

Rector's Letter - Rev'd Jeremy Trew - Aug-Sept 2021

Dear Friends,

I've only met the Bishop of St David's once. It was a strange conversation that did not end where I had expected it to: He suggested I should apply for ordination. I didn't. Instead, I decided to get a job, grow up a bit more, and then see. I got a job. Later I was ordained. I'll leave you to decide on the other point.



The current Bishop of St David's, Joanna Penburthy, has caused a row by a recent Twitter comment in which she wrote "never trust a Tory." She later apologised for the comment, but not for the sentiment, based on her reflections of the current administration, and in particular to a suggestion that the Government would attempt to abolish the Senedd, the Welsh devolved authority. The good Bishop has strong political views and believes them to be in harmony with her Christian faith.

"Now, hang on a moment Rector, this is the Summer holiday edition of the magazine. There should be something here about hazy days, sandy beaches and cricket on the village green (how Anglican). We don't want anything more disturbing or controversial than the book we're planning to take on holiday with us to read."

Fair enough. In fact, some people would go on to say that faith and politics should never trespass on one another's territory, and that Bishop Penburthy, let alone a mere Rector, should steer well clear and stick to what they know. Do you think that is true?

So, what is "political" anyway? A helpful definition I was once told was this: Something is political when we agree not to agree to disagree. You might need to read that twice. Agreeing to disagree makes for polite conversation and helps us get along, but it doesn't make our world a better place. It does nothing to right wrongs and fails to challenge injustice. By definition, anything that matters is political. Because, if something matters a great deal to us, we will not simply agree to disagree with others, but will argue it through and seek to provoke change for what we believe to be the better outcome.

Christianity, as I understand it, is political in the sense that it stands against injustice and the abuse of power in all its forms and aims to reform the very relationship between people and between people and God. One of my favourite Desmond Tutu quotes is: 'When people say that religion and politics don't mix, I wonder which Bible it is they are reading.' He, of course, received much venom for speaking truth to power, but I can think of few Christian leaders who have exemplified Christ-like faith to such an extent.

I think that Bishop Penburthy overstepped in what she said, and I am glad she apologised. But I would rather have as a Church leader someone who occasionally does that than someone whose faith is so meek and mild that it never challenges or provokes anyone. What kind of Church leader would you like, and why? We may have to agree to disagree, but I'd rather we agreed not to agree to disagree and instead worked our differences through. I think we would both be better off for that. How about you?

Yours

Jeremy

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