**Sunday Gospel thoughts from Bishop Helen-Ann**

**Sunday 22nd September 2024 (17th Sunday after Trinity) Mark 9.30-37**

Perhaps the most significant part of today’s Gospel comes towards the end. In the context of the story here, the disciples are arguing about who amongst themselves as a group has authority and in reply Jesus counters this verbal combat with a prophetic act: quietly placing a child in their midst with a clear lesson about the nature of being a disciple. Note that in this case, Mark emphasises the smallness of a child by using ‘little child’ (rather than just ‘child’). So the emphasis is on smallness rather than child as newness. There is an emphasis in the Kingdom of God of care for the most vulnerable, the least (irrespective of age). To be a disciple is to be as a ‘little child’, to model belief in God so as to live out a preference for the least not the great(est).

How do you respond to this Gospel? Can you empathise with the disciples and their concern? Reflect on your own faith community and where particular focus is on the least and the most vulnerable?

**Sunday 29 Sept 2024 (Michael and All Angels) John 1.47-end**

The feast of Michael and All Angels is a wonderful opportunity to delve deep into the realms of the mystical and the connectedness we experience between earth and heaven. Here these reflections are grounded in a Gospel narrative that seems to focus on the unknown whilst being rooted in the very human experience of Philip and Nathanael. Note Nathanael’s confidence in Jesus’ identity which (on the surface) seems to be based on not much. Of course, John is our Gospel writer and we know there is much more going on here. Jesus’ response echoes the story of Jacob and the ladder in Genesis 28 and it’s worth noting the angelic logistics here: the angels go up then down. They are already amongst us. Can we see them in action or sense their presence?

*How do you respond to Nathanael’s acclamation? On what do you base your own lived faith? Where and how have you encountered angels?*