

Did you pick up your Ordination Special from the newsagents? I did... Full of photos of Ordinations... And this one is even more special - this is Liz's C of E newspaper- a piece written by our very own newly ordained Deacon... So good that we've put it in the August magazine so you can read it there.

The Church Times not only has lots of photos - it has several pages of advice for those who are newly ordained. The headline is 'Don't say yes to everything' - so if Liz says no to you, congratulate her. And I liked these suggestions, which don't just apply to curates, but to all clergy...

Don't take yourself too seriously. Take your office deeply seriously, but laugh at yourself and never believe your own publicity.

Stop thinking that you have sneaked under someone's radar. The One who called you is faithful, and has work for you to do.

There is a redeemer, and it is not you!

That last one has taken me a long time to learn. We - as clergy - are not the redeemer, the person who fixes everything for everyone, the answer to the crisis in the Church of England. But we - as the church - do have a

vital role to play in God's work of redemption and healing and renewal. And there is a pointer to this in another very important service happening this weekend, in fact later today.

At one o'clock Keith will lead a service of baptism for four children - Georgia, Beatrice, Frankie and Harry. And at the end of that service the congregation will say these words to the children who are baptised: 'Shine as a light in the world, to the glory of God the Father'.

You may have seen that there was another baptism service last week, at Sandringham Church. When little Princess Charlotte was christened, Archbishop Justin gave a short homily. He ended by saying this:

"Beauty is the implied prayer of the baptism service, beauty of life which brings true and eternal greatness. In such times as ours, those who suffer - such as the wounded or bereaved in Tunisia and other places - need lives of beauty around them; lives that share healing and hope, offering to all around them, both in times of light and darkness, a vision of a Christ-filled future."

That is the call to all of us through our baptism - to live a life which brings light and beauty and healing and hope to those around us.

It is possible in this ordination season to focus just on those who are taking this big step, as they face the demands and the privileges of ordained ministry. But we can also use this time to reflect on our own calling - the calling of our baptism - to shine as lights in the world.

We might find ourselves reading the story of one of the new curates and thinking - I know I couldn't do that. But our Old Testament reading reminds us that being God's person in a situation doesn't depend on having a special service, or a particular training, or some great ability. Amos wasn't one of the professionally trained court prophets who the Kings of Israel gathered around themselves. He wasn't brought up to serve the king in this way and he didn't expect any of the usual rewards.

Amos was, as he says, a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees. He was a farm boy used to following the flock in the fields. He had no specially eloquent speech - he probably spoke with a thick country accent. But his heart was true, and he was open to God's call, and he was able to speak God's message of judgment on a corrupt nation and its leaders.

John the Baptist may have been the son of a priest, but he lived out in the wilderness, and dressed in rough clothes. He certainly didn't fit neatly into the smooth ways of Herod's court. But Herod was strangely drawn to his

honesty and his integrity - even when John told him things he didn't want to hear.

We may feel that we are ill equipped to be God's person where we are - whether it's in our neighbourhood, with our friends, among our family, at work, in a group or alongside someone who is particular need. But if that is the place where we find ourselves, then we **are** God's person there, whether we like it or not. And our second reading reminds us that the great privilege we have of being called and loved by God, is not just for us...

'In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live to his glory'.

The Salvation Army uniform as an S on each lapel - the S's stand for Saved to Serve - but they might also stand for Saved to Share. The grace that has been given to us, the truth that has been given to us - these things are for us to share.

We're thinking about this at the moment in the PCC as we look ahead this year. We're wondering about whether as a church we might follow a course called 'Fruitfulness on the Frontline'. It's about how we can make a difference on our 'frontline' - the places where our lives of faith come into contact with the world around - which will be in a different place for each of us - down at the pub or the

coffee shop, in the canteen or the office, in the care home or the hospital waiting area, in the school or on the street corner.

The course talks about how we can shine as God's lights by the way we act - the character we show - the difference we make in places which may be out of true in some way, as well as by what we say. Amos and John both did that. Our prayer for the children baptised today is that they will grow up to do that too. And we can ask God to help each of us to live more and more as his people where we are.

It isn't easy. I was very challenged by something else in the Church Times this week. It was an article about a training course for clergy called 'The Contemplative Minister' - my friend Peter, who is a Vicar down in Dorset, is involved in it. The course is about getting the most important thing right - the thing without which we will all make a mess of being God's people wherever we are - whether we are clergy or not - because we will be out of touch with the source of God's life in us.

In the article the writer talks about when he was a parish priest in South Africa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu came to talk to the clergy, and he told them this: 'Our people will not expect that we will be experts in drains or in finance, but they will expect us to be experts in prayer. And that is what they should expect from us.'

That's very challenging for those of us who are in ministry - because it is very easy for us to drift away from this first priority, because of everything else we have to do. The number of times I put down Quiet Day in my diary and then cross it out...

But the article goes on, it is because of the business that we need this - 'The key' it says 'is an ever-deepening relationship of love for God: hearts that are held firm in the peace that is in Christ Jesus, even in the most testing circumstances. Unless priests find a way to live the life of prayer, through all the joys and demands of ministry, they will not survive.'

I don't think that's just a challenge for us clergy. The key, for all of us, as we go through life with all its demands, as we face the challenges of growing older and letting go, and as we live out our baptism call to be God's people wherever we find ourselves - the key is 'an ever-deepening relationship of love for God' and 'hearts that are held firm in the peace that is in Christ Jesus'. The more we allow God to draw us into this relationship of love, the more we will shine as lights in the world, because it will be his light that is shining through us.