

Escaping the Rack?

All of us involved in parish and deanery activities find ourselves experiencing conflicts of time and priorities in the duties and activities that we undertake. We tend to feel guilty if we do not carry out each task perfectly – forgetting that usually ‘good enough’ will fit the bill. If we set our standards too high, and do not meet those standards, then stress will often be one result.



days of high unemployment, ‘Big Society’ and voluntary activity by synod members, whether retired or still in paid work, “How do you spend your time?” is an important question, as also is how we define ‘work’.

The exhortation to include things other than our work becomes doubly important when for many people *a fully rounded life* consists totally of voluntary or non-paid activities.

One relevant commentary on this is the Rule of Life from the Companions of St Lawrence:

“In order to live a fully rounded life, life as God intends it to be, we must include things other than our work. Almost inevitably this means leaving some things undone. For us, planned neglect will mean deliberately choosing which things we will leave undone or postpone, so that instead of being oppressed by a clutter of unfinished jobs, we think out our priorities under God and then accept without guilt or resentment the fact that much we had thought we ought to do we must leave. We shall often be tempted into guilty feelings when we do take time off, but we should then remind ourselves that such guilt is a sin against the generosity of the Spirit, and also extremely infectious.”

The Rule emphasises the importance of all our activities, whether paid work or volunteering, time off, family and relaxation, all of which must be taken into account when we decide how to spend our time. In these

Having a *clutter of unfinished jobs* is a source of stress, and we can all recognise the problems caused by having ‘too many balls in the air’ at one time. The effect of analysing our current and pending tasks, and consciously deciding those that can be postponed, delegated to others, or done at a lesser level (‘good enough’), can be a tremendous relief. Of course the decision to not do something, or to do it to lesser standards, must be a conscious one, perhaps taken in discussion and with the agreement of others, and the reasons for the ‘good enough’ approach should be clearly explained and communicated.

Time off is an important aspect of ‘*good enough*’ or *planned neglect*. Time spent on our own, with the family, with God in prayer or contemplation is just as important as paid or voluntary activities within *a fully rounded life*, and we must make sure that the standards we adopt make allowance for this.

‘What should I/we stop doing?’