**Presidential Address**

**Portsmouth Diocesan Synod, 24 July 2021**

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

*For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever, Amen.*

These words we all know very well. You will use them, and probably not even think about them. So familiar, that they trot off the tongue. Some of these words, Jesus told us to use. Others of these words, some scholars say, are lifted from 1 Chronicles, “Yours, O Lord, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and you are exalted as head above all” (1 Ch 29:11).

Together, they form the essentials of the Lord’s Prayer. They, in a sandwich, would be the bread, with the stuff about ourselves in the middle- you know, the bit that tends to dominate our thinking and our choices. We don’t often ask about the bread in a sandwich- we regularly ask about the filling. The bread of the sandwich - you know the beginning and the end, without which the sandwich falls into a mess in your lap can relegated, especially if you leave your crusts, to the inconsequential.

But, the beginning and the end encapsulate something of God, helping us each to navigate our own understanding of being *En Christo,* and made in God’s image. This is all so different from, perhaps, the more consumerist approach, the inward-looking approach when our own individual needs become the most important.

The posh word for these sections in the Lord’s Prayer is doxology. As you will know it comes from the Greek Doxa and Logos - meaning Glory and Word. These words are common in the scriptures, and they help us get a better perspective, to help us navigate the changes and differences that we face. We need this stability to find flourishing and growth. Indeed, we must all be careful that any speak of glory should be to God, and not to our vanity. Perhaps we all need an outward focus, and not just an inward focus as we pray, plan, and discern.

So, as we begin this synod meeting, let me ask that simple question- what does such doxology look like in your own prayer lives, and even more so, what does int look like in the everyday? If Jesus leads us into the divine and beautiful relationship with the Father, through the power of the Spirit, that we become co-heirs with Christ, as citizens of the Kingdom of God, through the cross- what impact does that make in the everyday? May I ask, where is our Godly perspective? How do we truly give glory to God, and not just our own opinions or thoughts?

I’m sure that I am not alone in doing this, but as someone who really does not dig heights, in fact the thought of going to the top of the Spinnaker Tower fills me with such dread, I still like to get a sense of perspective. For the introvert or the acrophobic amongst us, google earth is a very fine thing. You get to hover over a place, perhaps your own home, or even worse, someone else’s! Am I the only one who has done that? You can zoom out, which can help us get a sense of perspective.

So, again, how might we all get a sense of perspective together? How do we know that we are ministering in a way that Gives glory to God, and not to ourselves? Indeed, how do we ensure that we minister in God’s imagination, with God’s vision and perspective for Portsmouth? What ten drives us- money, numbers, music, or a deep sense of God’s unconditional love for everyone that we see. How does God’s reality, as we live as the people of crucifixion and resurrection affect our vision and dreams for this wonderful part of England?

Together, I am aware with my clergy colleagues, that we share in the cure of souls of our communities here in this place. Do you not feel the weight of this privilege? Hundreds of thousands of souls, yearning for identity, meaning, hope and belonging. What is our vision then for a flourishing Portsmouth, for every community, that God will be worshipped, and that people discover that they flourish? What does it look like when the charade of vanity is laid down, revealing the broken and damaged ego within? You know, that frightened person, in the midst of the pandemic, that wants to know that they are loved. Is this healing, that leads to the flourishing of our communities?

Together we travel, together we journey as synodal people. We gather today, yes virtually, to discover something of truth in the faces and yearnings of one another. My prayer today is that we will hear therefore the voice of God, and in my experience, it can come in the most unlikely of places, and not the ones who like to speak the loudest or the longest.

I wonder if it is time for a little perspective, as we emerge, for the time being at least, from restrictions. That we continue to pray into the bigger picture, the longer view, the sense of Godly imagination. I wonder also how we might, over August, take some time to rebalance- to give God a rightful place. That our prayerful reflections may speak of love, of beauty and of a hope in Christ and in one another. That glory may be given to the one who loves us unconditionally. This, and the culture that this produces, can be irresistible.

Why not make August a month pf prayer? Please pray for your new Bishop, please pray for your Archdeacon, and those who work at Diocesan House, please pray for your Vicar and Churchwardens. This is all very important. But please pray also for God’s glory to be revealed, that you will be given fresh insight, develop a learner’s heart, a childlike delight, in love. That is God’s love for you, and indeed for the person that you find the hardest to get along with. You know, God’s love for you, God’s forgiveness for you, and God’s healing for you. Concentrate on giving glory to God, and in discerning God’s imagination for the community where you live, where you work. I wonder what a difference that will make?

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

*For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever, Amen.*

*Bishop Rob Wickham*

*Commissary Bishop, Diocese of Portsmouth*

*July 2021*