

Danger and Safety

We are fortunate here in York living in a relatively safe city. Though the events in Barcelona last week remind us that nowhere can ever be completely immune from the actions of terrorists and other violent people. And on the whole we have to say that we do enjoy a stable and peaceful quality of life in this country.

Not so for very many people elsewhere, though. In parts of the world law and order have broken down. Insurgents and others pose a daily threat to security. In a number of countries democracy has given way to dictatorship. The stability on the surface is maintained by the suppression of any opposition and of personal freedom. In such places danger comes as much from the state as from rebels.

It is easy for us to take for granted the freedom, peace and security that we enjoy. Of course not everything is perfect. There are still social and other problems which continue to pose challenges. We should not become complacent. But we should also not close our eyes and ears to the plight of those elsewhere in our world who face violence on a daily basis.

In many such situations peacekeeping forces do what they can to keep the violence in check. But without solutions to the underlying issues their role can only be superficial. There has to be a will on the part of those involved to work for the breaking down of barriers and to live together in peace and with mutual respect. In practice that is much easier said than done but the work of reconciliation must be attempted and must go on.

The Christian gospel is fundamentally one of hope, grounded in faith in God, the God of love, the God of justice. That gospel message, that good news, needs to be heard by our broken and divided world. It needs to be heard in those places where there is danger, insecurity, fear, despair. For we believe that ultimately good will triumph over evil. The peace of God will overcome the hostility of humanity.

That is why as Christians in the face of all the problems in our world we can still say confidently with St Paul in our reading just now (Philippians 4.4-7) "Rejoice in the Lord always". If we can do nothing else to make our world a better place we can at least pray – pray to the God of peace, the God of love.

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