



St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey
11th Sunday after Trinity – Sermon for 10.00am 23rd August 2020
Bible Readings: Romans 12: 1-8 & St Matthew 16: 13-20
Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard

When I was preparing my sermon, I fell into the trap of skim-reading Paul's letter to the Romans because it was very familiar to me. Thankfully, the further I read by a quirk, my eyes and brain deceived me bringing me up short. Of the gifts of the Spirit I read "the minister in ministering; the teacher in Teaching, the extortioner in extortion; What? Extortion! Ah! No! Exhorter, in exhortation. That's more like it. It's too easy to get blasé about familiar texts and miss the point of what they are trying to say to us.

In musing thus, I reflected how beneficial it is that not one of us has all of the gifts of the Spirit, as did Christ. None of us can say we are the complete package and so, perfect: and, we don't need to be. Quite simply we need each other's gifts to make the whole. We need, each other's encouragement to use our gifts, not putting stumbling blocks in the way of others by being dilatory in our own duties. Not judging others who do not seemingly have active gifts, it may be that they pray for us every day and that is a hidden gift of grace and blessing. After all, if we don't look out for each other, the world certainly, won't and how will we save the world working on our own with our singular resources? Jesus intended that we need each other, working together, as much as we need him working in us.

In choosing his disciples for their respective attributes, Jesus could not have chosen better in selecting Peter to be the leader of his Church. The heart-warming feature about Peter is that he crashes around the gospels showing his fallible side. And let's not forget, Jesus appoints Peter as head of his Church well before his betrayal, death and resurrection. Jesus sees Peter's true potential. After his denial of Christ Peter recognised his monumental failings and this was the making of him. He did not try to shift the blame but acknowledged his fallibility, sought forgiveness and then, crucially, channelled his energies into avoiding blunders and vacillation anymore thereby becoming the Rock on which the church is founded.

He still was not perfect but despite his human failings he showed determination to do the right thing: learning from his mistakes, caring for others and being the bastion of faith, that others could look up to and so be inspired by. Using his gifts of the Spirit effectively, he helped build God's kingdom here on earth not solely by his own endeavours but collaboratively recognising that together we are the Body of Christ.

Well that's all fine and wonderful but of course, we didn't know Peter or Paul personally so how do we apply the Bible readings to our context to gain the benefit from them? Let's take the Apple Fair as an example and consider "What I do for the Apple Fair? I mean me personally. To save you any embarrassment, the answer is not much.

By contrast, the social committee beavers away for months on end planning methodically. Whereas, I'm the sort of person that likes to sprint to the finish rather than run a marathon.

Please don't put me anywhere near the refreshments stall, I'd look as miserable as a mullet! I hate the stink of tea.

I really wouldn't be safe on any other stall either. In my enthusiasm to clear the tables I'd be inciting people to empty their pockets whether they could afford to or not. And, as we know extortion is not one of the gifts of the Spirit! We need horses for courses or, as Paul says "Prophecy in accordance with faith; ministry in ministering etc."

One talent I do have is a big mouth! I'm very happy using it chatting to anyone and everyone giving a welcome here, a high five there. And sometimes, in the midst of a swirling mass of people enjoying themselves, there are those others looking to talk to a complete stranger who's identifiable by their clerical collar. Someone to whom they can unburden themselves: someone to pray with them. That's more me, I'm just a presence that doesn't make any money at all, a total fund-raising failure. Thank God the rest of you are using your many gifts and talents productively in other ways. Together we cover all aspects of ministry and mission. Together, we are the Body of Christ.

Amen.