

Mothering Sunday 2015

Prepared at the front :

for TB *baby/doll, baby food/sandwich, child's reading book*

For PJC: *water and Baptism candle, paten chalice, bread and wine, Bible, prayer sheet and prayer candle, oil of healing, home communion set.*

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TB : (Somewhat breathlessly) Father, have you hear the latest directive from from the Archbishop's Council

PJC: Should I have?

TB: Well yes, they've circulated it virtually through all the usual social media channels, (pause) you do follow the Archbishop's Council don't you Father?

PJC: Follow?

TB: On Twitter! You tweet don't you Father?

PJC: Tweet?

TB: (Somewhat exasperated) Well I know you try to use Facebook, you are friends with the Archbishop's Council aren't you? (silence, TB looks disapproving)

TB: Really Father! The Archbishop's Council, after much thought and consultation, want to check up on old Vicars; a sort of OFSTED to see if you are up to date, with it, trendy, still capable of leading a parish into growth.

PJC: Oh ... well ...

TB So you can be very thankful that you've got me-and I've brought with me one of the tools for leadership from the 'clergy skills subset' they gave me in College: it's straight from the Archbishops' Council you know: the Council's Ordination Consultation for Clergy who are Keen up-and coming.

PJC : The Council's Ordination Consultation for Clergy who are Keen up-and coming.. Oh yes, I think the Area Dean referred to it the other day – what was the acronym?- oh I remember: COCKUP

TB: That's right, COCKUP. It's all about talent development so we can deepen leadership reservoirs within the church. I think it's wonderful; all the complexity and difficult nuance of parish ministry simplified into an easy set of tick boxes so we can check up how you're doing and manage the church more effectively. We do the test, get the score and the PCC can decide at the next meeting whether to ask for a new and improved priest. It's all very straight forward. (Puzzled) For some reason not all clergy are very keen on it.

PJC : I can't imagine why ...

TB: (Somewhat sternly) The thing is, Father, firstly have you read it and more to the point, are you up to it? Is the parish truly going for growth under your talented leadership – or is it just plodding along like always? After all, St. Nicholas is in the north of England – and we were warned about the inherent problems of ministry in the north at College. Shall we go through the questions and see how you are doing? See what your score is – and know whether you can stay a bit longer?

PJC: Well. Alright – but can I ask the children to help me?

*Get children out*

TB Oh, good idea, Father; look: it says here that any priest who is prepared to work with children and to work collaboratively can gain extra points – especially for fresh expressions.

PJC: Fresh Expressions?

TB: yes, Father. It's a technical term the Archbishop's Council use for encouraging children to join in at church and to explore the gospel with them

PJC: But I've done that for years!

TB: No, Father you haven't. You've tried to engage with children and young people and your parishes have had mums and toddlers' groups and lots of baptisms – but these have not been called Fresh expression.

PJC: Does it matter?

TB: Oh yes Father- if it's a Fresh Expression it means you are up to date – if it's just helping people come closer to God, well that doesn't score any extra points.

Now are you ready to go through the test?

PJC: well I've got the children here – so lets' see what we can manage.

TB Now its says at the front that if a curate is dealing with a particularly severe case of DESPOND ...

PJC: Despond?

TB Yes, Decayed, Elderly Senior Priests Once area Deans

PJC I see.

TB Well in a severe case of Despond the curate is allowed to help a bit by offering clues. So if I offer clues the children can help and maybe you might just manage to pass. You see there are there four levels of assessment:

failing – that means that actually the Vicar is dead and has been for some years but no-one has actually noticed ;

satisfactory – which means that the vicar isn't satisfactory but since we're Anglican we have to be polite even to Vicars;

good which means that there is some possibility that one day the vicar might preach a sermon that someone, somewhere, might recall after they get through the church door

and outstanding which means that people actually come to church and recognise themselves to be the Church and to be part of Christ's mission and work.

Now the Archbishop's handbook offers a test especially for Mothering Sunday – so we'll do that one because today is Mothering Sunday –and I want to give you the best possible chance of not being forcibly retired . So let's start.

*In the next section TB offers the basic clue and gives the children the visual clue- PJC chats with them and comes up with the "church clue" Possibly TB keeps score in some way? Much patronising praise of PJC every time we get something right. Possibly some idea of "timing"?*

TB. So here's your test Father, on Mother Church.

Mother Church Clue 1: the very first thing your mum does for you? (*holds up baby/doll*)

*Answer: give birth, baptism, come to faith: water and Baptism candle*

TB: Mother Church Number 2: what mum gives you to keep you alive – (*baby food/sandwich*)

*Answer: - Food Holy Eucharist – paten chalice, bread and wine*

TB: Mother Church Clue number 3 : How mum helps you learn and grow –(*child's reading book*)

*Answer: the scriptures –Bible*

TB : Mother Church Clue number 4 :How mum helps you to say communicate? I'm not giving any clues for this.

*Answer : Prayer and prayer candle*

TB And so to the last question –and then we'll add all the points up and see where you and the parish come. Remember Father you have to have 80 points or more to pass. So, Mother Church Clue number 5 what does mum do for you when you are ill ?(*calpol or other medicine*)

*Answer : oil of healing and prayers and home communion.*

TB So, Father let's see how you've done? (*Adds up marks slowly: 10.20 ... 50 tone of incredulity*) well, father, astonishingly you seem to have passed.

PJC Well all this is only what Mother Church has always done.

TB: Really? Even at St. Nicholas? Even with you in charge?

PJC: Well I think so ...we 've tried anyway –

TB (*sense of relief*) Ah, only tried ... that's OK then. I thought for a minute that we might find ourselves be part of the Church of England Talent Pool. But in reality and all along we're just

PJC and TB: dear old Mother Church.