

Remembering

This last Tuesday marked the first anniversary of the Manchester Arena bombing on 22nd May 2017. Various events were organized and I found the service in Manchester Cathedral which was broadcast in full particularly moving. It was good that representatives from different faiths took part. There was a true sense of continuing solidarity in the face of violence and tragedy.

There are some who say that we should put such terrible events behind us and simply move on. That is much easier said than done, though. It is clear that the effects of the Manchester Arena bombing continue to affect profoundly the lives of very many people, not least the young people who were caught up in it.

One of the aims of the Community of the Cross of Nails is to heal the wounds of history. Those wounds can be very deep and difficult to heal. Both patience and resolve are required as well as mutual help and encouragement.

Memory is an important part of human life. Memories can of course be good as well as bad. They can be life-enhancing as well as destructive. It is thus right and necessary that we should continue to remember tragic events. To remember and to move on are by no means mutually exclusive. Rather they belong together.

When such events occur it is right to look for words of comfort. And the Bible is a good source. We find that in Psalm 23 that we read earlier. We find it too in our reading just now from St John's Gospel (John 14.23-27), and particularly in the last verse: "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid".

Ultimately, though, remembering is not really helpful unless it leads not only to healing but also to change: to a resolve not to let such atrocities happen again. History is there for us to learn from, to avoid past mistakes and to create a better world.

That is of course the ideal. The reality is a lot different. Yet that should not stop us striving for those values that are not simply very human but also values of God's kingdom: peace, justice, respect, love. Remembering which fosters resentment, hatred, revenge is self-defeating. Instead remembering should lead to hope. And that must continue to be our prayer.

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