

Vicar's letter - August 2014

We have started at last! The Collation, Induction and Installation Service on 9th of July marked the beginning of a new ministry for All Saints and for its new vicar and his family. It has been a long wait since the appointment was made on January 10th, especially as proximity has meant that our mutual paths have often crossed. It would not have been the same had we moved from Newcastle or Manchester, rather than from literally across the road!

Chryssa and I have been deeply moved by the warmth of the welcome given to us by the church and wider community of the parish of All Saints. Of course, many people are already known to us, but there are new names which we need to connect to faces and personal stories – please bear with us, we shall get there!

As I said in my first sermon as vicar, the question - “What’s the new vicar like?” – will probably be current for a while. Please let me know when you find out! No priest is omniscient and the new vicar is delighted that he will be ministering alongside clergy and lay people with great experience, qualifications and gifts. The vacancy has afforded many opportunities for ministry and service and we must build on this.

The Church is essentially about community. In 1 Corinthians chapter 12, St Paul uses the image of the Body of Christ to illustrate the twin themes of *unity* and *diversity*. Any church comprises of different people with a rich variety of experiences, preferences, gifts and talents. However, what draws us and holds us together is our love of God, our shared faith in Christ, our appreciation of catholic worship and tradition and our conviction that our church community of All Saints has something to offer a world desperate for meaning and real purpose. Some may recall that Archbishop William Temple famously said, “The Church is the only society on earth that exists for the benefit of non-members.”

I am aware that All Saints has experienced some very difficult times in recent years. Some people have been deeply hurt, and hurts are not easily forgotten. I would never wish to minimize the profundity of this pain on both personal and ecclesiological levels. However, one of the distinctive messages of the Christian Gospel is that forgiveness and reconciliation are possible even in the most extreme of situations. So, I want to look forward and not back. We are where we are, and we must pray that God will lead us forward to the next stage in the life and ministry of All Saints. The All Saints Church Guide book records:

“The basic truth remains the same: but its expression must be today’s expression, for today’s society,” and, *“The Church must always strive for the best expression, in time, of that which is timeless and eternal.”*

These are wise words indeed. We are a pilgrim people, loving and learning from each other; always thankful for what we have gained on our journey, but still peering into the distance with wide-eyed excitement about where God may lead.

As your new vicar I simply wish to serve, work and journey with you “to create a community of wholeness with Christ at the centre” (the Diocese of Bristol’s mission statement). When being interviewed for the post of vicar in January, I was asked by the Diocese to speak to the question, “How would you release the energy of the whole people of God in this parish?” My answer was simple:

I wouldn't. We just might.....but with the help of God we will.

With every blessing,
Kim Taplin

THE EDINGTON MUSIC FESTIVAL 2014

SUNDAY AUGUST 17th - SUNDAY AUGUST 24th

The gift of word in the poetry of George Herbert and the spiritual gifts of the Seven Sacraments.

For one week in August every year since 1956, Edington, a small village on the edge of Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire, has hosted a festival of music and liturgy in its magnificent 14th century Priory Church.

Singers from many Cathedral and Collegiate churches gather to take part in the daily services throughout the week.

The Solemn Eucharist and Solemn Evensong are the principal daily services together with the offices of Matins and Compline sung to plainsong.

The theme of this year's festival will give the opportunity to explore and celebrate the gift of word in the poetry of George Herbert and spiritual gifts of the Seven Sacraments.

This year's festival also marks the completion of the appeal and the installation of a new organ built by Harrison & Harrison of Durham. There will be a short organ recital preceding each evening service given by former festival organists. Saturday August 23rd the organ will be dedicated by the Bishop of Ramsbury and the Dedication Organ Concert given by Ashley Grote (Master of Music, Norwich Cathedral).

As usual, many renowned composers will feature throughout the week among them Tallis, Gibbons, Allegri, Howells and Walton . On Wednesday August 20th Choral Evensong is broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 at 3.30 pm.

This is a wonderful opportunity to experience fine music in a liturgical setting and discover the beauty of the Wiltshire countryside.

Further details can be found at www.edingtonfestival.org. There is also a poster displayed in the porch.

Norman Drewett

THE TRANSFIGURATION

(Adapted from a sermon given in 2010)

There was a cloud – and there was blinding light.

On a mountain 2,000 years ago.

On a city 69 years ago.

On 6th August we celebrate the Feast of the Transfiguration, and we also remember the terrible act of the Americans dropping the first atom bomb on Hiroshima. We commemorate 2 events, and in doing so see the radiance of the glory of Christ in stark contrast to the radiance of the destructive power of the atomic bomb.

In the Transfiguration our Lord was revealed as the God of Peace, *he exploded with the spiritual power of non violence and unconditional love into the light of the world, the fullness*

*of love and peace for the whole human race.*¹ The words of John Dear, a Jesuit and a pacifist.

In the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima, Dorothy Day, who founded the Catholic Worker, called the event the 'anti-transfiguration', when we rejected Jesus's nonviolence and created our own demonic light, the blast of the bomb, the dark cloud. So instead of bringing light and peace into the world to the human race, we bring death and destruction.

In our Lord's transfiguration, it was only those closest to Jesus who saw what happened and who heard the voice from the cloud saying, 'This is my Son, my chosen One. Listen to Him'. They saw Jesus in his glory, as he was meant to be.

At Hiroshima the effects could still be seen and felt only too well at 1500 metres. Over 200,000 died, either immediately or more slowly from related illnesses. A nine year old boy described the aftermath,

'I was astonished to see my sister covered in blood. Then I looked at myself and saw the skin of my hands and legs peeling and hanging down. I started crying with fear.'

A sixteen year old girl who was nearer, 600 metres, records:

'My hands were red with blood, my skin hanging down. In my wounded flesh I saw black red and white things appearing. I was alarmed and tried to remove them by taking my handkerchief from my pocket. But there was no handkerchief and no pocket. All the clothes below my waist were burned away.'

Why am I telling you this? It is not because I want to dwell on injury, it is because we must remember, and we must keep on remembering the terrible things that humankind is capable of doing to other humans and to the whole environment. *It must not happen again.*

Hiroshima happened when I was 7 months old and when I was a teenager and in my early 20s we were very conscious of the threat of nuclear weapons. That threat has not gone away, but there seems to be a complacency amongst many people that is worrying. Governments amass nuclear weapons, that also is worrying.

So there was a cloud and dazzling light – Jesus was changed physically, his face was changed, his clothes were dazzling white and he shone brighter than the sun; and he was talking with Moses and Elijah. It must have been terrifying for the disciples. Then they were enveloped in a cloud and heard a voice.

Clouds can be terrifying, or they can carry beauty. They can bring peace and wonder or they can bring destruction. The cloud of terror has hung over us for 69 years – the nuclear cloud of Hiroshima at 8.15 on 6 August 1945, destroying over 4 square miles of the city and damaging a further 9 square miles.

But there is another cloud that has followed its way through history – the cloud of God. The cloud led the people of Israel through the desert. The cloud covered Mount Sinai where Moses met with God. God led his people out of slavery to a promised land by a cloud. A cloud appeared at Jesus's baptism, the heavens opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him and the voice of God was heard,

'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

The cloud appeared on the mountain at his transfiguration and they were swallowed up in the cloud of God and again God's voice was heard,

'This is my Son, my chosen. Listen to him'

Then finally at the ascension he was taken up in a cloud. God was in the cloud.

There is a wonderful 14thC spiritual writing called 'The Cloud of Unknowing' which says that God cannot be reached by our intellect, only love can pierce the cloud of unknowing which lies between us and God.

¹ John Dear *Hiroshima Day sermon for the Feast of the Transfiguration 5.8.06*

Takashi Nagai, a Japanese university doctor was among the thousands injured by the bomb at Hiroshima. The flash of light came, brighter than the sun and a thick white mushroom cloud was over the city followed by the blast that destroyed everything from the centre of the city. Dr Nagai was flung into the air and buried beneath a pile of rubble and broken glass. When he escaped he found 80% of his colleagues and students were dead and the university in ruins and about to be burnt to the ground. He and his few colleagues who survived set about helping the wounded and dying around them.

He did this because he saw God in the cloud. He believed that he saw the suffering that the nuclear cloud caused as an invitation to share in the sufferings of Christ. Christ's transfiguration spoke of Christ's glory even when he was dying on the cross. So he felt the cloud at Hiroshima spoke of the same glory experienced through the great suffering.

Back to John Dear the Jesuit pacifist who believes that the Transfiguration is about the paschal mystery, about the cross as the way toward global disarmament and the new life of resurrection. Jesus turns into the bright white light which is the biblical symbol of martyrdom, and he becomes the risen Christ. It is for us to follow the transfigured Jesus on the way of the cross to help him carry out his mission of Peace. It is for us to be transfigured and to bring His Love and His Peace to the world, so that atrocities like Hiroshima may never happen again.

We, the Church must look for God in the clouds of fear, apathy, and weakness surrounding us.

We the Church must pray and hear God speaking to us.

We the Church must see God's glory in the powerful, transfigured Jesus.

It is up to us to walk in his light.

Liz Badman, Lay Minister

The temple is where God is

Sermon preached at evensong with benediction on Dedication Festival Sunday, 6th July 2014

"I was in Bristol on the night of the disaster. The following evening Fr Tomkinson had asked me to supper. I shall never forget the two of us standing in the smouldering ruin, the smell of burnt wood, the water, the devastation ... It seemed impossible that such a fate could have overtaken our beloved All Saints ... But as I look back I can see there was a lesson to be learnt. Perhaps we had become too dependent upon a building."

Those words (as I hope you may have realised!) are not mine. They were spoken by the then Bishop of Southwark, Mervyn Stockwood during his sermon at Mass on the day of the dedication of the present building, July 1st 1967. Those words seem a bit stark, harsh even, to recall 74 years after the destruction of the first parish church on this site and 46 years after the dedication of the rebuilt church. Taken too literally, they could seem to point to some kind of "divine judgement", though I doubt that was the intention. The substance of Bishop Mervyn's sermon that day was to encourage his listeners not to look back to glory days but to look forward. In former times, All Saints had drawn crowds because it was one of the few parish churches at the time, certainly in this Diocese, which taught the full Catholic faith. By 1967 that was no longer true, partly owing to the pioneering work done here.

Cyril Tomkinson, the parish priest here in 1940, wrote in the Parish Magazine of January 1941, very soon after the blitz, *"There, down the road, is the wreck of the natural body of All*

Saints; but you, living and immortal souls, are the spiritual body of All Saints”, and by the grace of God that spiritual body will stand.” He spoke of ‘down the road’ from Emmanuel church in Guthrie Road, now a block of flats, which afforded the congregation here a refuge in which to worship in the immediate aftermath.

It seems that All Saints’ congregations, down the last 146 years, have needed regular reminding, prompting and refreshing about people as temple being more important than building as temple. Perhaps it is a caveat more needed in parishes of our tradition than others. We have, quite rightly, a very high regard here for our temple building and the liturgy which happens here. I remember asking Fr Kim earlier this year what first attracted him to All Saints as one from a somewhat different tradition in the Church of England, and he replied “A sense of the numinous in worship”.

Fr George Bennett, in his farewell sermon at the end of his curacy in March 1982, quoted words we heard in the OT passage this evening when he said *“There is the danger, in a church where worship is the top priority, that overemphasis on the trappings of worship will lead to... ritualism. All Saints’ will be great, not when it chants, “We are All Saints’, Clifton, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord”, but when it cries aloud, “Glory to Christ our Saviour.” For all its glory, this beautiful church is just a piece of equipment for pilgrims, and the beauty of the liturgy just the merest shadow of the glory to come.”* Bold words again, no doubt borne of at least a modicum of experience of the ‘ritualism’ to which he referred.

By now you may have gathered that I have access to a collection of old parish magazines which I have recently mined. For several years I trawled through them regularly to find passages from the relevant months which might resonate with, or even amuse, the current congregation. The exercise taught me a lot, principally *“plus ça change plus c’est la même chose”*. We can get caught up in minutiae and we do often need reminding who we are - the body of Christ - and whom we serve.

However I’d like gently to make three counter-points - if I may term them thus - with different perspectives of time and status. The first is that I favour the simple (and easily remembered) definition that the temple is where God is, because it broadens our concept of temple, not only beyond a building, but also beyond the people who worship there and beyond the worship itself. St Paul, in this evening’s NT lesson, writes to the Church in Corinth, *“According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.”* The other side of the not-dwelling-on-the-past coin is that there’s also a danger of not heeding the past enough. We are indeed commissioned to proclaim the gospel afresh in every generation, and each one of us should take that seriously, not just those who preach. Our primary task is to cooperate with our loving God in the coming of his kingdom. But in doing so we cannot disregard those who staked their lives and reputations in founding and developing All Saints as a centre of Catholic worship. We have to work out what that might mean in each generation, and since we are poised for a new era with a new parish priest, it is all the more à propos. The temple is where God is - in a holy building, in holy relationships, in Christ himself as the incarnate God. You could say that it’s about ‘holy bodily insides.’

The second point pertains to the Blessed Sacrament. When the old All Saints’ was destroyed, the Vicar wrote in his letter to the Parish Magazine the following month, *“The Blessed Sacrament was saved and most of the portable treasures.”* Notice the order in which he put those things. Someone, probably Fr Tomkinson himself, had considered the Sacrament was the most important retrieval to be made that night. The temple within the temple? One of the most distinctive functions of the temple where we now are is that it houses the consecrated Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. In John 2, when Jesus

drives out the market men from the temple in Jerusalem, he says *“Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.”* John explains that he was speaking of the temple of his [risen] body. I do sometimes wonder whether we have lost some of the reverence and awe accorded to the Sacrament by the founders and forebears of All Saints.

That brings me to the third and final point, which is also a huge part of what All Saints has always embraced: the Communion of the Saints and the life everlasting. The departed remain very much a part of the body of Christ, another reason why we must not sweep away the past in the name of progress. Our foundation is Christ and the saints have been the builders in their generations. We must continue to build as carefully and humbly as they did.

Jessica Smith, Parish Lay Minister

The Child Within

When our children were young, we made a family visit to Disney World in Florida. Whilst there, we discovered that the British are only the second best in the world at queuing! However, unlike the queues at the Post Office or the supermarket checkout where impatience and irritation are deeply etched into every brow, Mickey Mouse’s ‘lines’ were happy places to shuffle for an hour or so. Of course, it helps if you are on holiday, but I suspect that the good humour had more to do with anticipation of a feast for the imagination or the thrill of the ride.

Cynically, I thought that I would merely tolerate the multi-million dollar marketing enterprise. I knew that our children would love the experience and that I would derive pleasure from their enjoyment, but I did not expect to be captivated by wonder myself. I was wrong. My imagination was courted and romanced in ways which surprised me. We all screamed with delight and terror as our roller-coaster train lurched around Big Thunder Mountain. We all gazed open-mouthed as cartoon characters came alive and even signed autographs. A middle-aged Anglican clergyman could even be observed waving enthusiastically at Donald Duck! Thank you Walt Disney for re-introducing the adult to the child within.

When it comes to believing in God, Jesus encourages us to rediscover the child within. In St Mark’s Gospel (chapter 10, verse 15), he warns that, *“Anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”* This is not a call to abandon the understanding, experience or sophistication of adulthood, but rather to demolish those defensive barriers of cynicism, world-weariness and intellectual arrogance which adults can erect to keep God at a convenient and safe distance. There is, after all, a world of difference between being ‘childish’ and being ‘childlike’.

On holiday, we all entered Disney’s Magic Kingdom as children. God asks us to enter his eternal Kingdom in exactly the same way.

Fr Kim

23 Upper Cranbrook Road
Bristol
BS6 7UW

The Editor
The Parish Magazine

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your article by Andrew Densham about our attempts to explain the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

I think of words which again speak of what is a true mystery:
"Christ is in the Sacrament as the meaning is in a word."

Yours sincerely,

Alan Dowsett

ALL SAINTS, CLIFTON FEAST OF DEDICATION

6th July, 2014

Readings: 1 Kings 8.22-30; Hebrews 12.18-24; Matthew 21.12-16

It's good to be here at All Saints again. Our two churches have a long history of connections. Two of my predecessors, Fr. Mackay and Fr. Tomkins served here too. Mackay often refers in the Parish Paper to how things were done at All Saints, Clifton – usually as a prelude to changing the way things were done at Margaret Street.

This Sunday, I'm here as the warm-up act for Fr. Kim. We will be praying for you and for him at All Saints on Wednesday.

'You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire and darkness, and gloom and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them.....so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."'

The Letter to the Hebrews contrasts the experience of the Israelites at Mount Sinai and the Christian vision of the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of which a church building is a visible symbol.

- One is a terrifying prospect. It has boundaries which must not be crossed on pain of death. The people beg not to hear another word. Even Moses, the friend of God, trembled with fear.
- The other has at its heart, **"Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel."** This a voice speaks of mercy not vengeance.

If we read through the Old Testament we find an internal debate on the relationship of Israel, the People of God, with the rest of humankind.

- On the one hand, there are those passages in books like Joshua, which with their

talk of divinely mandated genocide and ethnic cleansing. make uncomfortable reading for us who live in the aftermath of the Holocaust and more recent horrors, Then we find books like Ezra and Nehemiah, from the period after the return from Exile in Babylon. They stress exclusiveness, a clearer drawing and policing of the boundaries against the contagions of paganism.

- On the other hand, there is the counter-voice in books like Jonah and Ruth. In Jonah, the citizens of pagan Nineveh repent at the Jewish prophet's preaching – rather to his surprise and annoyance. Like some Christian preachers, he would much rather they all went to hell. In Ruth, the non-Jewish daughter-in-law remains faithful to Naomi, and will become the forebear of David, and so, eventually of Jesus too. That most Jewish of the gospels, Matthew, will include her in the genealogy of Jesus. His gospel begins with Gentile Wise Men from the East coming to the infant Jesus. It ends with the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.

In an age which prizes inclusiveness and tolerance highly, the exclusivism of Ezra and Nehemiah sounds harsh to our ears. But even if we see the more inclusive approach as fulfilled in the New Testament and the mission of the Church, we should recognise that in the midst of great pagan empires and cultures, a tiny nation with its peculiar religion, could only survive and maintain its unique spiritual identity, especially when it had lost political independence, by stressing its distinctiveness. The lesson of Jewish history has been that this has enabled a people to survive both assimilation and extermination. But the lesson of the Church's history has been that it could only grow into a worldwide body by crossing boundaries and breaking down barriers.

This is all very interesting you might be thinking, but what's it got to do with a parish in Bristol in 2014, almost on the eve of getting a new Vicar? Well, a Dedication Festival is not just an occasion for looking back, thankful for the blessings received here, but for looking forward and asking what God wants of us in the future.

This tension between exclusive and inclusive, the closed and the open, is not restricted to the Old Testament and the Jews. It has applied throughout Christian history and in our own age and in every Christian community.

In an increasingly secularised Europe, with religious practice in decline, how should the Church respond?

- One response was expressed and symbolised by Pope Benedict: the Church must become more self-conscious in its identity; more tightly disciplined, even at the price of being smaller. It has a pessimistic view of the world, especially the modern world; suspecting that nothing much good can come of it. There was a retreat from Vatican II with its spirit of openness to the world into an ecclesiastical yesterday. The outward and visible sign of this was a raiding of the baroque dressing up box and a pope dressed in ever more elaborate vestments.
- The alternate view is expressed and symbolised by Pope Francis. In his exhortation on evangelisation, **“The Joy of the Gospel,”** he speaks of the missionary transformation of the Church: a Church which reaches out to people where they are; rather than expecting them to come to it. **'An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself as necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelisers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice.'**

All this is given sacramental form in the simplification of liturgical attire, life in two rooms in a clerical boarding house rather than a palace, washing the feet of women as well as men, and even a Muslim on Maundy Thursday

I wrote an article a few months ago in which I referred to the anxiety in some circles – including anglo-catholic ones, - that the pope was “low church.” I said that I thought a “low church” pope is actually good for us “high church” Anglicans. He reminds us that being catholic is not primarily about dressing up in church, but about proclaiming the whole faith to the whole world.

The Church of England has been brought face to face with the reality that large swathes of the population no longer sense that they belong to it.

Many people simply lack the language and the sign language we take for granted. We might know what we are talking about or what we mean when we do this or that, but we cannot assume that they will. Many have learned neither hymns nor prayers at school. What we take for granted can sometimes seem as irrelevant to most people as Morris Dancing or one of those historic re-enactment societies which dress up as cavaliers and roundheads at the weekend.

The Church can seem not just incomprehensible but quite as alien and as frightening as Mount Sinai. If you're gay or divorced or unemployed, or in some places a woman, you may well get the impression that church is not for you. Even the bravest souls might tremble before entering. Some churches seem to specialise in condemning those of whom they don't approve – usually those who will never have joined or will make themselves scarce pretty quickly. What they need to hear and encounter is the Jesus who speaks of mercy.

In the Temple, the chief priests complain to Jesus about his healing of the blind and the lame and the children singing the Messianic greeting, “**Hosanna to the Son of David.**” He responds, **‘Yes, have you never read, “Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared perfect praise...”’** Some of our churches look and act like the local branch of the Society of Herod the Great: longing for a re-run of the Massacre of the Holy Innocents as soon as a child appears. Having got here in time to see the end of your Family Mass, I know that's not the case here. At their best, churches in our tradition have been places where the poor and disadvantaged of this world, what the Victorians called the “undeserving poor” and the sociological chaplains of consumer capitalism call the “feral underclass,” have found a welcome; along with others who don't measure up to the criteria of respectability.

And as if that were not enough, life is even more complicated for parishes like ours.

In an age when one form of evangelicalism or another seem to be in the ascendant in the Church of England, and many seem to have little regard for the things we believe are important, even vital, to the life of the Church: liturgy and sacraments, prayer and contemplation, art and music, church buildings as houses of prayer, or even be actively hostile to what they see as obstacles to evangelism, it is a tempting option to retreat into the bunkers of our sanctuaries.

Some of you are old enough to have read as boys P.C. Wren's “Beau Geste” stories about the French Foreign Legion. In one, a detachment of legionnaires is sent to a remote Saharan outpost called Fort Zinderneuf. Besieged by Tuareg tribesmen, their commanding officer dead, the draconian sergeant major takes command. As their numbers are whittled away, he creates the impression that the fort is still fully manned by propping up the dead on the ramparts.

There are anglo-catholic churches like Fort Zinderneuf. One priestly wit described them as: "More statues and relics than people, and sometimes it's difficult to distinguish between the relics and the people." The priority is to maintain the status quo: to prop up bodies on the ramparts in case the archdeacon comes round to see if the parish is still alive. A friend of mine took charge of one such famous parish fallen on hard times. He found that even PCC members hoped for nothing more than that the church would survive long enough to bury them. They had no interest in sharing their faith with a new generation.

How are we to see the way forward? Is there only a choice between maintaining our identity behind the walls, or abandoning it in order to attract a wider spectrum of people?

Now when you hear a question like that, you expect that the answer is going to be "No." otherwise I would not have bothered posing it.

We need, I think to look at a model of parish life which neither hides behind walls nor thinks that everything contained within those walls needs to be abandoned. The model I visualise is one in which there is a dense core of activity – worship, sacrament, prayer, preaching, study and service– all those things which build our Christian character as community and individuals. They need to be taken not less seriously but more for the very reason if we have porous boundaries which people can cross, open doors which they might come through. We are living in a frontier situation, moving out into the unknown. Remember, before the Israelites had the Promised Land and the Temple in Jerusalem, they had tabernacle which accompanied them on their desert journey as they were formed into a people for God. They were led on that pilgrimage by the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night.

Our catholic worship and practices should teach us to see God present not only in sanctuary but in the world: to recognise Christ's sacramental presence not just on the altar and in the tabernacle but in the brothers and sisters to whom he has bound himself for ever, even if they know him not. As we seek to engage in the task of mission, of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ, we will find that we need these things not less but more.

Scripture and sacrament speak to us of Christ's involvement in the world. They are a resource, not just for us but for all Christians, even many from other traditions. Perhaps they have never encountered them, and are not so much hostile as unaware. But hostility and unawareness may well have sprung from our rather conspicuous failure either to be transformed by them or to share them with others.

I have spoken of the Jesus who speaks of mercy, whose sprinkled blood speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel, but we who are his disciples cannot forget that he also speaks a word of challenge, of call – calling to follow him and to share in his ongoing work. We are given great gifts in the life of the Church, in the life of your church and mine, but we are not given them merely for our own benefit and comfort, even our own spiritual improvement, although we all need that. We are given them to share with others.

Preb. Alan Moses, Vicar of All Saints' Margaret Street.