

Article for Moreton Hall Directory

We live in frustrating times. I cannot begin to describe the measure of frustration so many people are feeling. Frustration about being confined; frustration about being alone; frustration of being afraid of what might happen when you meet people; frustration over low employment, no employment or, in some cases, even more employment than they had before because everybody is bombarding them with emails and extra work.

We have had a number of lectures and programmes on the television talking about our wellbeing and offering advice on how to deal with all the difficulties we have. But the real problem with frustration is that without realising it often we say and do things which are not really representative of how we feel about something or someone. We find that once a word is spoken or an action taken, it is very difficult to call it back. If we were not so frustrated we would never have said, or done things like that.

Often when we are depressed, upset and angry we want a focus, someone or something to blame. Once we have decided what that is sometimes our actions and words are disproportionate to the issue in hand and innocent and worthy people get hurt. We need to guard against the ill effects of frustration which can often lead to a judgemental spirit; angry words and wrong actions can lead to a breakdown of family and community life.

As a Christian I believe that wellbeing is not a gift that you generate by yourself, but comes to you from God. Only when you have a right relationship with Him can you have right relationships with those around you. Equally God calls us seek to have good relationships with others so we can have a good relationship with Him.

As we have been studying the Psalms, we have seen that David plumbs the depths of human despair, frustration, anger and disappointment. Yet he always turns his thoughts back to God to seek forgiveness for himself and trust God to deal with David's problem situations. David also sees that God is Lord of all and has love in His heart for every single one of us. David never asks for an opportunity to take revenge but rather hands over all the frustrations, disappointments and dangers to God to deal with in His own way and in His good time.

As a Christian who has worked ecumenically for most of my ministry, I have found in the Church there are people with very diverse religious and political views who nonetheless come together in their worship and service to God. But I have learnt that while everybody does seem to have a dark side, and can think say, and do things they shouldn't, they also have a tremendous amount of good in them.

A case in point is Winston Churchill. In recent years he has become a national icon who provided hope and certainty in a very dark and difficult time. But he also had a dark side. I grew up in a home, that while they thought very highly of Winston Churchill, they were under no illusions about some of his attitudes and beliefs, which kept him out of office in the 1930s. It was because of this, there were grave reservations over his appointment as Prime Minister in 1940. He probably lost the election in 1945 for the same reasons.

We should bear that lesson in mind when we deal with everyone around us, particularly those who offer so much in public service. Everybody who does good, occasionally makes mistakes and says and does things that perhaps with hindsight they regret. I cannot think of any political leader in the last hundred years that hasn't made that mistake.

In the midst of our frustrations we all need everybody to listen carefully, to understand patiently, and to confront gently if it needs doing, we also to bear with people and not to be too judgemental. In this way we will hold our families together, hold our relationships together, and hold our community together. I hope and pray that you will all have the space to overcome your frustrations and above all build a strong relationship with Our Father God who loves and cares for us all.

With every good wish,

Yours sincerely
Revd. Canon Jonathan Ford.
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