

Reflection for Sunday 11th July 2021

Do split infinitives matter anymore? There seems to be some debate and I leave it to your curiosity to settle the matter, but suspect that might be one you just let go. From my youth I remember '*Space, the final frontier...to boldly go...*' from Star Trek. It was always said that one should '*go boldly*' rather than '*boldly go*.' This time of year people are preparing to go in all sorts of ways. Children moving up from primary to secondary school, young people from school to work, college or university. Maybe you are going on holiday somewhere and are wondering what that may bring, The English football team go into the final with Italy (good luck to them), and it seems, all of us, will go into a post C-19 regulated England – the other nations of the kingdom taking their own approach. Pope Francis and the Bishops of England and Wales have reminded us about the need to go into the future with confidence by mitigating the effects of climate change. St. John Henry Newman advises that '*To live is to change, and to change often is to become more perfect.*'

Jesus challenges his disciples to go and to change when he sends them out on mission to act on his behalf. It is quite a responsibility and although we are not told how they felt there must have been some nervousness even though Jesus gave them authority and instructions. We are sent out to others as well as Jesus wishes to be made known to them through us – quite a responsibility. For us though it's not so much about where we are to go geographically, as our way of living is different from that of Jesus and his disciples. It is more about where we are to go in the sense of how people think, feel and believe and what they do. This week in The Economist magazine I was interested to read this: "*So far it looks as if the legacy of covid-19 will follow the pattern set by past pandemics. Nicholas Christakis of Yale University identifies three shifts: the collective threat prompts a growth in state power; the overturning of everyday life leads to a search for meaning; the closeness of death which brings caution while the disease rages, spurs audacity when it has passed. Each will mark society in its own way.*"¹

My interest focussed on the *search for meaning* although, if correct, the other trends are clearly important for the Church. But to be sent on behalf of the Lord, in our situation today could mean to *go boldly* or *boldly go* into that *search for meaning*. The Economist leader said that this *search for meaning* may mean a stronger shift into identity politics both on the right and the left. But at a deeper level they quote a poll from the Netherlands and Italy that one in five people thought that the pandemic had made their countries more religious and in Spain and Canada that two in five thought family ties had become stronger. Our search for meaning is not new but conditions of life can make this question more prominent and more present in peoples minds and hearts. The Church answers this question with the person of Jesus Christ. The Second Vatican Council states: "*Christ is the light of humanity; and it is accordingly, the heart-felt desire of this sacred Council, being gathered together in the Holy Spirit, that, by proclaiming his Gospel to every creature (cf. Mark. 16:15), it may bring to all that light of Christ which shines out visibly from the Church.*"² Maybe the question we need to ask ourselves, as Church, is the one faced by all of us if we are planning to go anywhere: what do we need to do, to take, to be? As John Henry Newman said: '*To live is to change, and to change often is to become more perfect.*' So no worry about splitting infinitives but about going, boldly or otherwise, in the direction of the infinite love of Jesus Christ - *the way, the truth and the life*.³

God bless you, Canon David.

¹ The Economist, July 3rd-9th, The long goodbye, page 11

² Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II, Lumen Gentium, 21st November 1964

³ John 14:6