

Archbishop of Canterbury?

No, Thanks!



One or two folks have recently asked if I had considered putting myself forward to be the next Archbishop of Canterbury. Though serious faced, I am pretty sure they were speaking in jest. I have thought about this in a similar vein.

The Baileys are quite used to living in draughty Rectories. However, having just filled up the oil tank at The Rectory, I can't stop thinking about the cost of heating Lambeth Palace. As a Grade I listed building of significant national heritage importance, no double glazing would be allowed. I strongly suspect that the loft hasn't been insulated either. After much prayer and deep thought, I am unsure that God would call me to fund heating a palace.

I must confess to occasionally being seduced by the splendid ceremonial vestments worn by Archbishops. Yet I painfully recall one Bishop, not that long ago, thanking the General Synod of the Church of England for appointing him to his new job whilst at the same time bankrupting him due to the cost of him having to buy so many new garments and sacred accoutrements. Mitre (pointy hat), crozier (stick), pectoral cross (necklace), purple cassock (long coat with lots of buttons), cope (glitzy overcoat), rochet (linen shirt with fancy cuffs), chimere (red robe with no sleeves – see previous), tippet (black scarf thingy, wider than one worn by priests)... The list goes on. And now that we are in March, far too late to add to the Christmas list. Also, new wardrobe – not IKEA. I think it is probably better (and cheaper) to admire all of this from a distance, spiritually speaking.

A chauffeur-driven car would be of real benefit. Since coming to live in Cottered and driving most days along the potholed, narrow, zig-zagging lanes, I have found my faith in miracles has gone from strength to strength. This affirmation of faith has been most vigorously promoted by supermarket delivery van drivers and the occasional parent screaming at a child on the back seat whilst driving into a blind bend. An Archiepiscopal Driver with Advanced Police Driving Licence would be of benefit – I can't argue with this - though I wonder if it would mean no more 'Thank You, Lord' as I swerve to the left... This might just be a loss.

Truth is, I have long learned that the grass is rarely greener elsewhere. The gentle undulating landscape of the Beane Valley with its mix of hill and valley people, clustered around small communities in which good neighbourliness and kindness to strangers abounds, is a treasure made in heaven. To serve as parish priest in such a place is a privilege that I suspect many an archbishop would give their 'high tea!'

So, just to be clear, for Lent, I am giving up on any notion of preferment, willingly and very happily.

God Bless.

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