

First of all, let me say how grateful I am to you all for being here today. Days like this, when we get to gather, to be together and to allow our hearts and minds to be fed by God, are precious. And it is very good to see you all.

A particular welcome to anyone for whom this is a first Bishops Study Day - whether you've recently arrived in the diocese, or have recently been licensed or ordained. Thank you for being part of this community - and if there's anything that you need kind of direction or help with, please don't hesitate to ask.

My deep thanks to you also Ben for returning home to Cornwall to speak to us and to share your wisdom about the God who walks slowly. I am really looking forward to hearing what you have for us, and for the ways in which your words will open up new spaces, understandings and possibilities in each one of us.

Before I hand over to Ben, I want to say a little bit about why I asked him to come, and why I wanted this topic for our day together.

There's an exercise that you can do with groups or communities to help them understand their culture; to explore the shared values that the group holds, usually without noticing. And it's worth doing because the things that we value are always the things that we honour and pay attention to; they are the things that are valuable - and so they become a kind of currency; a means of exchanging value within the community, a way of marking out success and failure, and of defining the boundaries of what is and isn't expected.

For this exercise group members are given blank bank notes of different sizes, and are asked to work together decide what the 'cultural currency' of the community is. What is it that is highly valued? What is it that's more like loose change?

And to figure it out, group members need to consider questions like - what words or phrases are used to express approval? What activities or actions are honoured and praised? What kinds of words, objects and feelings are given or projected onto senior people in the community? What are new people in the community told or asked when they arrive?

And what emerges is a 'currency' for the group which visually represents their cultural values; the things that are considered valuable.

I suspect that, if we did that kind of exercise for contemporary society, 'busy-ness' would quickly emerge as being a high value note in our cultural currency. And I think that we in the church, including in this diocese, have also starting banking with the Bank of Busy-ness.

For those who have an account at the Bank of Busy-ness, being busy makes people valuable, and people who aren't busy are less valuable. We express our admiration for someone by saying - 'you're so busy', and we can gain credit by telling others how busy we are.

To be busy means we are doing a good job; it means we are worthy and worthwhile. We talk about busy-ness a lot, we notice those who are particularly busy, we complain about how busy we are

Being busy is brings value.

But Jesus never said 'blessed are the busy'.

He said that those who mourn are blessed; and that the poor are blessed; and that the hungry, the weeping and hated are blessed. He gives great value to those who hunger and thirst for justice, and he honours people who seek the needs of their neighbour, including the neighbour who's not like them; he gives time to prayer and silence, to eating with friend and stranger; he honours those who are faithful and curious.

Even though his 'to-do list' included saving the world, he never said 'blessed are the busy'.

And so it's good to spend time today with the God who walks slowly, and who isn't ever busy. And I encourage you - I encourage myself - as we listen to Ben, to notice the ways in which being busy has become more than just having things to do, and has become a source of value - a way that we know that we're worthwhile.

And as someone who is tempted to carry cash from the Bank of Busyness in my wallet, I want to make you all a commitment.

I will not use busy-ness as a source of value. I will value faithfulness, curiosity and a commitment to mutuality; I will value time in prayer and service of neighbour; I will pass on your stories and accounts of how your communities have shared the love of God and the name of Jesus, especially with those who haven't heard it for a while. I will notice when you tell me you keep your day off properly, and will commend you when you tell me you've decided to take two days off - and I won't need you to give me a reason for doing so.

I hold the ministry that each of you carries in the highest regard - but not because you are busy; I value you and your ministry because you are faithful in the things of God, curious about what God is up to and committed to a ministry of mutual care and accountability.

You are all of unique and ultimate value, but never because you are busy.

So it's good today to give time to one another, and to the God who walks slowly.