

Children and the Vulnerable

Last Friday we focussed our thoughts and prayers on the victims of the dreadful attack on the Manchester Arena. What was particularly shocking was the fact that so many children and young people were seriously affected. Some were killed or injured, Some lost their parents, other loved ones or friends. Very many more were traumatized by this terrible atrocity.

Children and young people are particularly vulnerable, and traumatic experiences such as this can have a lasting effect on their lives. On 19th August 1982 the General Assembly of the United Nations decided to commemorate the 4th of June each year as the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression. To quote from their website:

“It is a sad reality that in situations where armed conflict breaks out, it is the most vulnerable members of societies – namely children, who are most affected by the consequences of war. The six most common violations are recruitment and use of children in war, killing, sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access. The purpose of the day is to acknowledge the pain suffered by children throughout the world who are the victims of physical, mental and emotional abuse. This day affirms the UN's commitment to protect the rights of children.”

Many children were killed or injured just the other day in the suicide bombing in the capital of Afghanistan Kabul. Indeed children are killed and injured in conflicts and acts of terror every day in some part of the world. That is a terrible indictment on humanity.

As we heard in our reading just now (Matthew 18.1-7, 10) Jesus is quite clear that children are to be valued and protected, not harmed or abused. Their innocence is not to be taken away from them by violence or cruelty or by the loss of loved ones. For Jesus reminds us that we are all in a sense to become like children, to see the world, to see God, as they see.

Of course not only children are vulnerable. The elderly are often vulnerable too. Indeed at times in our lives we may all be very vulnerable. The Gospels testify to the fact that God in his Son Jesus Christ came to share in our vulnerability, both as a baby and later on the cross. Yet the Christian message is that ultimately our Lord is the victor, overcoming sin and death. That is the hope that as Christians we offer to the world – a world in which there is so much violence and cruelty, and yet also so much that is good, selfless, kind and loving.

2 June 2017
Kingsley Boulton