

Friends

In 1996, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 51/95 proclaiming the 16th of November as “International Day for Tolerance”. The accompanying declaration affirms that tolerance is neither indulgence nor indifference. It is respect and appreciation of the rich variety of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. Tolerance recognises the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. People are naturally diverse; only tolerance can ensure the survival of mixed communities in every region of the globe. (Taken from the UNESCO website.)

There is Biblical support for this and Colossians 3:13 tells us: “Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you...” Philippians 4:5 says, “Let your gentleness be known to everyone” and Ephesians 4:2-3 reminds us that we are called to live “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love...” Jesus himself reminds us to “love one another as I have loved you.”

Important in the UNESCO declaration is the affirmation that tolerance is neither indulgence, nor indifference and the Bible places a strong priority on discernment. In Paul’s letter to the Hebrews, he reminds them that when we first become Christians we need milk, not solid food “But solid food is for the mature, for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.” (Hebrews 5:14)

I, like many of us, was brought up to ask the question “What would Jesus do?” to help discern the way forward in each situation. Yet that is not always easy to know when faced with the complexities of modern life. Nevertheless, the old principles bear true. We understand God’s will through the renewing of our minds in an

ongoing development in insight gained from a deep relationship with God and his Word. In this way, we can tread the path between tolerance and discernment with love, recognising that we will not always make the perfect decision, but that God loves us for making the attempt.

God bless, Vicci