

# It's good news for the poor

BY BISHOP JONATHAN, BISHOP OF PORTSMOUTH

WE learn from Luke 4 that the work of the Church is to proclaim "good news to the poor", which involves alleviating both spiritual and physical poverty. It's the passage when Jesus unrolls the scroll in the synagogue and recites from Isaiah 61:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor."*

Too often, we allow ourselves to be defined as either 'word' or 'sacrament', concerned with either social justice or seeing people come to faith and becoming disciples - whereas the reality is that both are important. I call this "disjunctive-itis", pulling apart what actually belongs together.

I long for this diocese to explore what it means to seek the Kingdom in, with and under Christ. Serving those who are both spiritually poor - needing the forgiveness of sins and the hope of new life - and economically poor - physically poor, hungry, a refugee, or putting life back together from the rubble.

We need each one of us, those whose instincts are to go for spiritual poverty and those whose instincts are to roll up their sleeves and serve at the Foodbank. For Christ calls us all to seek and serve his Kingdom, to build signs of new life, signs of anticipation of that coming Kingdom now, here.

Christian life is a contemplative action - or an active contemplation. Some will emphasise this, some will emphasise that.

But the Church is called to proclaim in word and deed 'good news to the poor' and, in raising up the poor, to receive the voice and ministry from the poor - and to be changed by their perspective, the learning of those in very different circumstances.

It is unacceptable in God's world and in our nation that a quarter of children live in poverty, and that inequality between rich and poor grows wider almost every week. This is beyond politics. It's the work of the Church, to speak truth to power, and that the first place in God's heart goes to the least in the world's eyes.

Don't just mull it over, don't just write endless papers about it, do something about it in Christ's name. Join in with works of transformation and justice wherever they pop up.

We are called - not to do some provisional, or preliminary or less than profound task. We are here to do the work of the Kingdom, until that Kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven. Until that day, rededicate yourselves for nothing less than a whole gospel for the whole world for the whole of Christ's glory, even in us.



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