Dear Parishioners of St Georges, St Peters and St Pauls,

A Biblical principle which has meant a lot to me and saved me much anxiety, heartache and fatigue is the Jethro Principle.

You will find the Jethro Principle set out in Exodus 18 v 13ff.

The story describes the visit of Jethro to Moses, his son-in-law.

What Jethro saw, perturbed him greatly. All day long, Moses presided at a CCMA settling disputes among the people. This was a tiring and time-consuming business.

It was exhausting for Moses and frustrating for the people, obliged to wait their turn. It was rather like the Motor Licensing Department at the Municipal Offices here in Knysna!

Jethro said to Moses, “This is not the best way to do it. You will only wear yourself out and wear out the people who are here. The task is too heavy for you; YOU CANNOT DO IT ALONE!”
Jethro went on to advise Moses to appoint people who were honest and capable to assist him in adjudicating. With Jethro’s help, Moses put a system of delegation in place. The simpler disputes were handled by his assistants, while the more difficult cases were referred to him. It was a win/win situation. With a smaller workload Moses could apply himself without undue stress to resolving the more difficult cases. And the people didn’t have to endure the frustration of waiting to have their problems addressed.

Jethro should be the Patron Saint of every Parish Priest!

On the wall of my office in Bloemfontein, I had a sign which read - “One person can make a difference, but a Team can change the world.”

I’ve seen many Clergy exercising their ministries. Those Clergy, whose efforts have borne the most fruit, followed Moses’ example and heeded Jethro’s advice. Essentially, it means not attempting to do the work of 10 people, but setting 10 people to do the work.

In our Parish we already have many Team Players. Let’s now recruit and mobilise the talents of those who are being underutilized.

As I mentioned last week, it isn’t a One Man Band; it is an Orchestra.

This is how I understand my ministry. It is not a question of getting out of work. Rather it is an intention to get suitably gifted people to do the work. This means coming alongside them and encouraging them. My job is to conduct the Orchestra!

And so, be forewarned!! Every time we meet, I am assessing what your skillset is and how it can best be deployed in the service of Christ.

I was thrilled by the response of parishioners who accepted the invitation to bid Colin and Louise farewell, when they left the Rectory and began their journey to their new home in Cape Town. It was Dee Hollely’s idea and a lot of our people, from the three Churches, at short notice, lined the road leading up to the Rectory. The excellent response is a testimony of just how effective the Jethro Principle can be, when practised.
Yes, together we can experience the difference between the little things we can do alone and the magnificent things we can do as a Team!

As a Team we CAN make a real difference in Knysna and even further afield by working together as a Creative Minority, like leaven in the lump.

Clergy are sent and lent to a Parish for a while, before being called to serve elsewhere. When a Priest leaves, the greatest tribute to his or her ministry is that the ministry should continue unabated. This, I believe will be Colin’s abiding legacy here.

I invite YOU (insert your name) to prayerfully assess the ministry we are providing in and to Knysna and to ask for discernment to identify what is missing and how best YOU (insert your name) personally can provide for the shortfall. Don’t be shy! There is a ministry out there with your name on it. Let’s talk about it and see what the Lord would have us do together.

In conclusion, may I express my gratitude to the Team who are already doing such exemplary work for the Lord.

May the perverse Covid situation in which we find ourselves help us to bestir ourselves, by reigniting our vision and passion, enabling each member, without exception, to use their God-given talent for the good of the people and the extension of the Kingdom.

Your servant in Christ

+ Paddy