

Of Bishops...

St Cuthbert was extremely reluctant to accept the appointment of Bishop of Lindisfarne. To be called to such a lofty role by the members of the church meant accepting a life of great responsibility, accountability, and vulnerability to the wiles of Satan waiting to corrupt your immortal soul. Power was no attraction to the saints of old, nor is it to the vulnerable saints of today. Humility is hard when you have authority over others.



Bishops, priests and deacons are ordained to a role of service: they are servants of God and commissioned to minister to people. At the funeral of an ordained person the coffin is traditionally turned to face to congregation – for it is they who are their judges in this world. The thought of this is enough to caution anyone discerning ordination. Only the grace and mercy of God can save you from the wrath of those who ask too much of you and are disappointed in your decisions.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has resigned. He has given a full public statement. He would be deeply aware, when he accepted the role of Archbishop, of his vulnerability and of the impossibility of the task ahead: only in God's love and restorative justice would he be able to minister amidst the clamour of contradictory expectations and the grave sins of some under his pastoral care. The role is so much more than the man. The role carries the pain of bearing responsibility for both the actions and decisions of others and of discerning the right response. Discernment is never easy – for both roads are lined with hidden dangers. For this reason, we pray for our bishops to be guided in wise judgement.

Today Justin Welby has resigned his role – the inevitable outcome of a decision seen retrospectively as harmful. As church we owe those survivors of abuse our prayers and support in Christ. We also owe them assurance that we will pray for wise and discerning safeguarding practices in future.

Justin has also asked for our prayers for him and his family and, as fellow Christians in a fallen world, we owe them this grace and kindness as they follow the unclear pathways before them.

'Neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, can separate us from the love of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Romans 8.38-39