



School Matters June 2016 Issue No.21

Dear Parents and Carers,

I don't usually share my political allegiances but I have thought long and hard and feel compelled to write. The events of last week's referendum have troubled me and when I see the value for this month being 'Unity' I feel it is destiny that I should put down my thoughts to help lead us in a positive direction. Sunday's second reading, from the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians 5:1, 13-18, coincidentally provides warning words for us at this divisive time. Paul writes:

"My brothers, you were called, as you know, to liberty; but be careful or this liberty will provide an opening for self-indulgence. Serve one another, or rather, in works of love, since the whole of the Law is summarised in a single command: Love your neighbour as yourself. If you go snapping at each other and tearing each other to pieces, you had better watch destroy the whole community"

I talk of course of the vote to leave the EU and now the consequences that are before us. For the very first time as a headteacher I came to work on Friday to witness staff arguing in a manner that perhaps was more than friendly political debate. Parents bringing their children to school were in a noticeably sombre mood. I sensed shame from some and for others a concern that they perhaps do not feel as welcome as perhaps they had thought.

I wonder if independence, liberty and the desire to be in control has been confused with a crisis of identity. You may well have guessed that my own roots are not English however as a third generation British Anglo Indian I have learnt that to find my identity I must not isolate myself. Working with others, respecting their differences helps me to understand who I am. The more I try to love others, the greater liberty I can enjoy. My parents were born in India as Anglo Indians but held a British passport. When India voted for Independence they gave the Anglo Indian community an ultimatum. Take up Indian citizenship or leave. My family and many other families returned to England, but to a home that they did not really know. It was a difficult time and a unification that felt far from being 'one'. The consequence for my family is that I struggled as a child to understand who I was and in the days when it was acceptable to call names. I grew up having to look outwards to understand how race and culture are very different things. I was English by culture but by race I didn't fit in. As England became more global, European and outward looking I began to understand my ethnic identity and celebrate it. Now leading a school that is made up families from all over the world I finally find my calling to lead this multi-cultural, flourishing and unified community.

I am saddened that Unity is now compromised and I urge all within our community to stand by our values and strive for fellowship, tolerance and peace. I fear a difficult time ahead and know not how our political leaders will resolve the issues that we face. I do expect however that as the headteacher of St. Bernadette's we will continue to strive for Unity. Whichever way you may have voted last week I ask you now to love thy neighbour and bring unity to our school community.

This month's value is Unity. Let us all pray that our leaders can find unity in this time of uncertainty.

God's blessings

Mrs. Clewlow