

## ***Productivity!***

*Acts 10<sup>44-end</sup>; Psalm 98; 1 John 5<sup>1-6</sup>; John 15<sup>9-17</sup>*

*I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. [John 15<sup>16</sup>]*

What will it be like to come to St Mary's in 100 years' time? I doubt that (m)any of us will be here to see it, but these stones will still stand as witness to our prayers and they will have been absorbed into them just as this ground has witnessed the prayers of the people of this Parish since 900.

The Readings today remind us of our Easter Faith:

- ✘ The Psalmist reminds us that we are a people of praise who celebrate God's victory and his promise of his covenant and love. It also reminds us that God will have the last word on this world.
- ✘ John reminds us in his letter that whoever is born of God conquers the world because they believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that the people of faith are hallmarked by doing what God commands them.
- ✘ In his Gospel John reminds us that we are a joyful people who love because God loved us. We are assured that we are chosen and that we are friends of God.
- ✘ Acts reminds us that this faith is inclusive and embraces even the people who those inside that faith may not think belong – they can be forgiven through Christ's death too. God's sense of humour is such that the faces of the orthodox believers must have been a picture as they witnessed the Holy Spirit fall in power on the people of Joppa that they went so hesitantly to.

This is Good News, it is our Good News, it is the glue that hold us together as a people of God – members of the Church of Christ.

In 100 years' time that Easter Faith will still be the same, but what the Gospel for today makes clear is that we have a responsibility to and for that future. **I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.**

A couple of weeks ago (during my days off!) I sat in a one-to-one interview with every member of staff in the family business for their annual review. Did they understand the job they were there to do? Were they doing it? Were they being productive?

If I were to sit down with each member of the congregation here, how would you answer the questions?

### ✘ **Do you understand the job you are here to do?**

It is to share the Good News and to introduce those around us to the possibility of forgiveness, of freedom and belonging. Once through the door, our job is to love all of them.

### ✘ **Are you doing it?**

Like Peter, we have to be attentive to God challenging us to move beyond what we find comfortable so that we have the privilege of seeing God's Holy Spirit (and his sense of humour) at work.

### ✘ **Are you being productive?**

In the end, only God can answer that – he alone knows whether we have been effective in introducing people to faith. However, we can respond to the four simple things we can do:

- i. Do we live our faith in a way that shows it is genuine and makes a positive difference to us?
- ii. Do we go out of our way to share that faith with others in a way that shows we really do believe it is a matter of life and death?
- iii. Do we invite our friends and family to Church – not because the Church is perfect, but because it is where they will hear the message of hope?
- iv. Do we pray faithfully for our friends and family so that God knows who we are concerned about – because we surely pray for those we love?

The ship that is the Church isn't a cruise ship; it is a lifeboat; it is a place of work, not leisure, and its effectiveness is only ever as good as the productivity of the crew. In 100 years, the congregation here will be our children and grandchildren in the faith: since the future of the Church depends on our effectiveness, our productivity, how confident are you about that future?