

July 2017

'A NEED FOR GRACE'

The Rector writes:

It was only in 1334 that Pope John XXII decreed that the church should universally keep the Feast of Trinity. Scripture contains no reference to 'Trinity', yet is filled with references to the triune nature of God. Perhaps the most famous, best known and possibly best loved of these appears at the end of St Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth (2 Corinthians 13:13 NRSV):

**'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit
be with all of you.'**



These words we use week by week in church, and I trust day by day in our prayers. Sometimes the familiarity of words prevents us from stopping to think about the challenge they bring to our daily living. St Paul prefixes the words of the grace with the following challenge as he takes his farewell.

'put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace' (2 Cor 13:11)

Although St Paul was dealing with issues and conflicts within the church, it seems to me that we need to heed his words as we look at the problems and challenges that face our national life at this time.

The political unrest following the general election, acts of terrorism and religious hatred, and the awful catastrophic fire at Grenfell Tower all reveal how fractured, fragmented and fraught with danger our daily life is becoming. The strength of feeling, anger and frustration of the victims of these events is understandable and in many cases justified. But there is a very real danger that demands for answers, culprits to blame and justice can easily be overtaken by calls for vengeance and retribution. This is dangerous territory. Our nation really does need an application of grace at present.

At the heart of grace is the love of God - God's love is not just one attribute of God's nature, it is the very heart of his nature. Each and every one of us has the capacity to love, each needs to love and to be loved. When awful things happen this love is challenged – in some it will turn to anger and hatred, in others to a sense of helplessness and despair, and in some into a selfless outpouring of support. All of these we have witnessed in the past few weeks.

For the Christian we are reminded of the selfless sacrificial love of Jesus, who loved us so much that he gave up his life in heaven, to come to earth to live among us, and to suffer and to die to save us from our sins. The things happening in our nation again challenge us to think about the way we live – have we overdone 'austerity'? Should we be prepared to pay a little more to provide the care and protection we need to respond to the challenges of emergency provision? How far should we seek to integrate other's into our society, or encourage difference? I raise these questions not from a political point of view, but from a need for grace!

The third aspect of St Paul's prayer speaks of the communion (fellowship) of the Holy Spirit. The Greek word 'koinonia' , which can be translated as 'partnership', 'sharing', 'interchange', 'fellowship' and 'communion', reminds us of the need for community. Living together in harmony as the Trinity live in harmony is a real challenge. For us mortals the aim of living in complete unity is probably beyond our human ability. But we do need to be aware of the need for understanding, respect and support in community – and thank God in the horrors of the past weeks there have been many examples of this. The selfless devotion of the emergency services, the generosity of ordinary people, the tears and prayers, the care of churches, mosques, religious and community groups – have all shown that there is much love around. But if we are to 'put things in order and live in peace' as St Paul suggests, we need to go on not just by praying but by living in the Grace of God!

Yours in Christ,

Reverend John, your Rector.