

*Trinity 1 – 23 June 2019 Mayor's Inaugural Service*

“Count Your Blessings” is one of those good old-fashioned sayings, an old-fashioned idea even, that we could do well to follow in today’s world. For we live in a world and nation of confusing divisions and uncertainties.

The old order of the way things were done is disappearing – matters of economics, politics, community cohesion, faith and religion. We could despair at all that is going wrong or we could recognise the many blessings we still have.

I have enjoyed a week of blessings of various kinds:

Prayers with someone in Hospital on the evening before they were to face serious surgery.

Meeting up with old friends from the International Link that Salisbury Diocese has with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia when the Archbishop of Latvia came with some of his senior clergy to confirm the continuation of our links of mutual support in prayer and learning.

Blessing of a restored Garden of Remembrance at Royal Wootton Bassett and a memorial to commemorate not just fallen of WW1 and WW” but the fallen repatriated from Iraq and Afghanistan.. Complete with a flyover of a WWII American fighter plane.

And yesterday afternoon, the Consecration of Idols at the Hindu Temple in Swindon in an Exotic and Elaborate ceremony full of joy and hope. The people gathered there from Swindon’s Indian community celebrating not just their faith, and not just their culture and community life, but celebrating with joy their rightful place in the wider community of Wiltshire and of Britain, bringing economic and community benefit to all of us who live here.

Here in Devizes we can look around and see what Blessings we all might count today.

You our Councillors: You are one of those blessings prepared to represent us citizens in the running of our local authority ensuring that from the mundane to the magnificent our community life is ordered and flourishes. In this service we recognise that you our councillors and especially this year’s Mayor Cll Judy Rose are counted as a blessing.

Representatives of Law and Order: Under Sheriff, Representatives of Police and Fire and Rescue and Ambulance services, Judge McNaught. Crime and Disaster could be ready to overwhelm us without your efforts, but we are blessed by you who are dedicated to keeping us safe and secure. You are counted as a blessing.

Volunteers who support so many community and charitable groups across the town and county. You too we count as a blessing, building up a sense of a common life lived together and enabling all however challenging their circumstances to share in that common life.

Counting our blessings may be the first step from despairing at what is wrong and moving to act for what is good and right and true. All of us can move from just counting blessings to being a blessing for others.

Maya Angelou, the American Poet and Writer and Civil Activist said this about being a Blessing

“The thing to do, it seems to me, is to prepare yourself so you can be a rainbow in somebody else's cloud. Somebody who may not look like you. May not call God the same name you call God - if they call God at all. I may not dance your dances or speak your language. But be a blessing to somebody. That's what I think.”

“Be a rainbow in somebody else's cloud, be a blessing to somebody. That's what I think”

It is wonderful to live and receive so many blessings; to count the blessings that have given us joy and hope in life this last week..but it is even better to be a blessing for others..to be that rainbow in somebody else's cloud.

The Bible readings we have just heard point to that..From our first reading, That our compassion and concern for others should be genuine.. not driven by personal or political ambition. A desire to see good done for others rather than a selfish concern for our own wellbeing.

And from Jesus, perhaps most well known and loved teachings, The Beatitudes we see that at the heart of God is the source of all blessing for all people and the whole of creation..seen in self-giving, mercy and love.

Go home today from this service and count your blessings .. tell others, family and friends about those blessings you enjoy. It will brighten up their day too; and when you feel truly blessed be blessing yourself to others a “Rainbow in somebody else's cloud”. Our town, our nation our world will not just seem to be, but will truly be a better place.

*Canon Paul Richardson*