

**St John's Crown Terrace  
Aberdeen  
Eve of All Saints 2016**

**Mark 8:27 – 9:1**

My Dear Friends all of you. Those from this congregation. Others from Ellon and Cruden Bay. Friends from around the Diocese and from other congregations and denominations.

And not least to Andrew and to the family. My greetings to you.

How wonderful it is to be here and to mark this moment in the journey of Andrew's ministry. A ministry marked by significant evangelistic accomplishment in Eastbourne, with ministry and mission abroad in the UAE and more recently by displaying professional comportment in his ministry and commitment to evangelism at Ellon and Cruden Bay.

Through all these experiences Andrew has changed and, dare I say it, has grown. The determined evangelical evangelist remains. But added to that rich rootedness is a discovery of the Catholic zeal of proclaiming the gospel that is there in the SEC motto: 'Evangelical Truth and Apostolic Order'.

Likewise for St John's transition is here, has to be here. Its own rich heritage in this part of Aberdeen is now fed by a pastoral and evangelical concern for those with significant need. Its more formal liturgy of a Sunday is enriched in balance with the contemplative Taizé Eucharist on Wednesday evening and the quiet 11 traditional Eucharist on Wednesday morning and morning prayer with breakfast on Fridays.

A truly varied and versatile church and one whose heritage of which you will soon be a part, Andrew.

You have changed. This church has change. And that change must continue.

Some things need to be said for if they are not we risk missing that which is vital.

The finances of this church need urgent increases. A forecast deficit of some £20,000 by this time next year will need to be met by increased giving across the congregation from those tiny amounts that some can barely afford to the large giving of others who can.

And for you Andrew, you are at the point of discerning where your ministry might lead these next five to ten to fifteen years and so on.

Change, movement, addressing challenges. All these are movements that swirl around variously challenging and perhaps even frightening us.

And yet, let me say by way of encouragement that none of this is new.

The gospel that we heard read is a celebrated passage which signals a watershed in Jesus' ministry.

The character of the story changes at this point.

Jesus is no longer in Galilee. But he has moved on. He is on a journey. One that will take him northwards and then back south, eventually uphill from the Dead Sea to Jerusalem.

At this halfway point in the gospel, this pivot point, Peter affirms Jesus as Messiah and the divine voice affirms him to be so.

From now on Jesus' teaching spells out both the meaning of his own role and of what it means to be a disciple.

Not surprisingly the material in this section shows signs of its application to the needs of the Christian community amongst whom it first circulated as they sought what it meant to be disciples.

The notion of being a settled organisation, confident and comfy with a fat bank balance that should never be used, had to be challenged and changed.

The overall theme of Jesus' teaching spells out what it means to follow one who sees his own mission in terms of service and obedience: the Jesus' own attitudes must be reflected in the community which claims to belong to him if they are to be faithfully secure in discipleship.

And likewise all you do Andrew must model the life and witness of Jesus amongst those whom you are now called to serve.

The crux of this gospel passage is the movement from service and mission to the personal commitment and sacrifice that must be the hallmark of all Christian discipleship.

Andrew, your ministry and mission here at St John's will be well blessed by God, if with those around you, you do indeed rise to that challenge and together move, with Jesus, from Galilee along the difficult and stony road, uphill to Jerusalem.

I wish you every success as you tread that road together.

Bless you all.

Amen.

†Robert Gillies

31<sup>st</sup> October 2016