



**Sunday, 20 January 2019 – Epiphany 3**  
**Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey**  
**Readings: 1 Corinthians 12 1-11 Gospel St John 2 1-11**  
**Focusing on calling, communication, talents and timing**  
**Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard**

### **How are we doing?**

The other day I met an elderly acquaintance and asked him 'How are you doing?' his jovial response was "As you can see, I'm still above the turf!" Whatever our age, good health is vital for vibrant living: it's the same with our church. To review our church life is a faithful response to God's love, mercy and grace. It helps us to determine if we are making the best use of the gifts we receive in his service: that's mission action planning – 'Mapping' for short.

### **Calling**

In today's Epistle and Gospel Jesus and Paul give us masterclasses in resources and resourcefulness covering calling and communication and talents and timeliness. In the Gospel Jesus is attending a wedding with his disciples: how heartening it is to learn that calling also embraces celebration. But why did Jesus, God's Son, need disciples? In taking our flesh upon him, Jesus knew our physical limitations of only being able to be in one place at any one time. For his message to spread beyond the confines of his community Jesus needed co-workers. He knew that his disciples would make mistakes but none-the-less he drew people to him by empowering them to share his mission & enables them in his time. Jesus understood timing: when his mother approached him at the wedding to say that the wine had run out he told her his hour had not yet come. Similarly, God activates our calling when we are ready. Jesus knew his disciples would stumble, betray and desert him and yet God is patient. Only when Peter was, broken-hearted with shame, was he receptive to being transformed to into the 'Rock' on which the church is founded. Sometimes, it takes a humbling experience before we recognise our need of God's grace. Learning by experience enables us to grow in faith.

### **Talents**

How else does Jesus empower his followers? Reflecting very briefly on last week's readings Christ, instituted baptism for us through his own. In his baptism he drew heaven to earth through which God sends the Holy Spirit to activate the individual gifts he bestows on us. Only Jesus received all of the gifts of the Spirit, which is why we are called to work together to make up the whole Body of Christ. St Paul explains this far better than me in his letter to the Corinthians. 'There are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit and there are varieties of service but the same Lord. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.'

What might that mean in reality? Are you with me this far because here's the clue, to the MAP competition question featured in the newsletter: "Which facial feature do I consider

I use the most. "My mouth!" Mouths are so useful for communication but the hazard of using a mouth is that it can engage before the brain activates! We are all made so differently. You may be the spiritual eyes or ears, therefore, benefit from your clarity of vision and keen sense of hearing to support and encourage me: such, is true collaborative ministry.

To translate this into practical terms, if one person's talent is mixing fluffy sponge cakes and another's is mixing concrete, it would be idiotic to tackle the opposite job, which needs a different talent. Using our God-given gifts skilfully, gives us time to observe, welcome and receive the gifts of others. To deny people the opportunity to use their gifts of the Spirit or, to hinder them, is contrary to God's will. Like Jesus, we have to be courageous and help people fulfil their calling, not constraining them with our personal preferences or weaknesses. Equally, it does not serve Christ's mission if we see someone in need of help or direction and we fail to act, as God will hold us accountable for the use of the gifts he has given. Key to all of this, is timely two-way communication, to ensure that we can work seamlessly together in our respective roles to help ministry and mission flourish.

### **Timing**

Our presence this morning and your faithful attendance over the years, is a sign that we want our church to thrive. Mapping enables us to review realistically how best to direct our energies by using the assets available to us today which, to name but a few, are:

- A building, a congregation and good music;
- 1½ days paid stipendiary ministry a week;
- Good relations with St Andrew's Douzaine;
- A thriving community centre across the road: and,
- The Last Post restaurant is under new Management that's got to be great news for our future Church celebrations!

Realism also acknowledges that:

- With Annabel on sabbatical, her ministry needs covering;
- We're not as young as we once were; and,
- Innovation may strain our limited resources further:

These are challenges we need the vision to resolve to secure our Christian witness in this parish. Help, however, is never far away. At the wedding in Cana of Galilee Mary did not despair, she talked to Jesus and he prayed to God his Father. The miracle Jesus then performed from basic resources transformed the ordinary into the extraordinary making everything better than it was before.

Irrespective of whether we are lay or ordained, Jesus calls each one of us to be active disciples and faithful stewards of his mission. The best catalyst for growth is two-way communication in prayer. Once we hand over our concerns to God, he will help us to see more clearly the possibilities when sharing our thoughts together.

### **Action point**

Welcoming, receiving, serving: are we that kind of church? Let's talk about the possibilities.

**Amen.**