**The Rector's Ramblings**



So this week I was, in the space of half an hour, called a Militant Feminist, and then a ‘disappointment’ for not being feminist enough! The cause of both of these accusations? The appointment of Sarah Mullally as the new Archbishop of Canterbury (as a slightly amusing aside, the Archbishop is often referred to by the shorthand title of the ABC – but until her inauguration in January she is the Archbishop of Canterbury Designate – so now it’s the ABCD!)

But back to my experiences in the shop this week. The first customer, visiting from East Sussex, took exception to the front cover of the Church Times, emblazoned as it was with a picture of Sarah Mullally, and let rip to anyone who wanted to listen, and those of us that didn’t, as to their views of women in leadership positions in the church – basically they shouldn’t have any! Once they had completed their purchase (I wasn’t going to lose a sale), I politely responded by pointing out that there is no reason that a woman cannot hold a position of authority in the church, or anywhere, because we are all equal in the sight of God, and then I did what I rarely do, especially with someone who probably knows the Bible as well as I do, I quoted scripture. Specifically, I quoted from St Paul, often used by some as the poster boy for the anti-women brigade, erroneously in my opinion, and his letter to the Galatians - ‘There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus’. (Gal 3: 28).

The customer harrumphed, called me a Militant Feminist and left.

Which brings me to my being a ‘disappointment’ as a feminist. One of our regular customers had been in the shop and heard the exchange, although sensibility they had kept their head down looking at the Christmas cards until the shop was empty, and then as they made their purchase they said ‘Oh I totally agree with you, women are not only able to hold positions of authority, it is our right to have them, and we’ll do them better than the men!’. Now I held my tongue with the obvious response of ‘Liz Truss!!’ and instead, again politely, pointed out that that hadn’t been my argument. I don’t believe women are automatically better than men, nor do I believe that as a woman I have the right to any position, role, or job simply because of my gender. I believe in equality, that we are all created equal in the sight of God, and that I hope and pray that the new ABCD was appointed because she was, is, the best person for what is an unbelievably demanding role and someone who will be able to lead the Church to a more stable, calm, and yes, inclusive, position so that we can do what we are called to do, spread the Good News of the Gospel. I also, again, quoted good old St Paul in his letter to the Romans ‘We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.’. (Rom 12: 6a).

Although there was no harrumphing this time, the customer did look at me sadly and said ‘oh, that is disappointing, I thought you were a feminist!’.

The appointment of the new ABCD has, and will continue to, caused a certain amount of distress to some, and a huge amount of excitement to others, but I can’t help but wonder how Jesus, St Paul, Mary Magdalene, St Peter, the early church Fathers, and the early church Mothers, would react to all the arguments and disagreements if they were here now? Because in the early church, up to the time of Constantine and the acceptance of Christianity as the ‘state’ religion of the Roman world, men and women shared in the responsibilities of leadership, of fellowship, of hospitality, and of evangelism, based, as St Paul’s tells us, on their gifts, irrespective of gender or race. Gifts given to them by God through the Holy Spirit. If I had continued with the letter to the Romans, St Paul does not differentiate between the role of men and the role of women but says that each should use their gifts to the best of their ability ‘If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show kindness and mercy, do it cheerfully.’ (Rom 12: 6b – 8).

So I am neither a Militant Feminist, nor I hope a disappointing one, because my feminism is based on the belief that we are all equal in the sight of God, that we are all created in His image, and that we all have gifts and skills given to us by God through the Holy Spirit, and that irrespective of gender, race, or skin colour, we should all not only use those gifts, but be given the opportunity to use them to benefit as many people as possible. My feminism is one that says the best person for the job should get the job, the best person for a position should get that position, and if that happens to be a woman, great, but if it happens to be a man, then I will celebrate with them, and support them as much as I can.

*So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them: male and female he created them. (Genesis 1: 27)*

*Rev Sarah*

**Worship in the Valley Parish**

# Sunday 19th October

## Holy Communion 10am St Andrew's, West Dean

## Rev Sarah Manouch

*07468 854864 priestvalleyparish@gmail.com Please note that I am part-time. My principal working days are Friday and Saturday as well as Sunday. I am not available on a Thursday.*