah! Rather, through the power of his Holy Spirit he has blessed each one of us individually with particular gifts and hence, we do not view life through the same lens. What seems a priority to one person is viewed through the opposite end of the telescope by another and that can be so frustrating! We have a combination of skills be they administrative, artistic, introvert, extrovert, welcoming, meditative, pastoral, you name it, the list goes on. Only Christ manifests all of those gifts but, together, we are the Body of Christ and so as Christians we need to find ways to work with our differences to serve Christ collaboratively.

So, how did the first Christians get it right? Was it because they were able to learn from Christ and the apostles at first-hand how he wishes us to live and work for him? I'm sure that must have had a lot to do with it. Additionally, they believed that Christ's second coming would be imminent and so they lived for the present moment rather than planning for the long term, whether that was financial planning or succession planning. We, however, over 2,000 years later perhaps lack the sense of urgency of those first Christians. Or, is it, the way that we perceive our own attributes? I recall someone once saying of themselves, “I pride myself on my humility.”

It makes us laugh and wince at the same time but wait for the next verse of Acts!

“No one claimed private ownership of any possession but everything they owned was held in common.”

How do we answer that? We might say, well that might have worked then and it might work in monasteries today but let's get real, those of us living everyday lives have to pay social security, income tax, home insurance, health insurance, motor insurance, the children's education, food and clothing isn't cheap and then what about the mortgage? All that's true. We have obligations, whether we like it or not.

But having fulfilled our obligations, which after all make for secure, comfortable living, do we indulge ourselves first and foremost and then think of the poor and needy and then the church afterwards. It may not be practical in our day and age to hold assets in common but we can still have a common calling to support those Christ came to save, otherwise, where is the love in our faith?

Sitting at home working my way through the reading, I hoped for a little respite at this stage but no! Acts hadn't finished poking fingers at my complacency, so here's Acts next salvo!

“With great power the Apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and great grace was upon them all.”

The Apostles certainly learned the art of making Christ's ministry and mission their priority and it's thanks to them that we're Christ's disciples today. The season of Easter can open the door to new life for those who do not yet know Christ. The services of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Day drew people to church we do not ordinarily see. How can we encourage those people to feel wanted and welcome and to become part of our regular church community?

Well, the season of Easter is also the time when we focus on church ministry and mission with the circulation of the AGM booklets. While we wait for the AGM at the end of the month, now is the perfect opportunity for us to reflect prayerfully on what takes priority in our lives. To make time to watch and pray with Christ, as we consider how we account for our time and money and the use we make of them in God's service. Commitments, will always make a claim on our time, whether that's family, financial or health, but without God we would have nothing. There's no more direct message than that.

Amen.