

## **TRINITY 6 (Great Bealings)**

One of the Quotes of the Week in Friday's 'Church Times' is from the Bishop of Bath and Wells, who apparently made a speech at the recent Glastonbury Festival. He said this:

"You're probably thinking that anyone who's a bishop must spend their days living in a different reality most of the time. And you might well be right, because that, for me, is what faith is all about – of seeing the world from a different perspective."

Of course, I would like to tease that out some more if I was there with the Bishop listening to Dua Lipa, Coldplay or more likely, Shania Twain! Without of course showing my own political colours, these last 14 years have certainly viewed the world from a different perspective to my own and, as part of a national Church, we must continue to pray for everyone serving in Parliament in the months and years ahead: to govern well and honourably. Our government is led by real people, like us, with their own joys and struggles - who offer their own gifts and hopes, in public service.

I may not have had much sleep last Thursday but I still remain very concerned that 40% of the Electorate did not vote at all – which speaks volumes about people's lack of trust in the political, decision-making process. If we care about the whole of our nation and care for the common good, it is incumbent on all of us to share the same reality (and not invent a new one); and I guess the Bishop is also saying that our common

faith so often calls us to be counter-cultural in our thinking and doing...

But perhaps this is no bad thing? We have witnessed so much dishonesty and lack of integrity and fairness over the years that we cannot be surprised that, every call for change right now, would inevitably 'win the day'. And herein lies the test to all our fine words if they are to be converted into practical action and real change, for the better. St Paul especially in our first reading, asks us to think and act differently if we are to create a more harmonious political climate than we have witnessed in recent times. He admits to his Lord that he has been guilty of being overly proud or elated with his own strengths and convictions and the good Lord reminded him: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.'

You very rarely hear a politician say 'sorry' and they certainly would not be popular with their party whip if they said publicly with St Paul: 'whenever I am weak, then I am strong.'

And yet, that is one of many Christian gifts or, 'perspective', as the Bishop suggested, which would actually bring some real purpose, unity and light to the task: of governing well.

With the added ingredient and culture of humility, there is more chance that wisdom could take more of a hold on the parliamentarians we pray for - and the many concerns right now we all have for all our institutions, like the NHS, like Education and Welfare, The Home Office and Foreign Office, Care for the Environment, and so on.

To quote perhaps a more famous saying of St Paul (Romans 13.1): “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God...”

I leave you with that ‘pilgrim’ dilemma or tension. I believe, as I am sure you do, that God is our collective authority, guide and inspiration but we still have a duty of Christian interpretation and activism to fulfil in creating equitable governance, with service and justice at its heart.

I do agree with our new Prime Minister that ‘politics can be a force for good’ – which is why our prayers for him and our Parliament matter, why they should be regular and constant in whichever place we reside or play, work or worship.

So may God’s will be done in our nation and in God’s world.

Amen.