

Treasure

11 7 10

Teach us, good Lord,
to serve you as you deserve;
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds;
to toil and not to seek for rest;
to labour and not to seek for any reward
save that of knowing that we do your will.

St Ignatius Loyola 1491 – 1556

My text may be found in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 21:

‘For where your treasure is there your heart will be also.’

Where is your treasure; what do you treasure most? A good question and by asking such a question, we are asking what in our lives we value most.

I guess what I treasure most is being a priest. I treasure having a church to look after here in Dinard. Being a priest is as much about being as about doing. Before you can play the part, you have to be the part. So a vocation to the priesthood is as much about growing into the role of a priest as discharging the duties of a priest.

I guess I value people. To be part of a community is to recognise the worth of the individuals who make up that community. In school as in church, I have treasured the relationships between myself, my colleagues and my pupils. I treasure the memories of the people I once knew and I value the past. Being with people and being kind to people is an essential part of my life.

I value too the central tenet of our Christian faith: that God knows me as I truly am and despite my faults, my many faults, he still loves me for what I am for he knows what I could be. I value the fact that God has given me this life to lead and when I eventually die, that there is still the life of the world to come.

So you know some of the things I treasure most: my vocation; the people I've known; my faith. So what do you value? Whatever it may be, our text from the Sermon on the Mount is clear: 'where your treasure is there your heart will be also.'

In the text, the heart is being used as an image of our affections: where we love, there we will find what we value most. One way we show where our heart is where we invest our time and effort and money. If we like football then we will have watched a lot of football from South Africa in these weeks of the World Cup. If we like food, then we're prepared to spend the money on the ingredients or splash out on a meal out. And if we love God, really value our relationship with him, what would we not do for him?

Today is the first of three sermons on the second Sunday of each month which will explore the theme of Christian Stewardship. By Stewardship, I don't mean just money: of course money is important but there is more to stewardship than simply giving money. Stewardship involves three essentials I've already mentioned: time, effort and money. Time spent in worshipping God; in coming to church to worship God; being with God by doing things for other people because you love God. Effort is making the effort to do something for God: it is being a sidesman; making coffee after church: arranging flowers, arranging a flower festival with icons: the possibilities are limitless. Money is what we are all short of, more now than we were before the financial crisis hit everyone. But we can and should give money to be sure that the work of God continues to be done in this place and expands and develops to reach out to those who need God as we need God but may not have yet found him as I hope we have.

Now it may shock you to hear that I personally don't care how much you give to God. What you give is up or down to you but I do care that you should care. My responsibility is that you should feel responsible about your giving but what exactly you give is between your informed conscience and God - it has nothing to do with me for we are told in the Sermon of Mount at the start of Matthew 6 to give to charity in secret.

I hope this helps. We are all stewards of what God has given us. If we treasure what he has given us, if we truly invest our heart in trying to serve God as he has called us all to serve, then our Stewardship of this church will have a firm, solid

foundation and we will pass on St Bartholomew's as a centre of Christian light in this part of France to the next generation of stewards of God's work.

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Amen.

Preached at the Eucharist

St Bartholomew's Dinard

11th July, 2010

H: Sermon 22: Steward 1

