

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT



Standing on your own two feet now

Dear Friends,

At Westminster Abbey, at Bishop Michael's consecration, the preacher, Rowan Williams - the former Archbishop of Canterbury - , remarked on a favourite pastime of clergy: to find the strangest ideas in hymns. As it was Ascension Day, he had come up with a great line; 'He (Jesus) is gone but the church carries on' (no, not sung at All Saints!). He talked about how theologically incorrect this line was, but understood the meaning of the hymn to be that Christ has ascended and we in the church are to carry on spreading the Good News.

Archbishop Rowan went on to say that being a Bishop was to be the Good News, an amazing opportunity, and this role brought great joy. Yet, although it did indeed feel like Good News, there were times when the role seemed far from being Good News and it was one that was hard to bear.

I am sure that he was reflecting on the joys and sadness that he had had to go through when he was Archbishop; the controversy over a potential appointment of a gay Bishop and the disappointment that the vote in General Synod went against Women Bishops during his office.

He reflected that, of course, Bishops were not the Good News in their own right but that it was the Good News of Christ which, through grace, gave them the strength to carry on.

Christians are all called to be the "Good News" to others and this often feels like a

wonderful opportunity but at other times can feel like a huge responsibility. We are not alone in this task, we too have the grace of Jesus Christ and it is in his strength alone that we can share the Good News, just as Bishop Michael will do among us.

Bishop Michael, in his welcoming service at St Alban's Cathedral, reflected in his sermon that the phrase from the reading; '*Are you the one to come or are we to expect another?*' (the question John the Baptist's disciples asked Jesus) was a rather a good joke to start off his sermon in thinking about his own appointment, as he found himself wondering whether he really is the right one? Was he going to fulfil expectations, is he the right choice? Well he prayed over that and I think that he has already proved to be as we witnessed when he came to us at All Saints' on his first Sunday as Bishop of Hertford.

We also may wonder whether God really chooses and uses us; are we up to the task of living out God's Love? Again, just as with Bishop Michael it is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can truly fulfil our role as disciples.

Bishop Michael in his sermon at All Saints' reminded us that after the Ascension of Jesus; (*probably in the sense intended in that the hymn that Rowan Williams had quoted, 'He is gone but the Church carries on'*) we have been entrusted with the living and sharing of the Gospel. Like riding a bike for the first time with neither stabilisers nor parents running alongside, or leaving home and living by ourselves, we need to be prepared to stand on our own two feet as witnesses to the Lord.

As the old Christian joke goes: 'There is no plan B'. It is up to us, through the strength and power of the Holy Spirit, to share the Good News of God's Love.

Love,
Jo