

Revd Michael Burns
Christ Church West Wimbledon
Sermon : September 27th, 2020
“Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity”

16TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY 2020

Well, this week has seen yet another change in the regulations which are being imposed because of the spread of the coronavirus. Our Government are continuing to impose their authority on the population – but stressing that common sense should prevail and that we should all look to help each other for the greater good of all. “Don’t kill granny with the coronavirus” is one of the more intriguing phrases. Only time will tell whether this is enough. Coincidentally, this Sunday the Gospel is also about authority – about who has it and about who it comes from. The chief priests and elders of the people challenge Jesus’ authority in the temple. From this we are left to ponder the authority we give to God in our own lives, and wondering about the authority with which the church continues to speak – whether earned or not.

It is Paul who encourages the people of the church in Philippi what we should be about in some memorable words – “doing nothing from selfish ambition and conceit but in humility regard others as better than yourselves”; he encourages his hearers to “look to the interests of others so that we may be of one mind”.

Being of one mind. This is not easy to do – because from the beginning of time, human beings are those who all have a wide variety of opinions and are often unafraid to express them. Yet we do try to have a common mind about what is right and proper and to move forward more or less together. This is the Christian way as we proclaim: “We are the body of Christ. In the one spirit we were all baptised into

one body. Let us then pursue all that makes for peace and builds up our common life”.

One word that is often freely bandied about by the church is that Christians are called to a life of holiness, to holy living. To be holy literally means to be ‘consecrated or dedicated to God’. Yet most of us assume that this is something that others are called to be and to do – most especially the saints of past ages or at a push, the vicar – but it’s surely not for ordinary Christians. Yet holiness is possible for all. Edward Pusey was a churchman who lived in the 19th century – and in a sermon he said this: ‘It is a mistake to think that holiness consists in doing great and extraordinary things beyond the reach of ordinary people. It has been well said: ‘Holiness does not consist in doing uncommon things, but in doing common things uncommonly well’. ‘Holiness does not consist in doing uncommon things, but in doing common things uncommonly well’.

At this very difficult time, more than ever, we are called to do the small things as well as we can – caring for one another, supporting one another, praying for one another. That is what God has called us to do as we open our eyes, serve him with reverence and know the peace of God that passes all understanding as we live out our holy lives as Christians in today’s anxious, fearful world. We do all that with confidence because God has given us the authority and it is in his name that we live and work. Amen.