

Hope

I always like the expression that defines an optimist as one who sees a glass half full and a pessimist as one who sees a glass half empty. Objectively the quantity of the contents in the glass is the same but it is how we view it that is different.

Some people are naturally optimistic, whereas others tend to be more pessimistic in their outlook – and I am sure there are many who fluctuate between the two.

That will certainly affect how we look at the state of our world. We may think: things can only get better; everything will work out in the end. Or we may think: things are going to get worse; is there no end in sight?

We cannot deny that there are problems in our world, on all levels: international, national, local – not to mention problems with relationships on an individual level. So often the glass never seems to be full.

This last week has seen disagreement in our government about Brexit, and the greater uncertainty that will inevitably bring. And there were the raised and then dashed hopes about the England football team in the World Cup.

But on the plus side there was the joy at the rescue of the twelve boys and their coach from the cave in Thailand. We saw human skill and resolve at its best to save what could have been a terribly tragic situation.

Hope lies at the heart of the Christian Gospel, as St Paul makes so clear in our reading just now from his letter to the Romans (Romans 8.18-25). There is suffering in our world, in our lives, and to bear suffering with patience may be very difficult. And yet hope sustains us, encourages us, keeps us going.

Yesterday I attended a very moving funeral of a near neighbour in which that deep sense of celebration, love and hope was very much in evidence. The passing of a loved one is of course a very sad occasion, particularly of someone who gave so much to others and enriched their lives. Yet I am sure many left that church with a sense of gratitude and of hope.

The same applies to the whole task of peace and reconciliation, to the task of making ours a better world, a safer world, a world in which fear can give way to joy. And so our prayer is that people's glass will be full, that they may be filled with hope, that they will never give up – just as those rescuers in Thailand never gave up. For our hope comes from God.

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