

**Sermon Trinity 4. Zechariah 9.9-10, Romans 8:9, 11-13, Matthew 11:25-30.**

***Remembering the child within.***

At this time of year people are being ordained as deacons and priests and beginning new ministries across the country and world. It is known as Petertide and we celebrated the feast of Peter and Paul last Sunday – great saints called from very different backgrounds, with very different intellects and personalities. They came to Jesus in order to go and become giants of the early church. We call it the mass (missa) as it means **go** in latin – we of course use the word dismissal. I often say the hardest part of the mass is the end – go in peace to love and serve the lord.

As with Peter and Paul and many new deacons and priests at this time coming to God is not a simple choice and sometimes doesn't seem a choice at all. Many folk come not gladly and eagerly as some here have today. Peter and Paul's coming to Christ were hard and quite painful I will not repeat last week's sermon. It can get harder – the older we get the more baggage we carry – and it can start to get heavy at quite a young age.

However, in the total vulnerability and intimacy of God in Jesus on the cross He allows us to face our own vulnerability our weaknesses our burdens our baggage and challenges. It becomes the beginning of true strength and of real courage not to flee or hide but face them, use them and go, go out with a new heart and hope.

The older amongst you will recall the “*comfortable words*” of the old prayer book. Our Lord's words are invoked by the priest at the altar, the words before the communion prayers after which we come to receive the one who dies to self, that we may find our true life.

*Come unto me, all ye that travail and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.*

Or in today's language from today's gospel:

*'Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.'*

The words of the Word made flesh (Christ) have the capacity to pierce the soul and bring an eternal peace and rest the world cannot give. I am reflecting on those words today, partly because they are our gospel and partly as after this mass I will make a recording of answers for some of our children asking questions about communion. I greatly miss the interaction with the many of the children of this parish in our schools and our church. They can be a source of life, of insight of fun, grounded truth and yes of wisdom. Virtual and video is not the same.

I was but a child myself when I heard those comfortable words for the first time – I knew nothing of sacramental theology but I knew I had to go to the altar to receive that refreshment offered. In my child like way I was refreshed, I was changed and went off in a different way.

When I heard those words for the first time, I did not know what was said before or what came after. Now I do – “I thank you Lord for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children.”

How often Jesus takes a child to teach the world. “Unless you become like this child you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” He reveals the Wisdom of God, His Spirit around us, the wisdom already reflected in the scriptures of Jesus’s own childhood memory: of little Samuel, of little David and how Jesus himself must have memorised his Psalms ... “out of the mouths of babes and sucklings comes the wisdom of God.” He not only memorised them but embodies them as the child in the temple, sees such *un-adulterated* wisdom and so begs us do the same.

No doubt there will be many learned and clever sermons given at this time of ordinations and such like, virtual or otherwise. I remember my own in the huge and glorious splendour of St. Augustines Kilburn, I was alone except for two bishops and the Dean, now of Canterbury, to preach along with a few folk in the congregation of course. David Hope the bishop of London had graciously, or as graciously as his Yorkshire bluntness would allow, agreed to ordain me according to the Book of Common Prayer. I had, oddly for a young teenager, gone to the charity shop and found one. I wanted to understand something about those comfortable words that bade me to bread and wine those weeks before. For the ordination of priests the language of that book beckons even more strongly; “bring all that lieth in you wholly to this one charge” – I’m sorry but modern replacements seem vapid and shallow. The Dean preached a wonderful sermon worthy of Cranmer himself I’m sure.

Then at the point of ordination I lay flat in silence before the bishop. A little voice from the front broke the silence “is he dead?” I heard a thud on the back of a different little Samuel’s head and a sshh from his grandmother, a wonderful woman but perhaps lacking the patience of Eli. Then of course the bishops, dean and clergy came forward to lay their hands in silence again upon my own head, mercifully more gently, as I knelt and before the bishop and he invoked the Holy Spirit. Little Samuel could not contain himself and the silence was broken once more “are they making him better?”

We come to Jesus, he changes us, he makes us better and then we go. I was most touched the learned and clever Dean did come and preach but in a sense he need not have bothered - it was all revealed by a “mere child.”

I invite you to remember the child within, to come to Jesus afresh whatever the age whatever the travail, baggage or load. Come to Jesus, find rest in order to go out with an easy yoke and lighter burden;

for then it is Christs and not yours alone. Such was the path of little Samuel, little David, of Peter and Paul. May it be mine and yours too. Amen.