

Great Gonerby Rectory October 2010

Dear Friends,

As I write this the Pope has just flown back to Italy -- or rather the Vatican City to be precise -- we were reminded that it is actually a different country.

Before Pope Benedict arrived the media was doing its best to pour cold water on the visit -- reporting more on the cost and, of course, on the child abuse angle. But even they have admitted that his visit was a success.

Now, obviously as an Anglican minister I am not a Roman Catholic, and there are aspects of Catholicism that Protestants still take issue with.

For example, the belief that during the priest's prayer the bread and the wine somehow become Christ's body. Also the over emphasis on Mary which can almost become idolatrous.

However, on the whole, Catholics and Protestants agree on far more than we disagree on, and it is always a joy to worship alongside my Catholic brothers and sisters.

It is said that Pope Benedict is considered more of an intellectual, and does not have as much of the natural people skills as did his predecessor John Paul. But it seems people warmed to his quiet and serious manner. He struck me as a kind and genuine person.

But what I particularly liked was his direct speech which challenged the nature of our "secular" society as he termed it. He was certainly not going to compromise his beliefs in order to gain popularity. As the Independent newspaper put it -- "the Pope reminded us that there is more to theology than Anglican flexibility".

Dead right -- like many of you I get frustrated by the way some of our own Church of England leaders want the church to take on board the ideas of the secular world.

Pope Benedict made it clear that the secular ideas should be challenged, not adopted. By doing this he won respect for himself and all Christians.

God Bless,

Revd. Peter.