

All Saints Alive

VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Growing together

Dear Friends,

The Pope's Visit to Britain certainly stirred up strong feelings for many people. For some it was a unique and joyful opportunity to see the leader of their Church at close quarters, while others felt the need to protest. Both sides of the debate are understandable, as the Pope represents a significant and admirable spiritual tradition, yet one which has to face the fact that inappropriate and unacceptable actions have been perpetrated and remain to be fully dealt with.

As a Christian who prays for and seeks unity, how wonderful it was to see the Pope and the Archbishop worshipping and praying together at Westminster Abbey, sharing the Peace, and not just a handshake but a holy kiss, as brothers in Christ! Despite the grievous difficulties facing the Papacy and the Roman Catholic Church, the atmosphere of the Pope's visit was generally one of encouragement and unity. Crowds stood in the sunshine to greet the Pope, schoolchildren sang at the Great Assembly at Twickenham, and people were moved by his presence. One young girl whose hand the Pope had shaken talked about how it was the most amazing and incredible thing that had happened to her.

The media reported the event widely, and in an attempt to be even-handed they also spoke with humanists, or some of the "aggressive forces of atheism" which the Pope had criticised. You don't need to be an atheist to disagree with child abuse – every right-thinking person does - but this was focussed on in a manner which made them appear to have the moral high-ground. Yet those who spoke for atheism seemed to have no perception of the spiritual needs and



feelings, which faith encourages and strengthens, the commitment to loving and serving others and the following of a calling to live hopefully and joyfully. One such humanist commentator said (seriously) that the feelings at a Papal Mass would be no different to those experienced in a crowd for a Lady GaGa concert! There might be a similar euphoria from time to time, but the potential for personal transformation from worship is vastly different to a mere entertainment.

For me, questions remain about the Roman Catholic Church's approach to dealing with abuse, and some other policies have unwelcome implications for people's lives, but there is no mistaking the genuine spirituality brought afresh to many lives by the Pope's visit. Surely we can welcome his approach when he says "May Saint Bede's example inspire the Christians of these lands to rediscover their shared legacy, to strengthen what they have in common, and to continue their efforts to grow in friendship. May the Risen Lord strengthen our efforts to mend the ruptures of the past and to meet the challenges of the present with hope in the future which, in his providence, he holds out to us and to our world". And as an Anglican, I know that the Archbishop of Canterbury was right to say "We pray that your time with us will be a further step for all of us into the mystery of the cross and the resurrection, so that growing together we may become more effective channels for God's purpose to heal the wounds of humankind".

That is my prayer also, and I hope that the visit will have a lasting and positive influence on the spirituality of many people in our land.

Love Jo

Harvest Thanksgiving: October 3rd

We will be collecting for the Bishop's Harvest Appeal, the Climate Justice Fund, and asking for cash and cheque donations rather than harvest produce. The initiative is called 'Faith Moves Mountains' and it is the Church of England's national environmental fund in partnership with Tearfund. Speaking about the Climate Justice Fund, the Bishop Alan of St Albans said, "This year's Harvest Appeal, through the Anglican Church in Teso, will help farmers and families grow crops that can cope with the changing climatic conditions. Please support this work generously to bring justice and hope to the people of Teso."

It will be great to have some harvest produce during the week before to decorate the church and this can be auctioned off after the Harvest Service and the money raised will also go to the Bishop's Harvest Appeal.

Winnie's Story

Winnie's family lost everything when floods hit eastern Uganda in 2007. For months, the family survived on food aid and wild leaves. Winnie (now 5) and her sister Merab (7) were often sick. Then drought set in.

'It was very hard', says Winnie's foster dad Stanley. 'I felt terrible that I could not feed my wife and children. Merab has sickle cell anaemia and the lack of food made it worse. He joints were swollen and she was in terrible pain.'

'I prayed to God that he would give us the strength to get through. And God answered my prayers. He brought the Church to us.' With help from the Anglican Church of Uganda's development team, Stanley and his neighbours in Odort parish, Katakwi District, have set up a farming group. They've received tools, equipment and training to grow drought-resistant crops such as watermelons and sunflowers. Stanley (32), the group chairman, has also been given a kick-start with poultry farming - and he now has 210 chickens in the small yard of his self-built home!



'We have benefited a lot' he said with a smile from ear to ear. 'The girls and our two younger sons are all able to eat three times a day. It has been two months since Merab was sick. Merab and Winnie are able to go to school.'

Half the world's population lives in desperate poverty on less than \$1 a day. Stanley is one of them. For basic survival, and nothing else, Ugandan farmers need to earn 1 million Ugandan shillings a year (£320). Last year, Stanley earned just 600,000 shillings (£192) - from a small harvest of watermelons and from finding additional work as a brick-maker.

Now, Stanley's watermelons and sunflowers are established, so the harvests should provide a much larger income - as long as the rains come. And his 200 chickens act as insurance for a non-rainy day.

More information at www.harvestappeal.org

Harvest Appeal prayer

God of the harvest, in a changing world,

Your love is constant and your mercy never ends. Fill us with thankfulness for your goodness, Open our eyes and stir our hearts, that we may live more simply and give more generously.

Bless the work of the Anglican Church of eastern Uganda in enabling our brothers and sisters to grow drought-resistant crops so they may live with confidence for the future and reap the fruits of justice.

Amen