

## A MATTER OF THE HEAD AND THE HEART

A reflection on the readings for Sunday 1st September.

The study of "English Language " at school was both dull and terrifying. It consisted of each of us reading out a sentence and then having to say what each word was. Adverb? Noun? Adjective? Etc. And if you made a mistake in your declension, the master's cane would come crashing down on your desk and you would stay in after school and write fifty lines " A verb is a being and a doing word". I scraped through O Level and was glad to get shot of it.

In contrast the study of English Literature at college was a joy. The joy of storytelling and the beauty of words was revealed to me like buried treasure. I devoured Thomas Hardy, the Brontë sisters and Jane Austen. I learnt that language was not just about getting the definitions correct - it was how you opened up the affairs of the heart as well as the head. I did well in the O Level for this one and the love of words has stayed with me ever since.

Our readings describe the impact of faith in similar ways. What we believe can be confined to a compartment in your life (learn to recite the creed off by heart and all will be well) or you can let it touch every part of you until it defines who you are.

Jesus condemns the Pharisees and scribes in our Gospel reading (Mark 7 v 1-8) for presenting faith in a way that only touches the periphery of things. It had become, to them, a matter of scrupulous observance and outward appearance and the cane would come crashing down on anyone who got it wrong. But it seemed as if the inside had been left untouched.

In our reading from Deuteronomy (4: 1-2, 6-9) Moses teaches the people that " no other nation has a God so near to it as the Lord" and that they must show, through their observance of the law how He touches every part of their being. " Neither forget the things that your eyes have seen, not let them slip from your minds" - let The Lord be at the root of everything you stand for, I think He is saying. A God of both the head and the heart.

James writes his Epistle to the backdrop of Jesus's impact. For He came into the world as the embodiment of the Father's love for us and in this passage (James 1 v 17 - end) he shows us how we must translate this into the way we are. " Be doers of the word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves ". Let His words touch every part of you.

In Jesus and now by the power of the Holy Spirit both the head and the heart find their place within us and beyond us, so it becomes both our duty and our joy to proclaim Him and let His love grow deeper in us.

I remember as a little boy saying to someone that I would quite like to be a vicar but that I didn't think I would be clever enough to remember all those bible verses! I thought it was a matter of having enough head space for the facts. It took me many years to really understand why., at the start of our Communion Prayer, the Priest always says "Lift up your hearts"!

With love  
Andrew