**DIOCESAN SYNOD**

**June 15, 2019**

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS**

Many of us will have either participated in or been present for some of the D Day commemoration events, where in a range of ways the people of this region and the nation gathered to reflect on the significance of those events, to acknowledge the labours of those involved, and to give thanks for those willing to give of themselves for the common good. That we continue to think of it after 75 years bears witness to the lasting significance of the event at that time, yet it is clear from the character of the commemorations that there is an enduring legacy, and a sense in which the commemorations themselves will have an impact on the lives of this generation by making us think, reflecting on our common history and considering the future together.

There is in that a very real sense of the interconnectedness of human life, both at any one given time across different places, and from generation to generation. The fabric of those different kinds of relationship remains as important as ever to the Church, and as mysterious as ever. We do not quite know where we end and others begin, and therefore where our relationship with the world ends and begins. It’s for that reason that it is so very difficult to reflect on the impact that we have on the world around us, because in the long term it is not totally clear whose impact we are talking about. It is all of ours one way or another, and so none of us has ownership of it. Those who are not against us are for us, says the Lord.

We’ve begun to speak as a Diocese about growth in depth, impact, and number, and the question about impact is especially hard to pin down. It’s partly, as I say, because it’s not always easy to say who did what, and perhaps that’s also because it doesn’t always matter. But perhaps also it’s tricky because we cannot but have an impact on the world around us. Our very existence changes things, makes a difference, in the smallest and most intangible of ways. The character of our briefest conversations, the choices whose significance may only emerge at a later date, all of it changes our world, just as our world changes us. And that means that before we think about growth in impact we need to reflect on what kind of impact we already have, and what quality we would like our being in the world to show.

Growth in impact is not therefore about doing more stuff; we make an impact on the world, for better or for worse, so let’s think about how it becomes better. And that’s why growth in impact is really a bridge between growth in depth and growth in number. The positivity of our impact on the world (that’s a word I dislike though frequently used by sportsmen and women but I’m struggling to find a better one) as Christians grows out of our depth of faithfulness to God, out of the grace and love of Jesus, and through the empowering of the Holy Spirit. And as much as the life of our God infuses our very being, so our impact on the world comes closer and closer to Christ, and from that place we might inspire others to join in a life lived in relationship with the living God.

And, if ‘we’ grow in number, only then might our impact grow because we are more. But just as we get to that point, we’re reminded again of Christ’s words; those who are not against us are for us. Who are ‘we’? We can never quite pin that down either, and so part of our growth is in celebrating those partnerships, formal or built on that looser but most profound of things, friendship, to seek to live in a way where our interaction with the world might become a blessing.

In view of those important partnerships and their impact, I’m going to end by briefly introducing Ian Coombs, our new and first Children’s Society ambassador about its impact…