

Last night as part of QPS concert there were two songs by the modern composer Eric Whitacre. The Juniors sung his Seal Lullaby which is a beautiful piece of music, but by the time they got to the forth line ' at rest in the hollows' I realised that I had tears running down my cheeks and I took a moment to just listen and sit and consider this past week. While most weeks my days are varied and sometimes strange – this week seems to have involved a more unusual flow than most!

On Monday, when you usually I would have the day off, I went instead to a meeting in the city for other Director's of Ordination training. As well as my responsibilities in the parish, I also have responsibility for training for Curates (trainee priests) in the Willesden Area. It was the first time I met with this group in this context – and I was feeling a little nervous that I might put my foot in it – but actually it went very well.

I then came back to Queen's Park where I tried to stay awake as Fr Laurence and I were attending the Big If tar at the Al Khloe Foundation which didn't start till 8.30pm. The If Tar breaks the fast at the end of each day of Ramadan, and Al Khloe each year have one evening when they invite communities leaders to join with them. As well as many local residence, there were a lot of local Iman's, Rabbi's, Priests, members of the Inter Faith Councils. Councillors, the Mayor of Brent, and a little to my surprise (though Fr Laurence had given me a few hours' notice) the Archbishop of Canterbury – Justin Welby who gave the main address. I have not been to such an interesting evening, with so many speakers in a very long time and it was in many ways a little surreal!

Tuesday was almost a normal day, though I did start late, and Lesley our administrator is away so I got to check emails for bookings and things – and we had a Trustee's meeting in the afternoon, and then I had a meeting with the Archdeacon – actually maybe it wasn't such a normal day - I was able to spend time with some members of the congregation in the evening.

On Wednesday morning, just as I was preparing to go off and take Home Communion when, I received a phone call asking that Fr Laurence and I make our way as quickly as possible to North Kensington to relieve the clergy who had by that point been sitting with people since 3am after the fire in Grenfell Tower. We went, and even though I knew we were going to a disaster zone, I am not sure how any of us can really be prepared for that level of devastation. There were so many people, so much dust, so many donations – and it was hot!!

We were only there for about three and a half hours as it became clear that there were sufficient volunteers and that at this point we weren't needed. I was struck by the scene of what we encountered – the fullness of humanity in all its goodness as well as sadness and brokenness. People of all faiths and cultures sitting together – standing – wandering trying to make sense of what had happened. People bringing donations because they needed to show they cared; or to express their grief – their shock – their horror. People who needed to say, I used to live here, I knew someone, I don't know what to do.

The week continued to be a strange collection of meetings and encounters with people. And what I was reminded of this week was that God is expressed in our humanity – in our talking with one another – in our sharing in each other's pain. As we were sitting in the chapel downstairs praying on Wednesday evening – when I suspect like many of you I wanted to cry out 'Why God – why!' I was remembered a poem of Teresa of Avila which we have reflected on before – called Christ has no body.

*Christ has no body but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
Compassion on this world,  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes with which he looks  
compassion on this world.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours<sup>1</sup>.*

God works with us, weeps with us – journey's with us, questions with us. God's hands in the face of disaster are our hands! If we want to know the meaning of Corpus Christi, if we want to understand what it means to share in broken body and blood of Christ and be sent out to live in the power of God's love – we only need to look at the journey of each of our weeks. For the body of Christ is present in what we see and in what we do.

On Wednesday, the love of God as expressed in the hands and compassion of others, was overwhelming. Archbishop Justin, speaking on Friday at the memorial service for London Bridge, put it this way.

*"I think the depths of sorrow we're seeing test the resources of all of us. Yet what is so extraordinary – up at Grenfell Tower, here, around Westminster – is this overwhelming depth of community that I think most of us didn't really believe existed, and has somehow been revealed in these tragedies.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Teresa of Avila (1515–1582)

*“You’ve got Muslims coming into churches to help with relief and support, all faiths, no faiths, everyone just being with one another. I can’t remember London like this.” He went on to say: “life overcomes death is experienced at times like this, probably more clearly than at many other times when life is easier. We just see the force of life<sup>2</sup>.”*

Thinking about what the Archbishop and others have said, it is not that other moments in history have not pulled us together, I think rather we had lost hope in the potential of our humanity, I think in many ways we didn’t believe we are capable of caring together, or noticing the other – and in fact it appears that for many – we are.

At Corpus Christi we give thanks to God’s gift of communion – our life source as faithful Christians. When we eat and drink we are taking Jesus into our very selves. He feeds us, renews us and strengthens us. Bread and wine are the outward signs of our spiritual journey. The very presence of Christ in us is the inward change. This is why Communion is sometimes called ‘The Food of heaven’

This is what Jesus is trying to describe in the uncomfortable words we heard today from John’s Gospel. To our ears, as well as those listening on the sea of Galilee, Jesus inviting his followers to eat him is confronting, and to some offensive. But like all John’s writing, this passage is figurative, not literal. When we eat food it courses through our body as it is digested, bringing nourishment. Jesus in this passage invites us into as intimate a relation and communion with him as we can imagine. When we share in the Eucharist each week Christ energizes us to do God’s work. The bread of Christ is empowering. It not only can fill the heart, but it can also lead all who receive to overflow into actions of love. In the Eucharist, in our prayer life, Jesus, God is at the centre of all we are, the energy which lives in our veins.

The Archbishop has been very strong this week in saying that the actions of people love, express to the actions of God’s love. It doesn’t take away our pain or our questions, or even any anger we might feel. But love, God’s love, the life giving force can sustain us in these difficult times.

Today as well as celebrating Corpus Christi we will also welcome Charlie into our community. Charlie was baptised last weekend in Italy – but as part of his family is also at home here at St Anne’s we will welcome him again in to our community of faith. In welcoming him, we also promise to uphold this community life – to work to ensure this life force, this inspiration continues – that he too can grow up to share in, and with God’s love.

Each year on Corpus Christi we are reminded that in the past our service today would ended with a procession around the church. We would have bought to

---

<sup>2</sup> Archbishop Justin Welby as reported in the <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/16/depths-of-sorrow-are-testing-british-people-says-justin-welby>

church today symbols of our trade – symbols of our daily work and we would have followed the sacrament out of the door and into the street carrying these symbols.

The image of a procession of all the people of God following the enshrined sacrament, recalls our procession through life and reminds us that the Eucharist is our food for the everyday journeys of life. We are called to follow this not just around the church – but out the door and into our community and sharing Christ love to all we encounter. To publicly proclaim that Jesus is at the core of our being and our lives.

Our faith is not just for the quiet corners of this church – our faith is lived out in everything that we do every day of our lives. We have many difficult days ahead of us as a community, and however painful they are God is present and active. We are the body of Christ, and this is our hope, and it is Christ body that will also sustain us. **Amen.**