



Hello All.

The days are starting to draw out a bit and the weather is a little warmer and it's much more of an easy call to take the dogs out for a walk or lead services in some of our colder churches when Spring has started to appear rather than in the winter months.

But these days the winter months aren't as confining as they once were and even if we don't take advantage of warm cars or excellent P.P.E. (Personal Protective Equipment) we can still take advantage of new technology to keep in touch with our friends and family and the outside world.

I know that not all of you will be aware of or make use of email and social media but many do and it is a wonderfully useful thing, but it does carry dangers. An important task for us all is to be, especially for our young people, aware of the potential dangers which social media carries.

But one of the dangers of the like of Facebook and Twitter is something that we face in our real lives as well as our virtual lives. And the danger is the way we often project a preferred image of ourselves. On Facebook we choose what we post and we choose things that will make us look good in front of others. Whether that's pictures of our holidays or updates about personal achievements or links to worthy causes, we post things which we think will be well received by others and we carefully select out anything which might show us in a bad light. But of course we do this in our real lives as well: we keep under wraps the darker side of our lives: our jealousies, our prejudices, the times that we have lost our self-control, the arguments we have with our loved ones and we are all guilty of answering "Fine thanks" when asked how we are even if we aren't! And in one sense that is understandable, these things are private and not to be shared to all and sundry. But like the preferred images displayed on Facebook our real life preferred image carries a danger too.

I wonder what all these carefully preferred images do to those who are broken or going through dark times: what does that do to others when the preferred image of the lives of those around them is like a photo-shopped picture of a super model in a fashion magazine! We are all too good to be true and we end up comparing the truth of our own situation against the preferred image put forward by someone else and that is damaging to our self-worth, our self-esteem and makes us want to bury the truth of who we are even deeper.

The Christian faith acknowledges that we are all broken and that we all have dark moments and periods in our lives; and that no matter what the preferred image is that we show to other people that God knows the truth of who we are, in our doubts, in our pain and in our brokenness. Church should be a place where we can leave those preferred images at the door and be totally open and honest with one-another! (Although, being honest, it is sadly rarely the case).

As we continue on our journey through Lent towards Easter, why not consider what our preferred self-images are doing to those around us, why don't we try being a bit humbler and forgiving of others and why don't we engage a bit more with God, the one who knows the secrets of our hearts and possibly the only being we can be totally honest with?

Yours in Christ,

Rev Andy Simpson