

Truth and Trust

I hope all of you have been able to enjoy the marvellous weather we have had this summer, either here or elsewhere on holiday, and that you feel refreshed and re-created, as you come back to work or a new school term. August is a time we expect to forget – at least temporarily – the problems which assail us all, whether they be personal, national or global. But we know of course these problems are ever present and of concern for us all, and do not go away, even on holiday.

There are still parts of the world where war is being waged, such as in Ukraine, in Gaza and Israel, in the Sudan, and where the peace is fragile and precarious, as in Iran and Myanmar. And the spectre of terrorism, carried out by fanatical fundamentalists, strikes fear and mistrust throughout the world and causes us to be less trustful of others, especially those who are outside our own circle. Anyone who has travelled by air this holiday will have felt this underlying fear and lack of trust, as we and our luggage have been scanned for suspicious objects. This gradual eroding of trust is not the only casualty of our life today. We may be puzzled by the intricate details, for example, of the Post Office Horizon and the infected blood inquiries, among others, but we are all aware, and pleased, that some of the most fundamental moral questions are being asked, not only ‘Whom can we trust?’ but ‘Where is the truth?’

It is thus not only for the good of society that these questions are being asked but also vital that some answers are arrived at. No society or community can flourish or be considered healthy or whole when mistakes or untruths are present within, and indeed promoted by the media, as is often the case today. Their presence is a fertile ground for evil. No wonder the devil is sometimes defined as ‘The father of lies.’ No wonder the bible stresses how important the virtues and ideals of trust and truth are. For example, the prophet Isaiah complains about “truth stumbling in the public square.” Paul the apostle exhorts the Ephesians to “fasten the belt of truth around your waist” and tells the Corinthians that “Love (i.e. God) rejoices in the truth.”

Truth is thus a precious virtue, an attribute of God, manifested in his son Jesus Christ, whose incarnation, according to the Gospel of St John, was “full of grace and truth.” And Jesus said of himself “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” It is indeed a sad reflection on our public life when a journalist declared some time ago, with an obvious reference to tabloid journalism, that “truth is no longer a golden thing to be safeguarded but a commodity to be bent and spun.”

We may conclude that there can be nothing but chaos and confusion in society when falsehood is not challenged. So, in many ways we should rejoice that in this country at least, various inquiries are set up, to challenge and face up to the truths they may uncover, however distressing it may be for those who are summoned to testify before such inquiries. Of course, the virtues of trust and truthfulness are not exclusively Christian, but no follower of Christ can deny how essential they are to the wellbeing of society, and the nation at large. They are, among other virtues, essential to the common good.

So we look forward to the upholding of these virtues in our world and wider communities and this September we look forward also to the welcoming of our new Team Rector, and the Church of England and the whole Anglican Community looks forward to the -at long last? – appointment of a new Archbishop of Canterbury.

With every blessing for a good return to work and school,

Clifford Poole.

NB We hope you can join us in All Saints’, Burbage at 7pm on Tuesday 16th September for the licencing of Sue Hart as Team Rector followed by celebratory drinks and canapés. Donations of finger food welcome.