

St Teresa's July 7th

33 years ago this week-end my Dad died after a long illness and during the 5th set of the men's final at Wimbledon.

One of his favourite maxims for a good life was :

Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today; and I usually heard a lot of it when I was a teenager trying to dodge homework or revision.

Now though I can appreciate there is a real wisdom in it - about appreciating the grace and possibility of the present, making full use of the energy, the gifts and talents we have today - in case we find different priorities or restrictions tomorrow.

The hymn

Lord for tomorrow and its needs I do not pray, but keep me, guide me, love me Lord, just for today - has a similar message.

The gospel today reminded me of all this because in it we find Jesus providing a charter for action, a mission plan, a set of priorities for 72 'others' (so not the usual inner circle of the twelve we often hear about) He appoints them to go before him to prepare the way for him to visit, and there is no room here for - well, maybe we'll do it later or tomorrow!

I'd like to more closely explore this mission charter, these priorities which Jesus provides

First of all - START OFF NOW !

Secondly - Go in pairs - not alone.

The followers of Jesus are being invited to share the task of announcing God's kingdom in all the places in which healing and forgiveness and the comfort of God's powerful love are needed and its a daunting task.

Leadership can be a very lonely ministry but when it is shared the burdens lessen and the joys increase and so from the start Jesus urges partnership in the ministry of mission.

Thirdly - Don't be distracted - travel light knowing that what you need will be provided on the way and if its not then the soil is not yet ready.

Fourthly - enter new relationships and new conversations in a spirit of peace

Move on if you are not welcomed but above all take the good news of a loving and tender God who is very near to us

Finally, and, perhaps most importantly, do this, not for the results you may or may not see but because your names are written in heaven. For us - over 2,000 years later, this is another way of saying that we know the joy of being loved by God, the friendship and leadership of Jesus and the strength and energy of the Holy Spirit which come first in our baptism, are completed in confirmation and renewed each and every time we celebrate Eucharist.

Over the last few years I have had the privilege of accompanying your parish community here in Upholland as it has looked afresh at its mission charter for this place and in this time.

My role has involved me in facilitating the development of the Focus Team which is essential if the shared leadership that can accomplish the priorities and goals identified two years ago are to be pursued. A core belief underpinning the growth and development that is occurring is that through the sacrament of baptism we are all called to use our own particular gifts and talents to help to share the Good News of God's love .

Your parish vision statement and the priorities flowing from it are all concerned with enabling **everyone** - of whatever age or situation to grow in that knowledge - that **their** names are written in heaven and the joy of knowing this is itself an attraction to those in our world who are searching and often, yearning for such peace.

How best can this community enable that message to be announced to all, in our busy, distracted, secular world?

I suggest that the first step is indeed to better appreciate the gifts and talents of all and encourage their use on behalf of God's Kingdom. It's written in your vision statement and the challenge in today's gospel may be that which my Dad used to prompt me with - are there gifts, talents, that you have that you are thinking - well maybe tomorrow or next month or year?

Over the years I have found that people who are gifted in so many ways and not averse to using these gifts at work or in other ways within their communities, somehow hesitate when it comes to offering them within a parish context, afraid somehow of letting their light shine, sometimes worried of what others may think.

After Mass today there will be a Getting to Know You meeting - opportunity to find out more about the Parish Focus team its vital role in sharing the responsibilities of leadership in this community and to begin the process of recruiting new members for September. Your vision statement recognises the link between striving to listen to needs and dreams and better appreciating the gifts and talents of all - this is an opportunity to do just that. It is open to all and if you come away better appreciating how leadership is developing in your parish, then that will be cause for rejoicing.

Start off now demands courage and trust and a willingness to take the risk!