

EDITORIAL – AN ORDINATION CHARGE

By Paul Beasley-Murray

While going through the papers of my late father, I came across the notes of the sermon my father preached at my own ordination some thirty years ago. I found it a spiritual tonic to read them. I confess that I had totally forgotten what he had said at the time. With the passing of the years I realise how apt the sermon was for me. As I was pondering what to say for this editorial, it occurred to me that maybe my father's reflections on ministry had a wider relevance too. In this hope let me share his notes with you. The only change I have made is to omit the illustrations, simply because the terseness of the notes does not make much sense at this point. I have refrained from re-casting the notes into inclusive language - things were different in 1970.

Disciple and Teacher, Servant and Master –

“A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master” (Matt 10.24). Observe the terms: The disciple is sent out to be a teacher, but he always remains a disciple - a learner. The servant is sent in the name of his master - and he always remains a servant. This is how Jesus went - always learning from his Father, always obedient to his Father.

First, the disciple shares the reproach of his teacher, the servant shares the rejection of his master. See Matt 10.32: “If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they malign those of his household”. That Jesus should ever have been called Beelzebub was the most shocking instance of the total rejection he suffered at the hands of the religious leaders of his time. Jesus was a tool of the devil! The spirit in him was the power of evil. Therefore everything for which he stood was to be rejected as abhorrent. This led him to the grave words about blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. If Jesus should suffer such rejection, how much more will his disciples know it? See John 15.20. Basic to the message of Jesus and integral to the experience of the early disciples is the inevitability of the disciple sharing his master's fate: see Matt 5.11,12; Luke 9.57ff; Mark 8.34; Mark 13.10. The sermons of the Book of Acts are chiefly delivered in hostile surroundings. The missionary progress of the Church through the ages is marked by the blood stains of its heralds. Recognise the

inevitability of hardship as a minister of Christ. It is in this that his partnership is learned and experienced.

Second, the disciple shares the attitude of his teacher, the servant shares that of his master. And that is a love which stoops to the lowliest and costliest service. See John 13.16: "I have given you an example that you should do as I have done for you. A servant is not greater than his master, nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them".

The first implication of this statement: preparedness for menial service. Foot-washing was the slave's job! The humility of Christ is to be expressed in readiness for work that only a 'Christly' man would do. The second implication: preparedness for sacrificial self-giving for the salvation of the world. See Phil 2.6-8 and v.5. No doubt this is for the whole church and not for the minister alone, but the minister must lead his people in this kind of ministry, and set them an example. It is unthinkable to tell people to walk in the steps of Jesus, and stand back. The servant church requires the servant leaders to show them the mind of the servant of the Lord.

Third, the disciple shares his teacher's success, the servant shares his master's glory. See John 15.20: "If they kept my word, they will keep yours also". Light in the darkness! The power and blessing of God that was with Jesus is with the disciples of Jesus. See also Luke 6.40: "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully taught will be like his teacher". This is in contrast to the terrible results of the blind leading the blind: he who knows the truth of Jesus will be able to lead them into the power of that truth just as Jesus did. This is the joyful, reverse side of the principle enunciated by Jesus. If men rejected him, men also listened to him. Even on the cross. And especially through the cross. See John 12.31,32. When was Jesus to draw all men to him? When his servants made him known through the preaching and living of the gospel. If Mark 13.10 puts the mission in a context of suffering, Matt. 28.18 puts it in the context of victory and power. If it be true that the march of the church has been marked with blood stains, it has also known joy and life. So today. Against all the pessimists, let that never be forgotten. And go, expecting to see response to your ministry. Your Lord's power is limitless. Let your trust match that power - and so will your joy.

With now thirty years of ministry behind me, and at about the same stage in ministry as was my father when he preached this sermon, I feel like saying 'Amen' and 'Amen'!

JUST MANAGING IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH

Sue Walrond-Skinner

(In February 2001 Sue Walrond-Skinner resigned from her post as Adviser in Pastoral Care and Counselling in the Diocese of Southwark. She explained her reasons in the following open letter which appeared in the *Church Times*. She raises some important ministry issues which are not restricted to that Anglican context.)

I have not resigned as adviser in pastoral care and counselling in this diocese because of some personal quarrel with the Bishop. What has brought us into profound conflict is, I believe, a matter of justice. Resignation has become the only way open to me to draw attention to a gaping void in our diocesan life, a void which has led to damage and distress among those I am called upon to serve.

I dissent from the current culture of the church, which is not confined to the Diocese of Southwark, but which is manifested in a particularly sharp and uncompromising way here a culture of management that all but denigrates and belittles a culture of pastoral care, making it increasingly difficult for pastoral care to flourish. This is a supremely important struggle in which the church is engaged and which, if we are to be true to the Gospel, the culture of pastoral care must be enabled to flourish again.

The importance of dissent

The dominant culture is all-pervasive and the voice of dissent is hard to articulate. Yet it is a vital voice. For Christians, and those who may be drawn into belonging to Christ, do not want primarily to be managed, they want to be pastored. Thus, those of us who have the luxury of being able to articulate a voice of dissent need to do so at this moment in time perhaps more than at any other.

Where a bishop fails to prioritise pastoral care or actively disclaims that role in word and action, the task of a diocesan