



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
Sunday 18 July 2021 – The Seventh Sunday after Trinity
Wellbeing for all
Written by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

You can have too much of a good thing!

Now that the school holidays have begun, I imagine that those of you who are grandparents will be even busier having the care and oversight of your grandchildren, to enable your own children to carry on with their working lives. You will give devotedly of your time to them whilst squeezing into your day all of your usual tasks: the housework, gardening, shopping, voluntary work and then the other necessities of check-ups at the doctor, dentist or optician. Doubtless you will be delighted to help with the grandchildren but, maybe, at the end of the day, you will be content to hand them back, so that you can have some down time to refresh and revive before the next call on your time. Looking after our wellbeing is vitally important.

Wellbeing viewed from different perspectives

Wellbeing, of course, means different things to different people perhaps health, welfare, happiness, comfort, safety, security, protection, success. In the readings today, particularly the Gospel, we see how Jesus takes wellbeing seriously. You may recall I read that when the apostles gathered around Jesus telling him everything they had done in his name, he said to them 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' Let's explore what wellbeing meant to Jesus. He really understood the value of taking time out to rest, refresh and recharge mentally, physically, and spiritually. There are frequent accounts of Jesus slipping away from the crowd or his disciples and going to a quiet place to pray. Praying privately to his Father in heaven, he put aside all the celebrity status that was attaching to him by the adoring crowds. His Father had given him a job of work to do and he needed to rest yes, but to refocus his thoughts for the next phase of his ministry. This morning, we heard that his disciples having gone out in twos by themselves, as he had instructed them, regroup with him and share their experiences. Jesus instils in them the need to rest and refocus before the next call on their time.

Giving and receiving

As you know, I invited feedback on my Clergy Wellbeing Survey that I circulated recently. I was immensely grateful for the responses I received because they really encouraged me. Week-by-week I prepare services and sermons and sometimes, I feel that what I have prepared is better on some Sundays than others. Like everything, it depends on the inspiration and the preparation time available to me. When I stand at the front, with all eyes focused forward, I see your faces and try to gauge if I'm saying anything relevant at all that's

helpful to you. That's why learning from Jesus is so beneficial, as it's good to reflect and pray in private, as a self-assessment and discernment tool. In that regard, the thing I've missed most during the Covid pandemic is not having been able to go on my annual spiritual retreats. I try to give of my best and retreats are the best way to recharge and refocus on ministry.

No one is bionic

One thing that I find helpful and I hope you find this helpful too, is that the Gospel accounts show us that Jesus had his vulnerable moments too. To quote the often-stated phrase these days 'It's ok, to be not ok.' The beauty of our faith is that effectively God provides us with an eternal spiritual supermarket where in prayer, we can replenish our stock 24/7. Jesus is the eternal supermarket manager stocking the shelves for our individual needs. His needs, however, were rarely considered. In the Gospel we heard that even when Jesus sailed across the lake to find peace and quiet, he was recognised instantly and mobbed once again. At one level, this makes me reflect that I too go to the eternal supermarket but do I give back anything close to what I receive? At another level, just like you busy grandparents, we clergy may well feel an affinity with Jesus when it seems that everyone is seeking our help, whether face-to-face or electronically such that 'we have no leisure to eat'. Jesus deliberately shared his ministry with all of his disciples so that they could reach as many people as possible, all having an equally important part to play with the gifts of the Spirit, they had received. We, however, are not Jesus having purely human attributes and different preferences of working. We lack Jesus' holistic skills of engagement. Need that stop us?

Wellbeing is a partnership

We all have our different responsibilities and calls on our time and that impacts on our well-being. I do not think we can keep giving if we are not receiving a balance of care. My personal view regarding clergy well-being is that we cannot have it without the well-being of all people. Jesus ensured that in ministry and mission his disciples were encouraged to work, rest and play together in partnership. So, here's the question for us all to mull over for our mutual thriving both at church and outside it: How might we discover afresh the ways in which Christ can help us, to help each other, to be the priesthood of all believers?

Amen.