

Father Philip's Address to St Paul's Assembly

Thursday 10th October, 2013

SPIRITUALLY TINTED GLASSES



I am often asked if I get nervous speaking to large groups of people. I suppose that after doing it for many years the answer is ‘no’ – but there is also a more practical reason why I would say ‘no’. I am a bit short-sighted and I can’t really see you unless I am wearing these glasses. But the problem then is that if I wear the glasses – I can’t see what I am reading. So I can’t really get nervous speaking to a large room full of people, because I can’t see you!

There are, of course, glasses for all sorts of situations: for short sight; long sightedness; there are bi-focals so that you can see distance and close up; there are tinted glasses and sunglasses.

Then there is an old saying “to see the world through rose-tinted glasses”. It simply means to look at the world how you would like it to look, not as it really is. For example, a person might be ignoring the fact that they have a

great deal of work to do and will never complete it in time, but carries on as if everything is fine. They may be said to be looking at the world through rose-tinted glasses.



All of us at some time or another are probably guilty of that. We might pretend that we haven't seen that a friend or a schoolmate is in difficulty and we pretend they are okay instead of asking them how they are. We may spend more money than we really have and continue buying other things thinking that the problem will go away, when in fact it needs fixing. In many different ways we can look at the world through our rose-tinted glasses.

Then with so much news around us: newspapers; internet sites; and 24 hour television news – it is easy to look at events around the world and pretend it isn't happening, because it is too much to deal with.

So at times it is good to look at the world in another way – through another pair of 'glasses' – through 'spiritually tinted glasses'.

Just over two weeks ago, over 4,000 kms away from us in Hong Kong, in a place called Peshawar in the Country of Pakistan, an Anglican Church was bombed during their Sunday Worship. Some 80 people died in the attack and over 150 were injured.



It may seem a long way away and it may feel that it has little to do with us. However, regardless of religion or race or distance, these were other people like us going about their daily business and caught up in a terrible event which they didn't deserve. But there is another connection we have with them - they were Christians, and also the Church in Peshawar – All Saints' - is an Anglican Church, as we are an Anglican School.

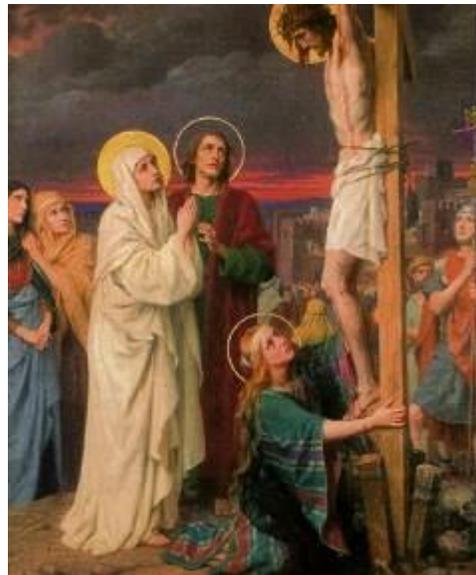
We can then begin to see so many similarities. Like us at Assembly, they regularly gathered together and sang hymns in praise of God and listened to the Scriptures being read. Like us in the Eucharist in our Chapel they gave thanks over bread and wine as Jesus commanded and received the body and blood of Christ. They are and were our brothers and sisters in Christ.





When we look at a situation like that clearly, we know that these are not strangers, but our brothers and sisters in Jesus who have suffered unjustly. But how can we make sense of it spiritually?

With our spiritual glasses we know that acts like these are not the will of God. God did not want this to happen. But what God does is He JOINS US in suffering because He knows what it is like to suffer. As the woman in the picture shows (she is the relative of one person who was killed at Peshawar) she kneels at the place where it happened. But she is not alone in her sorrow. Jesus suffered on the Cross for our sake. God the Father experienced the loss and pain of his Son as He watched Him on the Cross. His mother Mary stood at the foot of the cross and felt the sorrow that all of mankind feels. God does not cause suffering, instead He meets us IN suffering and comforts us.



So what can we do over 4,000 kms away? We can pray. Pray for those who have died, pray for those who are injured, pray for those who mourn. We can pray for those who work for peace and understanding between different people. We can meet Christ at the Cross – and we know we meet Him there at the Eucharist.

So today, after School in the Chapel on the 8th Floor of the Stewart Building, we have our regular Thursday Eucharist at 3.45 pm. Today I will offer that Eucharist with special prayers for those who died and suffered in Peshawar, our brothers and sisters in Christ, and for peace in that region and the world.

I will offer the Eucharist whether the Chapel is full or empty. God does not measure our success through how many people come to Church, but He listens to the voice of those who pray in faith. Of course you are welcome to join me and I encourage any of you who wish to do so. But even if you can't, perhaps at some point on your way home you will give a thought to the people of Peshawar and ask God to hold them in His hands and love them.

You may think your little private prayer is not much – but our spiritual glasses remind us that it is the greatest thing you can do at this distance, because you will be joining your prayers with mine in the Chapel – and I am joining my prayers in the Chapel with the prayers of the Church around the world who have been praying for Peshawar these last two weeks. Millions and millions of people, united in one prayer.

May God grant to the living grace; to the departed rest; to the Church and all mankind, peace and concord, and to us and all his servants, life everlasting.
Amen.

Thank you.