

Dear Friends,

During August we witnessed in Britain the most awful acts of unchristian and uncivilized vandalism. These were committed in London and in many other cities and towns of our land. In the main they were committed by 'young' people, and some very young, who smashed shop windows, looted the contents of the shops, set cars on fire and some buildings, even murdering three young men in Birmingham who were trying to defend property. The question, of course, is asked how could such wanton behaviour happen in Britain. A number of reasons are given such as poverty, lack of work, cost of living, and many such.

First of all, however, let us clearly state that the majority of young people in Britain, irrespective of their religion, Christian or otherwise, would not be involved in such behaviour, and one must be careful in appearing to blame the youth in general. There is however a very deep cause which has been building up for some time.

Not very long ago almost every child was taught the Ten Commandments both at school and especially at home, and that there was such a thing as the absolutes of right and wrong. This seems to be forgotten, or seldom taught, that in the end of our life in this world there will be a Judgement - a judgement in which we shall have to answer to God for everything we have done, and this will affect our eternal status.

I know that the terrible wars of the 20th century did a lot to destroy in the minds of many the Christian moral principles on which our 'western' civilization and concepts of freedom are built, especially respect for oneself and for others, sexuality, the sacredness and necessity of marriage and the resulting family life and the proper bringing up of children.

St. John Chrysostom (c.347-407), Bishop of Constantinople, wrote: "Bring Children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and great will be the reward which will be laid up in store for their parents. . . .Instil into them the fear of God from their first youth, and He will put His Spirit and grace into their hearts; and this will be a wall not to be broken down;. . .These will be to them wealth, and ornament, and glory. These will make them illustrious not only upon earth, but even in heaven."

Although England still has an Established Church and there are many devout Christians in it, and there are also other Christian Bodies who try to follow Christ, on the whole the Christian Faith is being sidelined. Sadly the Church of the land has officially turned away from many of the teachings of Christ and the universal Church and embraced the fickle ways of the world, in order it is said to appear to be relevant to the 21st century! As such it has lost its moral voice and is regarded by many to be indeed irrelevant. Hence many of the problems.

Surely it is time for all of us who profess to be Christians to wake up to what is happening and, looking into our own lives, renew our own commitment to Christ and the true teachings He gave to His Church.

There are many now living in this country who do not know Christ, who He really is and what He taught and that His Church must continue to teach the same, for they are the eternal truths revealed by God.

As I wrote in the magazine in 2006: listening to the news or reading about it, when possible, is essential for Christians. Our Lord Christ Jesus is the only Saviour of mankind and of the world, and is therefore concerned with every aspect of living and life, indeed of the whole creation, because it is through Him 'all things were made', as we profess every Sunday in the Nicene Creed. There is no other God than the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity. All other concepts of God, however lofty or grand, though sincerely and devoutly believed, are, in the end the concept of man's imagination, based on glimpses of his origin. No creature can completely understand its Creator, if it could, it would, in reality, be the creator. Mankind, whom we know through revelation was made in the image of God our Creator, is a rational being and a seeker after truth with the deep desire to know God and all His works. Whatever good there is in mankind comes from God through His Holy Spirit in His gift of Humanity. We can only know of God what He has revealed to us. Jesus Christ is God's human face, we eternal word made flesh in order to speak in human language, so that we may begin to understand and respond, to Truth and the purposes of God in His Being and loving creation.

As members of Christ's Mystical Body the Church which is in heaven. Paradise and on earth, it is our duty, as St. Paul the 'holy Apostle hast taught us, to make prayers and supplications, and to give thanks for all men...' (Prayer for all men, BCP, Communion Service). In order to do so we need to know what is going on around us, both in our local environment and in the wider world, especially these days with modem communication, and having prayed about it, seek God's grace to do something about it according to His will and according to our ability. God is love and our actions must reflect God's love.

As Christians we are to bring before the Lord, in our daily prayer and especially in the prayer of the Church, the Holy Eucharist, the needs of all, beginning with thanksgiving for His many blessings which we so often take for granted. Of course God knows the needs already, but He wants us, as His children, to show to Him our loving concern and offer to help according to His will. As St. Teresa reminds us 'God has no hands but ours, no feet but ours' to do His work in the world. Our Lord Jesus Christ said before His Ascension 'as the Father has sent me so I send you.'

We are living in dangerous but challenging times when our very Christian civilisation and way of life is under threat from within and without. As St. Peter wrote so long ago in his epistle 'The devil is abroad like a roaring lion, ... seeking whom he may devour... resist steadfast in the faith.' (1 Pet. 5: 8,9). Our very salvation and that of our children depend on our work for God to spread the Faith far and wide, and to awake folk out of their lethargy and apathy to the grave danger we are in.

With God's help and our determination, though we are few and many of us not very young, we will overcome because it is the call of Christ that we are responding to and the 'gates of hell will never prevail' if we respond to the call of God. Love is stronger than hate, and in Christ through His Resurrection, life is stronger than death. Christendom, in me main grew because of loving service and the proclamation of the Truth of God as revealed in Christ. It will grow again when we know the Faith, practise it, and lovingly share it with others. That is our vocation and we cannot afford to sit on the fence.

Your Priest & Friend,

Fr. Brian.