

Only one person spotted the deliberate(?!) mistake - after I'd announced there was one - in last month's letter. Luckily I had the chance to correct it before I transferred the document to the website. Sadly, the mistake in the magazine will be there forever...

Can you remember when making a mistake used to be something we all did? (All that stuff about "to err is human...") A time when it was quite a reasonable thing to stand up and say, "I made a decision, and it turned out to be the wrong one," or, "I got my facts wrong." People gave things their best shot and were pragmatic about failed results.

What's this leading up to? Well, I'm not about to make some scandalous confession, if that's why you've read this far!

It's the time to send our young people back for another year of education. What will they learn this school year: French irregular verbs, formulae, the economy and rainfall of Venezuela, primary colours, the anatomy of a dead frog? Something like that. Where, though, do they learn how to live? I know schools have standards of behaviour; this usually works in school. When they step through the school gates back into the larger world, what are the lessons being demonstrated there?

Do we seek justice or revenge? Does greed outweigh honesty? Do grown-ups really say sorry to one another? Do they really do this forgiveness thing? Do we, in fact, demonstrate that the next stage of life for our youngsters is actually one of growth?

If I quote Jesus as saying that we should not forgive one another 7 times but 70 times 7, doubtless someone will start ticking off the mistakes until reaching the 490th. So perhaps the last word on this occasion should be left to the fuller quote from Alexander Pope:

Good-Nature and Good-Sense must ever join;
To err is human, to forgive divine.