

St Edmundsbury Cathedral

Following in the footsteps of Edmund, King and Martyr



From the Dean

St Edmundsbury Cathedral

Sunday 21 May 2017

Sermon preached on Cathedral Giving by The Very Revd Dr Frances Ward,
Dean of St Edmundsbury

In the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

At the heart of things, here, at this Cathedral – at any Cathedral – is a tension, a real contradiction.

This is a holy place. A place of worship, prayer and music, of peace and social action. A place of education and discipleship. A place where people can draw near to God. Indeed, we are here this morning because of the love of God. As St Paul says: In that love ‘we live and move and have our being.’

We are also a business. We live in a changing world. No longer do people value the Church and what we contribute to society as in the past. We can't take it for granted that visitors will give generously. Most people out there think the Church of England is stinking rich, anyway. They don't know just what a worry it is to keep the show on the road.

In God's love we live and move and have our being. The tension, the contradiction is there when we have to market holiness. We need to be entrepreneurial. We have to. And I know how that makes you feel, because I feel it too. It feels wrong to put a value on the love of God.

But we have to. Those of us who love this Cathedral believe that it speaks of God's love more powerfully than anything we can say. So we constantly try to persuade people to give more money. We constantly try to second guess why they are here. We put candle stands out, because we know people say that they come for the good feeling it gives them. The peace of mind, and relief from stress. We ask them to pay to pray. We run Pilgrims' Kitchen because people will pay to eat and drink in companionship. We run a shop because people want retail therapy. We have LEGO because people love LEGO.

The Very Reverend Dr Frances Ward
The Cathedral Office, Angel Hill, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP33 1LS
Telephone: 01284 748720 Fax: 01284 768655
Email: dean@stedscathedral.org
www.stedscathedral.co.uk

It's easy to be cynical. To start to believe that we do all these things because they raise money. Of course, all these entrepreneurial activities have many other benefits too. And we never forget that we do everything for the real, the holy reason – which is that we worship God for God's sake, giving God the glory and gratitude we owe. The heart of a holy life.

We are facing hard times, financially. For a number of years we've put time and effort into developing income-generating enterprises. The shop, PKs, tower tours, LEGO – all performing well – but it's still not enough. And we've cut back on costs, with everyone watching every penny. It's not easy. We're not the only Cathedral that's struggling. Indeed, a recent confidential report from the Church Commissioners shows a number of cathedrals facing financial challenges, and almost no cathedral is in a comfortable position. Most, if not all cathedrals, cannot generate enough income to meet their costs. They need more income to fund the full range of their activities.

And so do we. To be a Cathedral in today's world means we throw ourselves into marketing holiness. But, let's be clear: we wouldn't need to market holiness if our other sources of income were enough.

Here at St Edmundsbury we don't have a large historic property portfolio. We don't have reserves and assets that bring in interest revenue. We don't have so many visitors we have to charge to keep them away. We rely on being as entrepreneurial as we can. And we rely on you.

At this Cathedral congregational giving represents 32% of Cathedral income. Yes, 32%. In the first 4 months of 2017, this income is 93% of what is hoped-for, and £3.5K below the same period last year. We are heading towards a short fall of £10K on regular giving at the end of the year. That's the week in, week out giving you put on the plate, or by standing order.

We simply have to turn this around.

Liz Steele, one of our Church Wardens, is leading to develop this crucial income stream. Back in Lent, I asked each of us to increase our giving. Many of you did – for which, much gratitude. If you didn't, please do so. Indeed, if you are on the electoral roll, you should be giving regularly – and in tax efficient ways if you can.

Don't be surprised if the approach is much more direct from now on.

Then, also, when we set our Cathedral 2017 budget, we anticipate we can raise £15,000 from our Gift Day. There is a letter for you to take home, to read and respond to. On 4 June, in 2 week's time, do please come with your gift. 4 June is Pentecost – the day we remember the birth of the Church. Come with your gift to celebrate. Please, give the Cathedral a birthday present. I'm hoping, expecting, that we will easily raise that £15k. In fact, that we will far exceed it.

This is over and above your regular contribution. We need both – your one-off Gift, and your increase in regular giving.

I know you come because this place is holy. Because here you know the God in whom we live, and move and have our being. I want you to value that experience more realistically. To respond to the most valuable gift we receive in our lives. I want you to value this cathedral as it deserves, in response to the love of God that calls us all to holiness.

Of course, we can all find reasons not to. You will no doubt wonder: But how do I know that the Cathedral is looking after our funds properly? What if I disagree with how my money is spent? How do I know that the Cathedral isn't being mismanaged? Let me assure you that it is not mismanaged. Remember that other cathedrals of all sizes are struggling to meet costs on diminishing income sources. If you want more details, any member of Chapter, or Forum, can help explain in more depth.

Your Cathedral needs your support. It needs you to give. Both at the Gift Day – whatever you can afford; and also regularly, week in, week out. Ultimately, you are responding to God's love in your life. The more you give, the less we have to rely on our entrepreneurial projects. It's down to you: you can enable God's holiness to continue in this holy place. Your support is invaluable. Make it a realistic response. A response that reflects truly the enormous gift of the invaluable love of God in our lives.

The love in which we live and move and have our being.