

## **Manchester Arena Attack, Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017**

Two months ago we gathered here to pray for the victims of the attack in Westminster. We are here again to offer prayers for an even greater number of people caught up in the terror attack on the Manchester Arena on Monday evening. The suffering was terrible and heartrending on both occasions, but the fact that this time so many young people were killed or injured makes it seem that much worse. The youngest victim was only eight years old.

What leads people to commit such acts of violence and cruelty is doubtless beyond our comprehension. We cannot see into their minds. Any claims they may make that they are acting in the name of religion or of God must be strongly challenged. For at the heart of all the major faiths lie peace, respect, concern for the well-being of others whoever they may be.

Yet there are positive things that so often come out of such dreadful tragedies. It was very moving seeing on television the vigil in front of the Town Hall in Manchester. There people of all faiths and none, of all political affiliations, of all backgrounds, came together in solidarity with the victims. If such terror attacks bring out the worst in the perpetrators, they do time and time again also bring out the best in others.

Many stories are told about how people rallied to provide help and comfort – not only members of the emergency and medical services but also very many ordinary people. Where is God in all this, we may ask. Well God is surely in those very people, in those acts of kindness, in those acts of love. For God is love, God is just, God is always there. God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is always present with us.

Our prayers are offered particularly for the victims: for those who were killed, their families, friends and colleagues who mourn their loss; for those who were injured; for the emergency, medical and security services; for those who witnessed those terrible events.

As we do so we pray too for those who in different parts of the world experience such acts of violence on a daily basis.

26th May 2017  
Kingsley Boulton