‘Transition’ is a word that we use a lot these days and in various contexts.

We all transition individually throughout our lives, from infancy through childhood and adolescence, to early adulthood and middle age to old age.

Nations transition politically, as we see currently with our own country’s voting to transition from EU member to Brexit Britain; and (like many other nations) from broadly centrist to a right-leaning ideology.

People who realise that the gender represented by their physical body doesn’t fit with the gender they know themselves to be inside also ‘transition’.

For them, transition is a particularly difficult journey they need to make. And also for the rest of the population - the transition of recognising the fact that gender issues are real and people experiencing them need and deserve love and support from us all.

The other evening the Parochial Church Council were talking about transition, the term used here in this diocese to describe what happens during the time between one vicar leaving a parish and (normally) the next one coming along. For Mabe and Ponsanooth parish I guess it means ‘whatever comes next’...!

In each case, in each context, transition brings with it self-examination, challenge, sometimes confrontation and opposition, often suffering. But hopefully an end product (what St Paul calls ‘a new creation’) that is about being true to the needs of the self and also to the things of God.

Today’s gospel reading talks about transitions in the way we live. It challenges us to make the transition from living according to the ways and values of what Jesus called ‘the kingdom of the world’ (basically a self-centred approach to life) to living according to those of the ‘kingdom of God’ meaning a way of life that is based upon the good of each other, through the constant giving of unconditional love. And this kind of transition, like the others, is not always easy.

How do you tell when you’re living according to one or the other kingdom?

St Paul says that it is in our intentions: the aim of the Christian he says is to please God by how we view and treat other people. It pleases God if we deliberately try to see Jesus Christ as being present in some way in the life of everyone we come into contact with. This in itself needs a transition from living without regard to God’s part in the lives of others, to examining ourselves, firstly as to whether we care about this stuff or not; and secondly how exactly we go about ‘*looking for Christ in all people’*. And as in all transitions, this needs both humility and courage.

A pop song some years ago sang asked “What have you done today to make you feel proud?”

St Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth, that they need to be “able to answer those who boast in outward appearance and not in the heart”.

Transitioning from the kingdom of the world to the kingdom of God is something to be appropriately and positively ‘proud’ of: living from the inside out, as it were - from the inclusive love in your heart rather than pandering to the current trend of placing importance on outward appearances.

In all of these things we are not alone, though. Jesus reminds us that the kingdom of God may only appear like a tiny seed, the merest spark of an idea, but like all seeds it grows (often un-noticed) in the soil of the welcoming human heart, until we notice its coming to fruition in what the bible calls the ‘fruit of God’s spirit’: (St Paul lists things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, all things that are about nurturing each other rather than ourself alone.

An oft-quoted story tells of the man at the point of death being visited by the angel who comes to take him to heaven. He asks if before this he might see what hell is like and is immediately transported to hell - which surprisingly is a huge banqueting hall with tables laden with delicious food - but all the people are thin and miserable because the knives, forks and spoons are eight feet long making it impossible for anyone to eat.

The man is taken to heaven which he finds is exactly the same banqueting scene with the same eight-foot-long cutlery, only everyone is well-fed and hearty. “How can this be?” asks the man - and the angel says,

“Simple - in heaven we feed each other”

Questions for reflection:

* Whereabouts are you on this spiritual journey of transition, individually and as a church?
* How are you at feeding each other - both giving and receiving?