

One of my memories of School is of choosing of teams. Two people are picked as captains and then they take turns in picking their team from the rest of the class. They obviously pick the ones who are best at running, at catching a ball or whatever.

Now I wasn't great at sport so I tended to be among the last to be picked. That came to mind as I read our lesson for today as Jesus told his disciples; 'You did not choose me, I chose you and appointed you.'

That verse has always been important to me as that was the text chosen by the Bishop of Aston when I was confirmed – I wasn't confirmed until I was 17. That is a memory that has stayed with me. At the minute our young people are meeting up over Zoom for our current set of confirmation classes.

Unfortunately we don't know yet when your Confirmation will take place – but I hope it will be a special day for you as it was for me. As for the rest of you; do you remember your own confirmation? The day of taking for ourselves the promises of Baptism.

I certainly remember mine and I remember the text the Bishop chose – don't remember much of what he said but the text and I suppose how he said it has stayed with me.

'You did not choose me, I chose you and appointed you.'

Or in the Message translation that we read from "You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit.'

I take two very important lessons from that. The first is that each one of you, each person is special. You didn't choose me – I chose you. Special not because we are the best runners, the best person at maths or science or Irish or geography or history, the prettiest or the most handsome- we are all special because God has decided that we are special; he has placed a supreme value on each one of us, the life, the death, the resurrection of Jesus – God says to each one of us – 'You're worth that to me.' – the rest of my life, of your life is one of learning what that means to each one of us.

The next lesson I take is that we are put here to make a difference. 'remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit.' Over the period of a confirmation course we think of what we believe about God, about Jesus. We also think of how that makes a difference in how we look at a whole lot of other things. The other night we were thinking about the environment, how we are to look after this beautiful world. Emma came from Tearfund and got us to think about our responsibilities to other people; the problems faced by refugees, how we should respond to that.

People of faith can make a difference in the world. I think of people who have campaigned against racism and oppression, their message was rooted in their deep Christian conviction that racism and oppression was an offence before God – I think of Martin Luther King in America, Desmond Tutu in South Africa who changed their countries – all out of a deeply held Christian faith. They were people who made a difference.

How can you or I bring something of God's love, God's desire for justice, for peace building, for reconciliation in my school, my place of work, my home, my community.

'You did not choose me, I chose you and appointed you.'

That stayed with me from the night of my Confirmation. May each one of you grow in your understanding of God's love for you and your place in his Church – and may God work in and through each one of you in what ever you do, wherever you live, whoever you marry.

“You didn't choose me, remember; I chose you, and put you in the world to bear fruit.’