

The Rectory
1st September 2020

Dear Family,

We are starting a season of new things. My thoughts and prayers are especially with those who are beginning at university, new schools and in new classes this academic year. We in the Church are also finding our feet in new ways such as worshipping God on line and worshipping God in our church building. Last Sunday I spoke on some advice I found for those starting new things in education and how that advice could be helpfully adapted for us in our Christian lives.

Children getting ready for the new academic year and possibly starting at new schools need to get ready for new ways of doing things, new rules, wearing different clothes, sorting out their pencil cases, maybe buying new lunch boxes, getting ready for things like going to a new dining room or possibly having their school lunch brought to them in their classroom. Advice from one source encourages students to be confident, smile (it makes you more approachable) and be honest about who you are and what your abilities are. Adapting that advice for us in the Church:

Christians can be confident as followers of Jesus: He has done everything for His followers, He has proven His love for us, we can follow Him with our heads held high and we can trust Him to always be there for us and ready to help us.

With regard to smiling, we cannot always be happy in our everyday lives as things come our way that are painful and difficult to cope with. However, we can always 'smile on the inside' when we remember how greatly we are loved by Jesus. Even if we are unable to smile on the outside we can always have an 'inner smile' which is the result of the joy of knowing that Jesus took up His

cross for our sakes. We can 'smile inwardly' (or perhaps another way of saying that is) we can be at peace inside because we know that we are loved, forgiven and cared for by God. Being at peace because we know God's love for us may well be noticed by those around us and it can bring peace to them too.

Children (in the advice I read) are encouraged to be honest as they start in a new place; Christians should be the same. It is OK as a Christian to not know all the answers, it is OK to have good days and bad days and it is normal to have ups and downs. Followers of Jesus don't need to be the best at everything in life. We all have different gifts and personalities and God loves us just as we are. If we are not good at one thing we will have abilities elsewhere. That is good news because it means that we don't have to 'keep up with the Joneses' in every area that they are good at. In life, we can be settled and at peace because of the truth that God loves us just the way we are. We don't have to prove how great we are to God or to anyone else because Jesus has already proved how great He is and shown us that He loves us.

Stay safe and God bless!

Andrew+