

Belonging!

[Habakkuk 2¹⁻⁴; Psalm 31¹⁻⁶;] Ephesians 2^{19-end}; John 20²⁴⁻²⁹

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God. [Ephesians 2¹⁹]

It was a great day when Chikomso Samuel was born - and to learn that his name means *The Lord leads*. It was a special birth as it was the first addition by birth to this Church Family since I became Rector. It was a special event I wouldn't have wanted to miss!

Thomas was away from the disciples when Jesus met with them on the day of his resurrection! He said that **unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and I put my finger in the marks of the nails and my hand in his side I will not believe.**

I think sometimes Thomas gets a bad press being labelled the doubter: it was his fellow disciples that he doubted not Jesus! What Thomas couldn't accept was a second-hand faith based on his friends, but wanted his relationship with Jesus!

A week later he saw Jesus and all doubts were gone - his confession **my Lord and my God** was his response to seeing the risen Christ.

Thomas belonged to the group who worshipped the risen Christ, but he missed out because he wasn't there!

Paul's letter to the Ephesians sets out how important each member of the Church is and how important it is for them to be there.

In the aftermath of the referendum where people have responded very emotionally about belonging and in a context where so many feel like strangers and are treated as aliens it is important to get the language of belonging:

- ✦ We aren't just **citizens** but we are **citizens with the saints!**
- ✦ We aren't just a people of faith but **members of the household of God!**
- ✦ Who we are counts - we build on **the foundation of the apostles and prophets!**
- ✦ Together we **grow into a holy temple to the Lord** with **Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone!**
- ✦ Together we **are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God!**

When as parents and godparents you promise that you will help Chikomso to take his place in the Church, it is this vision of the Church that Paul shares that he will be part of - and he won't miss out on God's grace.

Let me try to explain the difference Paul is highlighting.

If we were just guests in Church then we may have a place laid for us at the table when we arrive for the meal that Jesus shares with us - we may be missed, but it probably doesn't make much of a difference to us or anyone else.

But if we are the building our coming together is vital - the building is incomplete without us. If you were a pillar, or a window, or a bit of the roof, or even the pews the building isn't sound and safe if a bit is missing!

Chikomso has the privilege of having Christian parents who understand this and no doubt the covenant we enter into today in Baptism - with God, parents, godparents and the Church as partners - will find its fulfilment when Chikomso comes to know God for himself and finds his place in the Church built on Christ and joined together as the people in whom God lives.

If we hold him in our prayers then he will grow into his name - the Lord will lead him.

If we trust God for his future he may indeed fulfil his second name and be a great man of God as Samuel was - a prophet to his age and generation.

He belongs in God, with God's people!

What is true for Chikomso is potentially true for us all: that is faith!