

Trinity Sunday 2017

It's all by His Grace

It is almost four years when my family and I became a part of this United Benefice. I vividly remember been interviewed by Renos. One of the questions he asked was what was my favorite Bible passage and why. I said then that it was what many would call the Jesus Manifesto as recorded in Luke 4: 18-19.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

Reflecting back on this, our ministry here has been based on this passage, we have sought to bring good news and be good news to all we met.

We have sought to release those who are under yoke, replacing the heaviness of heart with the joy of the Lord. We have sought to show God's light and bring it to bear on all forms of darkness. We have always proclaimed God's love, compassion and forgiveness to all who seek His repentance.

Our ministry here has been fulfilling in many ways. We have been part of the creation of the small groups; we have played a part in setting up and managing the parish office and our communication system. We have played a part in the children and youth ministry as well as the many other ministries within the United Benefice.

For all these, we are thankful to God, our author and finisher who has been present with and for us. It is all by His grace. I am also very grateful to my family, especially to Patricia and Emma for their support and encouragement. And all they have contributed to the life of this church.

My mother, brother and sister in law here present. My extended family both far and near. All members of the Ministry Team, Godfrey and Peter who could not be here today. Charleen, Esther, Moni, Elaine, Hugh.

I am particularly grateful to Robert for his generosity of spirit in appointing me and to Renos for taking me under his wings in my early years of training.

The Pastoral team, Welcome team, Bell ringers, the choir and worship group and many others with whom I have ministered within and outside of the church. You are all appreciated and without you all, I could not have done it.

I came to Cobham as a novice and I am leaving, I believe as a competent and confident Priest. For this training and opportunity, I am grateful. It has been a privilege to be one of your Priests for the last four years.

Many of you have been asking me what I have learnt during my time with you.

I have been shown love and welcome by many. I remember just a couple of weeks after starting, lovely lady knocked on our door at home. She came to give me a book about bird watching!! Can you guess who she was? Well it was Daphne. She in her way represents the typical member of our church thinking of others and trying to be helpful. I could cite many other examples of such acts by various people from both our churches.

I have also learnt many other things. I am sure you will not be surprised if I say I have discovered that singing is not one of my gifts! I am sure in years to come; you will still remember my singing The Lord is here! Elaine in the office will remember my singing probably for the rest of her days!

I have learnt to consume left over communion wine!

I have learnt and seen the goodness and faithfulness of God, in the seeking of grants at the onset of the Youth Ministry.

Most importantly, I have had a firsthand experience of what could be achieved with unity of Spirit and Vision.

I have seen dedication and faithfulness to God's work. We need not look far for this. A look at Daphne all she's done since taking over the edition of Family magazine in 1997 and editing for the last 20 years. Daphne, thank you so much. I am sure we will be thanking you later on in this service.

Nevertheless, I will be lying if I say that it has always been a smooth ride. There had been moments of frustrations, disappointment and anguish. Many ignored the fact that a priest is also human; who could be affected by words and actions of others. However, I have been reassured by the grace, fellowship and compassion shown by many in this Benefice.

I have also discovered a new favorite Bible Passage from John 17:21. Here Jesus prayed for His disciples that they "*all may be one*" in Unity as he and His father are one. This is my sincere prayer as well for this benefice.

As I leave, I would want us to reflect on the nature of our relationships with each other. This is even more important as today we celebrate Trinity Sunday. And one of the things we could learn from God the Three-in-one, is the nature of the relationship between the God-heads.

It is a relationship of grace and compassion.

As a church, in many ways we are like the New Testament church. Our opinions and understandings are diverse and varied. The way and manner we relate to God are wide ranging. While some of us are pure in our liturgy and formalities of our service, many others love

the less formal aspects of our service. This I believe is the richness of our churches in this benefice. Each church is unique. Each service is special and this should be so.

However, we need as people of God to exhibit more Grace than we presently do. This grace is not only between our churches, but also between individuals.

*Grace to accept that we are not all the same,
but all travelers on the same route to heaven.*

*Grace to acknowledge difference and celebrate diversity. Grace to
forgive mistakes and errors.*

Grace to seek a heart of worship rather than perfection in worship.

It is through such that we will be able to fulfill the Divine commandment to go and make disciples of all.

As I look around I see men and women of faith, filled with hope and compassion. So as I leave, I am reassured that the future is bright for this Benefice.

I am sure the next Rector, will find in you a joyful congregation, a faithful and united people ready to be led and willing to believe.

My prayer is that our God who strengthens those who wait on Him, will give you the strength to wait, so that you will be renewed like an eagle.

This morning, I leave you with St Paul's words from 2 Corinthians 13:

"Brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you". Amen