

Ministering to Millennials and Generation X

REVEREND DR. TEAL

I want to begin by saying what a tremendous privilege it's been to be here, and to say thank you to so many who have made that possible. My philosopher guides and friends who've ferried me around the city, thank you so much. The thing about accents, you know, somebody said to me, it must be good to have that accent. Well, I don't have an accent.

[LAUGHTER]

You're the ones with accents. This is natural. This is normal.

But you'll have noticed that the person who invited the Lord to be the guide for this session also had an English accent: Tim. And I'm very, very proud and pleased to share not only a friendship, but an institution. Tim is just finishing being—I was his chaplain, so now he's been set aside as a chaplain on Friday night within the church. So I'm delighted that there's that wonderful overlap.

I want to say a couple of things before I start. First of all, if I say "this Church in this building," I mean The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. If I say "the wider church or denomination," that's what I mean.

And I'll try and get that right. I haven't found an adjective that's short enough to get The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. So "this Church" means you, OK?

[LAUGHTER]

And I want to—this is very embarrassing, because I didn't know that Elder Holland was going to be here. I want to say I want to also dedicate everything that's said and everything that we think to the Lord Jesus, our brother and Redeemer, and to do so in the light of two luminaries, one from England 1,300 years ago, Saint Cuthbert of Lindisfarne, someone whom I will be quoting, but somebody who saw the world as very thin, very transparent, the power of God, somebody who is amazingly inspiring. But the other luminary in the night sky of the Lord is a Saint 1,300 years later, suntanned Elder Jeffrey Holland of St. George. And of— [LAUGHTER]

And latterly, I think, of here. I think he's possibly well-known in this city. Because I can say that these people are lights in their generation. And my encounter with the Church has been predominantly through Elder Holland and his two sons, and I can say they show me the wonder of the restored Church and its invitation for the whole world to be a part of this in a place where faith is valid, where prayer is living.

And flying in, because I was a cheapskate, I got the cheapest flight, which is via Phoenix, Arizona. So ironically, after all that over the Hudson Bay you go over, and you can see Utah, and you keep going. And then you get in this small little American Eagle, which rattles like an old bus. You can't even put the stuff above the seats, as they fall out on your head.

But then coming up—and obviously, it flies much lower, because I don't think it can go very high—and I saw a big Y just past the window, so I thought, we're very low. But I just felt how fantastic it is.

I've only been here once before, and to the United States once before, and that was at the last conference in April. But how wonderful; it felt like coming home. And then coming up to Salt Lake City, the pilot shouted, because there wasn't an intercom system, he shouted that we're approaching. Brace yourselves, he said.

And I looked out of the window, and I couldn't see the temple. I couldn't see the temple because of all the build-

ings around it. And I kept looking in the sunlight, and then there was this tiny flash, a flash of gold, a flash of the sunlight on the angel Moroni. And I realized that the wonderful thing coming home is this is a place for all nations, the way in which the mountain range is like God's hand, cradling not only your church, the Church, but people of all faiths. And there's a real sense in which it's like being friends of all nations and home to all nations.

And we can't see—at least—that little flash of gold—I can't see the whole picture. I can't see where it's going to end, but we can trust that God will be God. God will not stop being our Heavenly Father. And everything about our lives together is embraced and sanctified in Jesus Christ, in whose name we meet and speak and think.

Enough of that. The aim of this afternoon, I take it, is to equip us as chaplains—I am a chaplain, both at University of Oxford, and chaplain to a religious community, and to one or two hospices, and the homeless people places in Oxford—to try to understand the context of the people among whom we minister. What's formed them? What's shaped them to think the way they do?

And to think, then, individually, perhaps, or perhaps corporately in a second, of how we form strategies to engage effectively Generation X and millennials, ways of connecting the mission of our institutions. Now, lots and lots of military. It's very bright here from all that shiny—all the shiny medallions. But also, I've talked to people who are higher education chaplains, chaplains in hospices, so wherever we are, what's the mission of the place where we are serving, and how do we connect that to who we are? How do we understand the spiritual priorities of those among whom we serve? And how do we embody this?

And I'll offer them the model of a rule of life. The word of a personal mission statement might be more accessible, but a rule of life, how we connect on the mission of our church, the mission of the place we are with our particular vocation from our Heavenly Father. And then how to commit to continuing professional development, establishing support, living in trust and accountability.

So that's the aim. But let's start with definitions that I was given. Generation X and millennials. We're not looking at this just to learn about it. That's interesting, but it's not really adequate.

It's to learn about what forms people, to learn, if you like, why they're looking in the direction they are so that we can then begin to understand, well, what's our strategy? How do we engage with these different sorts of people? Remember Neil Andersen on—is it—it will be Elder Andersen, won't it—on the 6th of October, when he talked about looking in the right places. It was a wonderful example of the cheetah and the antelopes. We need to be said to be wise and to be strategic to look at what our society is doing to people so that we can protect and help and enable people to be strong for themselves.

So I'm not just looking at it as a point of view. It's actually—we're not just describing it, we're doing it to expose everything that would threaten and hurt and damage people whom the Heavenly Father loves with an infinite majesty and mystery we can't get near. So, Generation X. If you are aged between 39 and 58, after the baby boomers of the 1960s to 1980, you're Generation X.

And the word is a strange one, coming from a book by Paul Fussell, saying, there is a category, an X category of people who wanted to not conform, to hop off that hamster wheel which was just getting faster and faster, and to say something that we don't want to be defined by just going for money and status and social climbing. So on one level, there's something quite extraordinary about that desire not to conform to the things of this world. And hang onto that, because when we look at some of these Generation X and millennials, it can seem very negative.

But there is always a flip side. There's always something to say, right, well, if that's really the motivation, there's something wonderful that the Heavenly Father is offering you, that it's not about status or money or social

climbing. You're not to impress. You come to pray and to draw people to the Lord.

So that's if you're 30 to 58, and that's me included. I'm Generation X. Millennials, people now aged between 20 and 38. So a lot of the people, perhaps, who are new recruits to the services, among whom chaplains in the armed services and other places will be ministering, will fit into this demographic.

It's not always easy to see how these people are described. And a lot of research I came across by preparing for this are saying, well, let's just be a little bit careful. Don't let's wipe everybody who was born between those two years—between 1980 and 2000—as all having these characteristics, because the whole society changes. So it can be a bit of a sort of—a bit of a caricature. But let's pursue and see what people think these two sorts of generations are.

First of all, in Generation X, in the early 1990s, these people were, well, we were typically portrayed as unfocused 20-somethings. You know the television program *Friends*, which runs almost all the time on British satellite television. Every hour of the day, there's an episode of *Friends*. In France, this generation is *génération bof*. *Bof* means whatever.

[LAUGHTER]

It's a bit negative, but there we go. Some research from Stanford has, if you like, said, well, the idea is that these people have got bleak cynicism. They're disaffected. They're even more cynical than the baby boomers. But again, this happened across all age groups. It's something that infiltrated society.

And I think as chaplains, without getting too dualistic, we have to think, in whose interest is it to disillusion people? Is that of God? Or are we to be more subtle in our understanding about the nature of evil as wanting to destroy and distort? And they didn't just stay as couch potatoes.

In the late '90s, it became clear that Generation X were very, very adept at entrepreneurial start-ups of different sorts. The *Harvard Business Review* says that that generation is the greatest entrepreneurial generation in U.S. history. High tech savvy and marketplace resilience helped America prosper in an era of globalization. UK research describes Generation X as the hardest-working group in the workforce.

In terms of character and society, when people describe the parenting style, which is a really interesting insight, Generation X—suffered isn't the right word—but was subject to the highest proportion of divorced parents in the history of the Western world, probably, and were latchkey kids in many ways. Or, like myself, because my mum and dad were divorced when I was being born, was wonderfully looked after and given stability by grandparents. And that experience has made, if you like, Generation X parents to be described, in the analogy from the military, stealth fighter parents. They let minor issues go. But my goodness—they don't hover like a helicopter but intervene forcefully and swiftly in the event of serious issues.

Over to the air force to discuss and think about that. What about millennials? Well, these are described sometimes as Generation Me. Jean Twenge wrote a book called—that these people are more confident, more assertive, more entitled, and more miserable than ever before. Other descriptions are that it's net generation. Virtual friendships—I heard a really horrible statistic that a lot of people who are millennials don't have a single friend, apart from all that fussing on Facebook and Twitter and all of that.

The burnout generation, the Peter Pan generation—my son, age 20, is still at home. And he'll probably be there for as long as he can be, I guess, because in Britain, at least, you can't afford to either rent or move out in a place like Oxford. Brittany Lusk from BYU has produced a really interesting review of millennials, that students who are the

millennials are more likely to define what adult means based on abilities and characteristics rather than the traditional rite-of-passage events. And it'd be interesting, when I go to BYU this afternoon, to just test that out.

Are people still getting married three weeks into being an undergraduate? Or are people putting it off? Robert DeBard, in *New Directions for Student Services*—I put some things on there—it talks about what characterizes millennials. Well, they're confident. They're special. They're made to feel particularly important by intrusive parents.

Sheltered, though. You've got different stickers on the back of your cars. Yesterday I saw, "Less than 10 pounds of ammunition is kept in this car overnight." We wouldn't have that in the United Kingdom. What we would have is, "Baby on board." Or even, "Show dogs in transit." Yes, that's really going to stop me hitting the car if there's an accident. I must swerve into a pedestrian because it's a show dog, and it's just had a shampoo.

[LAUGHTER]

But this sense of shelteredness—baby boomers, we described to you this unconditional amnesty. They were free. Then in between, Generation Xers, they were the latchkey kids. But now there's a real fear of letting kids go out to play. I don't know about the U.S., but we hear awful things about what happens to children, and we're not diminishing that at all.

But you still have to let your kids go out and play, even if they fall over and hurt their knee, or fall out of a tree in the president's garden at BYU. You've still got to let them do it. You've still got to let them not be too sheltered. And this is something, I think, which is a motif for us as chaplains.

We can be drawn into believing that we've vicariously got to protect everybody from anything nasty in life, rather than stand in solidarity. And that's been coming out. It came out beautifully over the conference, but also this morning. But we're told that millennials are confident. They quite like to do things as long as they get rewards.

They need gongs. They need particularly financial reward, but also a sense of negotiated conformity. And that's very different from baby boomers and Generation X. In fact, a move from cynicism about structure to a much more obsession with getting it perfect. I don't know about here, but we've had some dreadful things happen in the United Kingdom in terms of churches, all denominations.

And people think that if we get the system right, then we've sorted it. And it's almost this false naivete about our capacity to make a structure which is perfect, rather than recognize that human beings have an almost infinite capacity to deceive ourselves and to be deceived, as we heard yesterday in one of the addresses. But this sense in which, if we only get the system right, it'll all be OK—part of being a chaplain is to deal with that disillusionment.

Yes, let's get it better. But for heaven's sake, don't imagine that we don't have to be eternally vigilant against something which is almost a driving power against God's wishes of love. But achievers, and with that, a sense of pressure. But as I mentioned, lonely, looking for internet virtual friends rather than people.

One of the interesting things—which is certainly in the UK; I'm not sure here—is that people now designate themselves as working class. And a lot of young people are not going to college, almost as a matter of just course. They want to stop. In fact, I'm quite pleased my son stopped. He's actually said—he did better at A levels than I did—but said, "I don't want to go to university just because I'm good at these subjects. I need, instead, to know what I'm for." Well, that's quite a good way of pausing. So that's another characteristic. But that sense of reticence and reluctance has a downside. I think it's the Wharton School of Business, but it's echoed in Brittany Lusk's BYU study. If it goes on the way it is, we'll have a lower marriage rate than previous generations. And by the age of 40, it is estimated that 31 percent of millennial women will remain single. That's twice the last generation.

And half of all women do not plan to have children. That's really an important thing to ponder and to be aware of when you're dealing with people who think that career and that the noble desire to actually work and to contribute is more important than our mortal existence. So that is something I think that is useful for us to be aware of.

I'm not going to go through this. But this, if you like, is a way of just putting it on a grid. And you can have this if you want it. Just send me an email or whatever. The comparison between baby boomers, Generation X, and millennials. It's the last thing because the last—not column—what do they call it, if it goes that way? There we are. Thank you.

The big question. Baby boomers—what does it mean? Generation—does it work? Can I exploit it? But the millennials, this could be really exploited in terms of mission, as we want to draw out that which is best in human nature. How do we build it?

Well, it's always together. And it's always obediently. So there is hope, I think. Well, that's the context for what the title is and what the theme of our conference is, is ministry in the Lord's way. They change. And it's certainly not fixed. But there are such things—my experience as a chaplain over 15 years at Pembroke is that they are adrift in these attitudes.

But let's stop. It's great to have strategies and to be aware and to see what's positive and negative. But let's come back to the indispensable foundation. The setting in which we are put, we heard at conference, is nowhere near as significant as the focus or the direction in which we're looking. And the indispensable visa—borderland security let me in at the back of the building today—but the visa that lets us everywhere. And it's not going to be easy—no one said it was going to be easy—is integrity.

Another great Christian once said to me about what—I'd asked him, what should I do as a chaplain? He said, try to be close enough to be trusted but far enough ahead to be worth following. If we're going to lift people up, we've got to be above. Well, I suppose we could try and push people up. But it's less dignified, and probably less likely to happen.

So as a chaplain, as a servant of the Lord, He's given you your personality. And you have agreed to use it, in the eternal realm before mortality, to serve Him. So bring your personality with you. It's a great gift. We saw that this morning with—was it Ed? Can I call him Ed? Ed Brandt, with the way in which he used his personality and bubbled and sparkled. That was marvelous to see.

But our personalities can only be a servant. They are a tyrannical master. We don't want our personality to be a tyrant. Everything about you as a chaplain, about me as a chaplain, is to be an ambassador of our Lord Jesus Christ. And that means being quite honest with ourselves.

Another person, another chaplain, said that he didn't know quite how to go ahead when he was made a chaplain somewhere. He was a youngish man, 22—no, sorry—28, I think he was—a youngish man. And there were all these very attractive—and he was just, I don't know what to do. And then he just discovered, I've got to pray, because if you pray for somebody, you bring them into the ambit of Christ's power and love. And that means that you must hold yourself to account because the consequences of breach of trust are just unthinkable for our own families, for our own spiritual growth, for the reputation of the Church and the churches, and also for the destruction of somebody's trust in another human being, especially as we saw how millennials find it difficult to trust anyway.

If people are reaching out and trusting somebody, then we have to hold that as sacred and take off our shoes and stand on holy ground. And that means recognizing that temptation is real. Temptation is real. We are not immune. And even if we can deal with that, let's also remember—I don't know whether you've made jokes about a television

program from when you were growing up, and it goes straight over the heads of people. And you just think, oh, dear.

There's a wonderful couple of comedians in the United Kingdom called Morecambe and Wise. No one's ever heard of—oh, come on.

[LAUGHTER]

No? OK. Morecambe and Wise—and one of them is rather pompous and keeps writing dreadful, rubbish plays and then says, this is a play what I wrote. And sometimes in this tutorial, if I say that out loud, people go, oh, gosh, his grammar's bad. And you think, let's stop it. So let's be aware of the cultural differences that we just talked about.

The next thing I want to talk about is mistakes and how we handle them. It's important to know ourselves. There is a dignity that comes with self-understanding. One of the things that came across very powerfully at the last general conference in April was the sense in which we often imagine that repentance is an umbrella of bad things. It's about punishment and misery, rather than a wonderful opportunity as a human being.

As the philosopher Heidegger said, we have a human right to change our minds. And repentance or metanoia is about turning around, Heavenly Father, and coming home, like the prodigal. Just turning around. Remember the prodigal son? His motivation was not perfect. Why did he want to go home? He was hungry.

He could fill his belly. But the father was delighted. So we turn around. And we make that beginning to turn around, and the Lord meets us more than halfway. He's standing and looking for us to come back. So in a sense, to know ourselves and to cast our will upon His guidance, knowing our besetting sins—was it Elder Alvarez yesterday? I can't remember his name—who talked about when a mother went and asked, can you have a word with my son about eating too many chocolates? Come back in a week.

I know that world, I'll tell you. But to know our besetting sins and to have that sense of integrity, which means we've got to be brave. As chaplains, we've got to model that change that we want to bring to others. We need to stop putting ourselves in the center of the universe, as if the world is one great big biscuit that we stick into our mouth. And it means to stop getting in the way of the Light of Christ.

With all the forms of narcissism and self-interest—somebody once said, it's all right if you've got a big ego—thankfully, he didn't say it to me, but he may as well have done—as long as your serving towel is bigger than your ego. That's a big thing. So if you've been given by the Lord a great sense of self, then look for that bigger towel to serve others.

The other thing—a big temptation for me, and I think for perhaps all of us—is that we are often tempted to try to think that we've got to put everything right. We think that when people say, oh, they're very supportive, very often they mean they collude with us. And it is disempowering for us to try to take over somebody else's life.

We make more of a mess of it, very often, than the people who are in the mess. We are not the Messiah. But we are the brothers and sisters and the body of Christ on earth. Another thing that can happen is, if you're in an institution for a while, you can get very cynical about its leadership. It obviously doesn't apply to anyone in the military.

But you can see some of the things that happen to good people. You can see some of the way people get consistently left out, not seen, not appreciated. And you can get angry. Well, stop, because it is our duty, as we heard this morning in that wonderful first address, to minister to the strong and the weak, the arrogant and the humble. And it is to minister as Jesus does and did, which means that we don't let anger undermine that primary cause to be His

ambassador.

So overidentification with particular people in your places of service, thinking, this person's a victim. I'm going to stand up for them. And I'm going to make myself unpopular with the authorities. There is a time for speaking truth to power, but always with that measured love that we see in the Lord Jesus.

One of the things that I am learning slowly to do in order to enable that gap is to develop and review regularly a personal rule of life. There's the mission statement of the church, what we are about. There's a mission statement of the places that we serve. How do we connect them? So, what's my rule of life?

And the text that I have in my diary and in my prayer book, which helps me reflect on that, is from 2 Nephi 1:25: "I know that he hath not sought power nor authority over you"—this is, of course, Lehi speaking of his son Nephi—"but he hath sought the glory of God, and your own eternal welfare."

"Sought the glory of God, and your own eternal welfare." Not your temporal happiness, not the momentary glee, but your utterly—the vocation that you have for eternity. And that is something that I find incredibly important. And it still goes wrong, trust me. I'll tell you in a second.

But it reminded me, and I probably spelt her name wrong—there may not be an E on the end of Michelle Craig—who spoke a couple of days ago. Keep the sacred appointment of intentionally making time and space each day to hear the gentle promptings of the Holy Ghost silently, and to stop, even—I probably ought to tell you what my signature is, because then you can sign my checks. But to just do a little sign before I start signing my signature and leave a gap.

It's a little thing, a little small ritual, which reminds me, give space. Don't be a reactionary, because the world can press all our buttons, and we've got some very sore spots. So a rule of life or a text is like a focusing lens that you can—now you've just disappeared. I can just see three red dots at the back. But I've put them on. You've all wonderfully come back into focus.

It's almost as if it stops that reactionary by looking through and asking yourself in your ministry as chaplains, are you going to be reactionary? What is going to happen when people try and push your buttons? Because that will lead to burnout. It will lead to conflict. And it will lead to lots of interventions and the assumption that we are somehow riding into people's lives like knights in shining armor, and we just cause trouble.

I moved that to strategies aimed at moving people from dependency to independence to interdependence in the communities in which you serve. And it also means those last two words, eternal welfare—not just this moment, but in a sense, to refocus and to help people and stand in solidarity with them when they have to see the bigger picture. At the end of Stephen Covey's book, *The Seven Habits*, which I discovered is obviously something that you've probably come across, but I didn't know beforehand, but he quotes a [INAUDIBLE] called Phillips Brooks.

"Some day, in the years to come"—and I think this is really important for us as chaplains; we're not just there for that emergency room response, but to convey to people, and for us to know, our duty—"Some day, in the years to come, you will be wrestling"—these people and us—"will be wrestling with the great temptation, or trembling under the great sorrow of your life. But the real struggle is here, now." Our duty as chaplains is to support people and to plant seeds which will grow into mighty oaks in the day of people's supreme sorrow or temptation so that people can miserably fail or gloriously conquer.

And the good news is, when we do miserably fail, you cannot fall any lower than the infinite Atonement, the blood, the love, the presence of Jesus Christ. There's no place you can't come back from. To think that is to actually fail to

believe in the infinite Atonement of Jesus.

One thing that you might do, and I don't know whether this works in the United States, because Britain's still in the dark ages, really—we've got internet—

[LAUGHTER]

—is have—take to yourself just an ordinary book and perhaps go from 1 to 31, and pray for people. Write people's names in. There we are. Tim Farrant. Evening of the 22nd day of every month. Among others, I'll be praying for Tim, who prayed for us today. And try to tell people—I've told you now, Tim, but I didn't tell you before. So there we go.

What do we do—if I'm teaching, because I teach, too—one of the things I'll usually say at the beginning of a tutorial session is, your college will pay my college, which will put my food on my table. So I'm grateful for that. But the other thing that you will have to pay is knowing that I will pray for you on the 22nd day of every month until I die. And some people go, oh. We've got a loon—religious lunatic.

And some people can get very cross. How very entitled of you, somebody started to say. And I thought—so I said, well, I'm sorry. I was going to pray for you anyway. So I just thought it was honest to tell you. That very person, about three months later, knocked on the door and said, “I know it's not the 26th of the month, but I really need you to pray for me.”

And I think, well, actually, there comes a time when you can and must stick your neck out as chaplains. Now, if in the higher education in this country—I don't know how that works. Are you allowed? Is a tutor allowed to say to a tutee, well, I'll teach you, but I'm going to pray for you one day a month for the rest of my life, or is that against one of your amendments or constitution?

[LAUGHTER]

It's all right. Britain doesn't have a constitution. But soon we won't have a nation, either.

[LAUGHTER]

I'd better put Boris in here, actually, and tell him. So pray and tell. And like the bishop, don't say you're going to pray. I think a lot of people get cross about entitlement because sometimes we say, oh, bless you, or pray for you. And it's almost like, bye, go now, rather than actually meaning something. If you're not going to do it, don't say it. But please do it.

And you might think, oh, that's very nice. That's all very gooey and lovely. I'll move back from that. Everyone's being nice, and—oh, that's not my phone. It's better than my phone. When temptation crosses the way, don't let Elder Holland see, hey?

I got this email this morning. It went ping in the middle of the night. Actually, Daniel's iPhone. Would you switch it off, please, whoever you are? It just flashed on my—and it was from a former student of mine, 3:28 this morning, under the heading, Will you marry me? So I had to open it.

[LAUGHTER]

I didn't know who it was from. Or I did, actually. “Hello, Andrew. I hope you're well. I'm getting married. Paul, whom you haven't met”—this is another guy—“is French. We live in Paris. We were planning on getting married at a church in England—I won't say which one—on this date, which is very soon. And I'd like you to do it. We're both

Catholic. What do you think?”

So I thought, what do I do? I forgot the rule. What’s the rule? It stops you being a reactionary. So I started to—and then thankfully, the Lord realized it was the middle of the night, and so He helped me with His grace by switching off the internet. The server failed. So I couldn’t respond, and still haven’t.

But I remember this student. He’s a lovely young man. His parents are beautiful. They’re both Catholic. His parents are very devout Catholics. And I just thought back after I couldn’t respond, well, what about my rule of life? He has not sought authority. If I just could do it because I could—I had the authority to do it—how much damage would that cause to the relationship between him and his parents?

And as it happens, I could simply hide behind the law because you are not allowed—people of same genders are not allowed to be married in the Church of England in the United Kingdom. So I could hide behind the law and just say, “Oh, I’m really sad, but we can’t do it.” But what do I owe him and his partner for their eternal welfare?

I’m not being judgmental. But I owe the friendship that I now have to be able to draw near and to accompany and to do what someone else models, is to say, well, I can’t possibly understand all that’s happening, but I will walk with you and eat and drink and pray with you and try to maintain the relationships that you have with your parents. Now had I, if you like, forgotten my own rule of life and just responded, goodness knows what might have happened. Because also, I suffer from something called fat-finger syndrome on the phone, and it autocorrects it to all manner of nonsense.

So at 3:00 in the morning, thankfully, somebody wouldn’t allow me to do that. So I thought, well, what—I’d done this before, of course—what might work? What might work? This behind us is, I suppose, Oxford’s equivalent of an Anglican temple. This is Christ Church. And the chapel of Christ Church is Oxford Cathedral.

And up at the top, as you approach the altar, you’ve got these lozenges with Latin—*prudencia*, *fortitudo*, and *temperantia*, *iustitia*, or whatever. And you walk up. You walk up toward the altar, and then there’s a gap. And of these four cardinal virtues—prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice—there then comes almost a fusion between divine and human virtue, humility, and mercy.

And then you take a step up. And in front of the altar, you’ve got faith and hope. And then at the altar, you’ve got love. So what about this, then? Steps in the cathedral—how on earth could that be helpful? Well, I thought, how might this be helpful for the different sorts of people that we’ve described?

How would the Generation Xers—how might this help them? If you are concerned, the emphasis is on development of the self. And you might say, look, these well-trusted and used streams of wisdom within the Christian tradition have helped people to develop themselves in a way that—that is me, sorry—in a way that actually takes us to our richest, truest selves, points us in the right direction. So there’s a way of actually encouraging.

So take stock. Be brave. Moderate. Do things in moderation. Work for justice. Do so with a humble heart rather than an arrogant one. And of course, remember that mercy and justice are not opposites. We tell the truth, but we tell the truth not in order to trap people but in order to let people grow in love.

And then come the gifts of 1 Corinthians, of faith and hope and love. And to do this with millennials would also then be to recognize what some of the structure—the structure, the recovery of structure—is valued by millennials in a way that it isn’t by Generation X, that there is a way that you don’t have to do this by yourself. There is a method which can lead you to Christ. It’s not an alternative.

And praying, I am convinced more and more—Saint Cuthbert, whom I acknowledged at the beginning, says this about prayer: When we pray, whatever our situation, strange powers are set at work by our Heavenly Father. And when we do not pray, we hinder those powers.

So if we're trying to find a structural way to help people take their own sense of self-reliance and reach out to others in service themselves, then this might be a way of doing it. The other thing about mercy and justice is we live in a society, I think, which is an either/or one. We're either indulgent—I can do what I want. Your rules do not apply to me, particularly in terms of sexuality.

And what is interior to me, there is no control. I am in charge, on the one hand. And then a sense of fury and where justice is confused with vendetta and vengeance on the other. Now, mercy and justice don't work like that. Justice is important because it means that the truth has to be told. The truth is something that is very real. And in a recent court case in the United States, there was an accusation that somebody who had forgiven the killer of his brother somehow tried to hug it away and avoid justice.

I don't think that's fair. What he was wanting to do is also to reach out. He said on Fox—whatever it is—Fox Utah, he was trying to reach out so that the person who had done this would not end up committing suicide. What an extraordinary thing, and that people have been so angry about this being an issue of this, that, or the other, rather than it being an issue of the overwhelming of grace intermingled with justice. Again, Saint Cuthbert talks about forgiveness, and I'll share that with us.

So justice is only ever to lead to forgiveness. It's the whole teaching of the Bible, that we become godlike, he says. The one thing that makes us most godlike is the love which never ceases to care for people, no matter what they do to it. We realize the Lord's presence when we enter that path of Christian perfection by learning to forgive as our Heavenly Father forgives, and to love as He loves. Extraordinary. Extraordinary, in the 700s, to be aware and to communicate that across the ages.

In conclusion, if that's all too complicated, all those steps, then we come back to the ABC. Whatever you do in the name of the Lord Jesus, whatever you do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. And that we can say, before food, before a meeting, before a moment with a friend, whatever. And what will we be doing if we are embodying the mission of our Lord Jesus Christ?

We will be telling the truth in order to move people to a place of absolution—forgiveness, in other words. Your job is to convey absolution and also to take gently all that is there and incomplete in the people that we meet and to bless. Not just to say, bless you, as they go, but to deeply bless by standing in solidarity with them without taking over their free will and volition. And this process consecrated not only them but us.

As chaplains, we know that, in fact, if we've been called on to do something big or difficult—when I speak to this young man when I get back to Oxford, I know that God will have a purpose which will bless not only him and his family but me, as we try to really—not to avoid pain or difficulty or conflict. So I do think you are really important in steering a world which is often lost, often washed aside by this tendency or direction or another, but really, really important in the coming of not only redemption and salvation for the people who you meet, but exaltation for the whole world. And I firmly believe this and witness to it in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

AUDIENCE: Amen.