

Voice from the Vicarage September 17th 2021

Dear All,

It's not the first time I've written that in these days many things seem to take somewhat longer to achieve. So forgive me that this 'Voice' is a little late. The week seems to have been rather full and demanding. I say that in no way as a complaint! It's just the way it is as life makes its demands and brings its joys and of course, sometimes, its disappointments. Priests have the privilege of hearing a fair share of both these realities in other people's lives as well as dealing with their own, as each in their own way, and together, we explore how to make sense of such 'changes and chances'.

And of course we Christians are not simply able to concern ourselves with our own personal lives and situations, but be observant and concerned about life around us. While there is sometimes, indeed quite often, a tension between the work of the Church (and so her priests) as pastor and involvement in the world of politics—that is the circumstances of society and the way it is ordered and governed, rather than *party* politics, that involvement is inevitable. The fight against slavery was pastoral *and* political because it was about persons and a system that exercised power over others; the fight against Apartheid was pastoral *and* political because it was about the way persons were constrained by the State and held back from flourishing on the basis of colour; the work of Pope John Paul II and others in bringing down the Iron Curtain shook the political landscape but his motive was primarily religious—the inherent dignity of persons made in the image of God and the call to build now a society that reflects the heavenly 'Jerusalem', the true home with room for all.

Once a government, of whatever hue, so works to stifle opposition, or sees opposition to its policies as simply disloyalty to that State (and so equating itself with the State), creating a rhetoric that seems to demand unquestioning loyalty, it is straying into dangerous territory. The use of power to create inordinate fear to bring about compliance as if somehow the means justifies the ends is morally questionable to say the least, even cruel. The adage of the 18/19th century Roman Catholic and politically liberal Lord Acton that 'power tends to corrupt, and absolute power, corrupts absolutely' is deservedly well known.

Acton saw that opposition is not so much a nuisance as a necessity.

Structured, disciplined opposition is one of the great strengths of democracy.

It used to be that in England, anyway, and it may still be used, though not enough, the political parties not in power were referred to as 'Her Majesty's *loyal* opposition'. There was an assumption of, and basic thankfulness for the loyalty to the nation and the Crown of those who for the time being do not hold the reigns of government. In times of crisis, it was the wisdom and strong humility of leaders to call upon that loyalty for the greater good, leaving go of party division out of stern necessity, drawing around the table people who would otherwise be on the other side of the Chamber, and religious leaders too. Strong leadership can be conciliar.

It's just wise because walls demand voices be louder in order to be heard, and the need to shout rarely brings forth the best....

As I reflect on this, I do so as one who prefers to remain in the pastoral corner rather than the political, yet I am so aware of the noble tradition of religious leaders whose beliefs made them unafraid. Actually, the tradition of Anglo Catholicism in which this parish stands began back in 1833 with a sermon given by the irenic John Keble about the Church standing firm against inappropriate government interference in its life and worship...But that's another story to tell at another time....

Oh, but let me say quickly that I am only too aware of the times in history when

the Church has gathered to itself a power verging on the absolute, to the detriment of many. This week one of the readings reminded me of the words of Jesus about splinters and planks in eyes....

The local pastoral scene....

As I reported last week, the Thursday lunch was due to make its debut at the 'Lamb' yesterday. It went well in every way, and thanks to the team for their hard work. Here's a glimpse of them before the arrival of the crowd....



Prayer is an essential part of the preparation...offered under the mural of a large kangaroo....



Kitchen preparation too....



I love this photo!

The team masked and ready....

And today, the church will we pray be at her pastoral best as the funeral rites of Heinz Grobe take place here. It is a solemn and beautiful duty for a priest to commend a soul to our merciful Lord. Pray for him, and for our organist Stephen. They have shared their lives for 45 years....

And finally, thanking the Lord for millennials...

After many hours trying to make sense of online forms as we make our application for a liquor licence for 'The Lamb and Flag' to make it possible for us to sell and serve a glass of wine, and with interminably long waits on the telephone to get help, our *millennial* deacon (as opposed to whatever the slightly older next generation of deacon is called!) stepped in and solved the issue with impressive efficiency. I was delighted, and so was he, though I'm not sure it was good for his humility...

The application has been sent! A glass of red well deserved... much love, + *Lindsay*

Mass online this Sunday @ 10 a.m.

Sacrament can be collected from the vicarage today (Friday) 2—5 p.m.