

# WEEKLY SERMON

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## Holding your nerve!

Emma Raducanu. What a victory in the US Open Tennis championship last weekend! And so many firsts. The first British woman to win a grand-slam title in 44 years. First qualifier to win a grand slam title. First to win at the US Open without dropping a single set. On the twentieth anniversary of the 9/11 terror attacks when we mourned the tragic loss of life with all the awful international repercussions and fracturing, it was heart-warming to see a young woman, drawing together Chinese and Romanian heritage, Canadian and British citizenship. And, oh my, didn't she hold her nerve? At a moment that really counted.

At the third championship point, the match was halted, as blood suddenly gushed from her knee, following a particularly athletic lunge. With millions of viewers watching around the world, she held her nerve as her knee was patched up, so the match could continue. Then she went on to win the point, the championship. And some.

Holding our nerve is not in fashion. Our social media whirl encourages a sharing of moment-by-moment emotional updates. On the bigger scale, we feel invited to comment on every twist and turn of government and international decision making.

But Emma's Raducanu's poise touched me greatly.

On holiday in the Citizen M Tower of London Hotel this summer, they have a standard set of four "funky" reading books in every room. One out of the four is on Imposter Syndrome. That's an interesting data point in itself. One chapter was given to the theory that in the age of British Empire, the senior ruling class were schooled through education and upbringing to instinctively "hold their nerve", not let on how scared they were, to project the sense of calm and all is well. Overdone this becomes the British Stiff Upper Lip that allows no space for lament and grief. But in a good measure, it is immensely helpful for projecting a narrative that allows stretch and reach.

I love my role as the Anglican Bishop of Lancaster. Inevitably there are moments that really count. Allowing fear to "set the tone" is such a shame. Emma Raducanu's poise is a wonderful inspiration to us all to hold our nerve.

**Bishop Jill Duff, Bishop of Lancaster**