



St Marylebone
Parish Church

Wednesday Eucharist with Prayer for Healing
15th July 2020

Ephesians 3:14-19 Matthew 23:8-12

Barack Obama was once asked a question by a group of young people 'What is the secret of leadership, and the success you have had?' He thought about the question. Everyone waited for his answer. Would it be, they wondered, about being a great speaker? Would it be about being a strong personality, or having exceptional skills or courage? This was his answer. 'Be predisposed to see the power in other people' I'll repeat that 'Be predisposed to see the power in other people'. Quite a profound answer. True leadership, true power is drawing out the power and dignity of others to be who God calls them to be. That kind of leadership is in short supply these days. Ego, vanity, defensiveness and popularism amongst world leaders seems to be on the increase.

The way of Jesus however is diametrically opposed to that kind of power. 'The greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted. Jesus drew out the power and dignity of his disciples; a pretty rum lot. They discovered world changing gifts of evangelisation and ministry through his servant leadership.

Today we remember two people who, although serving the church with great distinction, weren't particularly concerned with their own image or preferment. St Bonaventure, Franciscan Friar and Bishop, used his great learning and intellect to lead the Franciscan order. Interestingly, given recent events, he turned down being Archbishop of York, but was appointed a cardinal bishop against his will – keeping the papal messengers waiting while he finished the washing up.

St Swithin, Bishop of Winchester asked to be buried outside Winchester Cathedral so his grave would be exposed to the footsteps of worshippers and to the elements. He wanted a humble grave. However, when a new cathedral was being built, his remains were moved into a shrine in the cathedral, despite dire warnings that to move the bones would bring about terrible storms. According to legend it rained for forty days. So resulted the saying 'St Swithins Day if thou dost rain, for 40 days it will remain, St Swithin's Day if thou be fair, for 40 days will rain na mair'.

We all have power in some way. Power of words or actions towards others. How do you use your power? Do you use it to build people up or to break them down?

May we, like Bonaventure and Swithin, let Jesus build up in us what we can offer to his church for *his* sake, not for our own aggrandisement. And may we, in turn be predisposed to do the same for others. To see the power in other people. To end with another American, Maya Angelou; People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. Amen.