



**ASHFORD TOWN PARISH
MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM RECTOR
July 2021**

'...in their vocation and ministry'

Last week, I was able to get to the British Museum for 'Thomas Becket: Murder and the Making of a Saint'. The exhibits included a baptismal font from Scandinavia, a bishop's crook from Wales, and stained glass windows from Canterbury Cathedral!

Becket is a fascinating figure. We have so much contemporary evidence about his life, and yet he remains something of an enigma. One thing, though, seems clear: when he became Archbishop of Canterbury, something profound changed – in his attitudes, his way of living, and in his relationship with God. And it was a change that no one around him expected. Perhaps he didn't see it coming himself.

I love the Collect for this Sunday, based on one Cranmer wrote back in the sixteenth century for the Book of Common Prayer:

Almighty and everlasting God,
by whose Spirit the whole body of the Church
is governed and sanctified:
hear our prayer which we offer for all your faithful people,
that in their vocation and ministry
they may serve you in holiness and truth
to the glory of your name;
through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

When Cranmer composed it, he knew he was saying something really radical: that all God's faithful people are given 'vocation and ministry'. Not just monks and nuns. Not just deacons, priests, and bishops (and archbishops). Not just missionaries and full-time Christian workers. All the members of Christ's body have 'their vocation and ministry'. The God in whom we have faith is a God who calls each one of us to serve him, and to share in his work in this world.

It was a great privilege to be at Canterbury Cathedral on Saturday 3rd July, to see Geoff Abasolo-Munnery welcomed into ordained ministry in the Church of England, and Susan Manners from Kingsnorth church ordained a deacon, to serve just down the road in the Stour Downs parish. Ordained ministers are a precious gift from Christ for the church, and both the awesomeness and the joy of that flow through the ordination service. We witness people embracing the vocation they have received from God, and we know they will be changed by that, for their good and for the good of the whole church. And those changes may not be quite what people expect.

How would you describe your 'vocation and ministry'? That may be an easier question for some of us to answer than others. But Anglican teaching – as expressed in that Collect – is clear that each one of us is given a unique share in the ministry of Christ, and in the calling of the church. It needn't be focused on

what we might term 'church ministry'. It might be more about relationships: marriage and family life is, I would argue, a form of vocation for Christians. It might be shaped through roles we take within society: the profession we are part of, the work that we do, whether paid or unpaid. And we don't necessarily just have one vocation either. We might have a 'church ministry' vocation, and a 'relationships' vocation, and a 'social role' vocation.

Sometimes, God call us to embrace a new vocation – like Thomas Becket becoming Archbishop of Canterbury, when he had previously been a high flying official in the royal household. But sometimes, God asks us to see that what we are already doing, and perhaps have been doing for a long time, can be a way of serving Christ, of sharing in God's work. And when we really say yes with our whole heart to what God is asking of us, things change. People change. We are changed. And not always in predictable ways.

The Revd Canon Dr Jeremy Worthen