

# The life that faith demands

## *Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time*

Published in the Ministry District of Yorke Peninsula

### Sunday, August 6, 2023

It is the feeding of the five thousand that we are confronted with the reality of the unlimited nature of Faith. It is perhaps easier to believe in Jesus, who offers us eternal life, a “Pie in the sky when we die”. Now Salvation is essential and is, in reality, the subject of most belief systems. Contained in that is often some form of Moral Code – how we should live is tied to the outcome of salvation. Even those who propose no afterlife live by the code that nothing matters, so all things are permissible. This would be part of the problem with our Western Hedonistic society.

But that is for another time. I will take as read the concept of Christian Salvation based on the acceptance of Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and also the idea of an appropriate moral code that flows out of this. What is essential is that a faith-based life should be characterised by more than a good moral life. Acts of faith should populate it.

Take, for example, the dilemma in the Gospel. The moral and compassionate response of the disciples was: *“This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.”* Jesus responded, *“They need not go away; you give them something to eat.”* Of course, the immediate response to a faith challenge is doubt: *“We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.”* But Jesus says: *“Bring them here to me.”* And the rest, shall we say, is History...

This is a story we have all known since childhood; for some of you, that is many years. But have we learned the lesson? Problem + Jesus = Miracle Solution. A simple equation but most often absent from our Anglican Congregations. Some of you might have heard me say: “God must truly love the Anglican Church because we Anglicans seem to do everything to destroy it.” That would be true of the current GAFCON opinions. We had a district meeting last Sunday that lasted three hours, basically discussing the problem that we have no money for our continuation. I do not wish to single out the Ministry District of Yorke Peninsula because this was not the first time I have sat in Church Meetings at all levels where the conversation has not been similar. Perhaps this is one of the joys of being an Archdeacon. It opens up more opportunities for similar discussions.

What would be far less frequent would be the honest discussion needed in the faith community. The problem is not a shortage of money but a shortage of faith. It is symptomatic of when the voices lacking faith dominate the conversation. I am not

saying that we should ignore the financial needs, nor should we not use our talents and resources to bring in additional money, but there is a distinction between Fun Raising and Fund Raising. In one, we gather to build community (and often, these activities will generate income. On the other, we gather to create revenue. I run with the principle that ministry should be self-sustaining and that the focus is a perceived need within the community. In Mooroolbark, we were confronted with an epidemic of loneliness. We began a simple programme of Sunday Roast Lunches and Wednesday Soup days so that people would not eat alone. A regular gathering of sixty for the roasts and thirty of soup meant that we did make money, but the gift to the community was company and fellowship. This activity began with the need, not the financial deficit.

Louise and I know this principle of God's provision. After the birth of our first child, we stepped out in faith and with no guaranteed income, we travelled halfway around the world to study in Africa for two years. We lived by faith, and God provided all our needs. In fact, most Clergy are called to live this way. Few of our ministry units offer assured income.

But this is not about me (or us) but about you.

What is the level of your faith? I know it may be a joke, but I have had members of previous parishes drive to the city and pray for a car parking space where they need it. It is not essential for Minlaton except on the Fridays of Long Weekends, but it is a step towards living by faith rather than sight. Too many of us do not allow faith into the equation of our lives. Maybe you are not ready to step out into ministry trusting entirely on God's provision, but a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, and likewise, the faith life starts with trusting in God in small ways.

So let us begin then and find small ways to live, trusting in God and not the circumstances. Like muscles, faith must also be built up, but it is up to you.

As a footnote, the meetings with people who prayed for car parks moved towards a faith-based response and were far more refreshing and innovative. There is something in that for all of us to think about.

**AMEN**