

## THOUGHT FOR THE DAY MONDAY 10<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2018

Good morning

The last eighteen months have been the story of a struggle. Not so much between Remainers and Leavers but between simplicity and complexity. Between the simple vote to leave or remain and the complexity of disentangling a forty year relationship.

It's also been a struggle between the heart and the mind. Many of us voted with our emotions and have had to watch others negotiate with their heads.

And if that's not been hard enough the struggles have been intensified by the debate about democracy itself and who should have the last word – a once-and-for-all Referendum of the people or a Parliament elected by the people.

Seldom have the two little prepositions 'of' and 'by' had such force in our history.

As we stand this week on the brink of a momentous decision and survey the channel between us and the rest of Europe there are many hidden currents.

The nation is divided, the two main parties are divided and many individuals are divided within themselves.

So let me take you to a corner of the United Kingdom, to the heart of ancient England and to a village in Suffolk near Bury St Edmunds and to a monk and poet of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century called John Lydgate.

He wrote words that allegedly inspired a politician who presided over a bitterly divided nation. The country was America, the politician was Abraham Lincoln and the words of the Reverend Brother John Lydgate were these:

“You can please some of the people all of the time,  
you can please all of the people some of the time  
but you can’t please all of the people all of the time.”

I guess in a pub quiz most would attribute the saying to a politician. But it was a priest and a pastor who coined them. For pastors as well as politicians know the fickleness of human nature.

But how are we, who are the led, to evaluate the competing leaderships at a time when it’s impossible to please everybody.

Over the last couple of decades there’s emerged a consensus about the principles of public service. Mostly they’re used retrospectively to judge a person’s past performance. They’re the Nolan Principles.

I doubt that many of us know them off by heart. But they’re worth pondering and applying to all those MPs who this week seek to lead us. They’re a sort of Seven Secular Commandments. Seven hallmarks with which to test and measure the stature of leaderships on offer.

They are: Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership.

The Right Reverend James Jones KBE