

All Saints Alive



VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

Anniversaries

Dear Friends,

I can't help but notice that this summer sees two very contrasting anniversaries.

At the end of July we remember that it is 100 years since the terrible sacrifice of a large number of men from the Hertfordshire Regiment amid the appalling tragedy of the First World War. Please do come to remember them, and to pray for peace today, at our ceremonies on 30th and 31st.

In contrast, 50 years ago our nation – and the United States – were going through what has been dubbed the Summer of Love. I am too young, of course, to really remember that, but my husband assures me that there really was a strong spiritual vibe that year, people – especially teenagers – wanted a different way forward.

Sadly it was not to last, and of course the Americans were heavily involved in Vietnam, which may actually have fuelled the young people there to seek love and peace rather than the violence and death which the Draft card represented.

The reason why the Summer of Love did not last was because it was essentially idealistic and without firm foundations. We can all feel that the world would be a better place if only everyone loved one another – it remains a truism which people will say from time to time - but just how are they to do that?

Christians believe that God is Love, and so love is the most important part of all our lives. And that is so, among all the uncertainties and suffering of our human lives. Jesus' way of love is a radical one (in

the most positive use of that word) for he keeps on loving and caring throughout his life, his passion and his death.

The resurrection means that the God of Love raised his Son, the human sign of eternal love, to new life, a life which we can all embrace and live by. However, the world is a very complicated place, as are all human lives, and there are evil aspects to our existence to be overcome, so we cannot achieve this loving way of life just by talking about it or idealising it.

We need lives which constantly feed off the love of God. Our prayers each day should help us to live more lovingly, knowing that God's love will lead and inspire us. And sharing in communion is an especially significant way of experiencing the love of God, drawing us close to Jesus and his loving sacrifice for us all.

May your Summer be a happy and loving one, may you feel that God is with you amid all this world's pains and problems, and may we not fail to remember and value others who have striven for the good in this sometimes evil world. Painful as that remembrance can be, and there are numerous recent deaths in our land from the scourge of terrorism, we need to go forward in affirming love as the central purpose of life, in harmony with our Creator and all our fellow travellers on this planet.

As Scripture says, *"Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"*; so let us live in the love and peace which Jesus offers us.

Love,
Jo

Sea Sunday – 9th July

Look around your home. How much of the contents in your cupboards, wardrobe, rooms, and even garage came to you over the seas, via the great merchant ships? What would your home be like without them? Yet when did you last give a thought to the people who bring them to you?

It is a curious fact that seafarers are one of the most important, and yet invisible people groups in our society. We all of us depend on them to fill our homes and businesses with an endless variety of goods, and yet we never see them, never speak to them, and rarely even remember their existence.



It suddenly makes Sea Sunday seem good sense: an annual opportunity to give thanks for the seafarers of the world, and to pray for their personal well-being. For going to sea is a lonely occupation. It separates families for months on end. It can sometimes be dangerous, and is always physically demanding work.

So this month, on Sea Sunday, let's pause and give thanks to God for the seafarers of the world. Let's remember how their work so enriches our lives. Let's pray for them, for their families, and let's support the organisations that offer them care and support through their chaplaincy work.

In doing so, we will join with thousands of other Christians all over the world who each year remember the seafarers who make our prosperity possible.

Finding Hope

Bishop Richard

This is written in the immediate aftermath of the horrific bomb blast in Manchester, and the murder and maiming of so many people, especially the young. At times such as this most ask the question where is 'hope'? Amidst this reminder of the

capacity of human beings for evil, hope seems elusive and absent.

Yet, without in any way diminishing the reality and awfulness of the suicide bombing, I believe we can see hope. It is the hope, expressed in so many ways, that our response must not to be distracted into that fear that divides us from our neighbour, but rather we must continue to live our lives with generosity and love for others. The aim of terrorists is to diminish us, to make us fearful of one another. The way in which the people of Manchester have refused to be captive to fear overcomes this threat.

It is the hope of small acts of kindness. Those taxi drivers who took people home from the Arena free of charge. The Sikh Gurdwara that opened its doors and offered refreshment. Hotels and cafes that took people in. The homeless man who rushed to help. The professionalism and skill of the emergency services.

It is the hope expressed by vigils in Manchester and across the country (such as the one I participated in in Luton) where people of all faiths and none came together to witness to those bonds of friendship and relationship that are the foundation of our resilience as a country. A sign of the strength of interfaith and community relations in this country, and the basis of a renewed commitment to work together for peace.

It is the hope of which St Paul writes in his letter to the Romans. His conviction that *"neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Romans 8:38f)

The hope that is love; God's narrative for his creation. The massacre at the end of that Ariana Grande concert is narrative of hatred and evil. That is never the story that endures. Rather it is God's story of love that always wins through; that divine love that always overcomes hate.