

Reflection for Sunday 1st August 2021
Ephesians 4; 1-16

Have we grown up?

By this question, I am not trying to be offensive, but really asking about the way we understand our journey of faith. And it is an important question. But it is not my question, it comes from the Bible Reading, and if you have the order of service, you will see I have highlighted the words on this. Let me begin with a simple exercise, which can involve us all. And for each of the requests, please feel free to look around.

- Raise your hand those of you who regularly pray for the church, the world.
- Raise your hand if you sing in the choir.
- Raise your hand if you do flower arrangements.
- Raise your hand if you have been or are an elder.
- Raise a hand if you would consider yourself a welcoming person to others.
- Finally, have many of you have raised more than two hands..

OK, this last one might be a problem if you participate in more than 2 of these things...because I can't ask you to raise a leg, though I could ask you to stand if you have run out of arms.

By what we can see, there seem to be a number of people in church today, probably all those present, who know they are involving the gifts given by the Spirit. That is good. And it is important, because it would seem that the author of the letter to the Ephesians suspects that the church -sooner or later- will develop the "comfortable syndrome", which was somewhat common during Exodus, and at other times of the history of the people of God. That syndrome is when people sit back and wait for things to happen, hopefully by God, and if not by God by some other person. In the reading today we are invited to GROW UP, to consider our place, our participation, our growth as part of the Body of Christ in the world. In other words, how we have grown up, living our faith.

This passage, well know as it is, is a reminder of our connection one with another, a concept essential to the letter to the Ephesians. And this connection is an inter-generational one. Our growing up in the gifts and calling as children of God is expressed in the wonderfully challenging words: *speaking the truth in love*. Which is often hard to say, and even harder to hear. And is a mark of our growing up.

What the reading clearly says is: *But speaking the truth in love, **we must grow up** in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love*. This is not something that involved us as individuals on our own, but rather, as individuals who are **knitted together** promoting the growth of the Body. And growing up is not always easy, especially when we realise it is a never-ending activity. We must "**no longer be children**" says the author of the letter.

So, the question is still here: *Have we grown up?* And it could be followed by another question: How have we grown up? Growing up implies accepting that we have yet lots to discover, that things change, that we change, that the world is far more diverse than what we imagined, that we are not the centre of the universe rather that we are a part of the wider picture, and important part but not the only part, and that together with others, different from us as they may be, we have been called to be part of the Body which has Christ as the head.

Growing up is to recognize that building this can only be done through love, and that is sometimes very complicated. And it is remembering that each person has the gifts that God has chosen to give so that coming together the wholeness is more than the parts.

Growing up it to recognise that the world evolves constantly, that there are new challenges, new realities, new ways, things that in the past were never part of our vision, and yet today mark our faithfulness to the Good News of Jesus Christ. Do you reflect on these matters at any time? Do you give the same answers today that you gave 20/30 years ago; what new answers have you discovered? What happens when many of those questions have changed?

Years back there was this poster: three monkeys sitting on a stone, and the phrase was: Just when I thought I knew all the answers, they changed all the questions. And I have always believed that in some form or another, this describes the church, when it keeps on giving old answers to new questions. Because this does happen. We are called to grow up, to be able to engage with the new questions that the world is asking – environmental questions, justice questions, gender question, economics, human rights questions.... Growing up is hard, but it is absolutely necessary, how else will we be able to establish our place in the world.

As we will sing in a few moments: *Let his children all join hands and be one with the right hand of God.* Children growing up to reach that maturity, proclaiming life in fullness through love, for all. Amen

With special thanks to “Talking absolute worship”.

I invite you to look at the photos below and reflect on any connection you can make with the Bible reading for today – particularly the challenge to *knitted together* promoting the growth of the Body...



[Joshua Hoehne/Unsplash](#)



[Tim Marshall/Unsplash](#)