

Creativity

One of my great-nieces is just finishing a degree course on graphic design and earlier this week she showed my sister and me round the final year exhibition of the different courses. What struck me was how talented and imaginative these young people are. We may have preferred the work of the graphic designers to some of the fine art on display, but then we were biased.

Art in all its various forms, architecture, music and literature are tangible expressions of human creativity, and have been an important part of human endeavour since earliest times. Artistic creativity and skill very much enrich our lives. As we heard in our Bible reading just now (2 Chronicles 2.1-9) artistic talents were used to the full by King Solomon for the building of the great Temple in Jerusalem. And ever since then these skills have been employed particularly for churches and other religious buildings. Human creativity has been used not only to enrich human lives both also to glorify God.

Yet as we know all too well the products of human creativity can be very fragile and at risk – as we saw with the fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in France and with the wartime destruction wrought both at Coventry Cathedral and here at our own church of St Martin.

The cause of the fire at Notre Dame has not yet been confirmed but there is no thought that it was anything but accidental. Deliberate damage and destruction is different, though. And that may be caused by war or conflict, by ideology or vested interests, or even simply changes in taste.

To create takes time, effort and above all skill. To destroy requires none of these. There may be attempts to recreate what has been destroyed but the results can never be quite the same as the original. Protection of heritage is important not just for its own sake but in order to safeguard the identity of nations, communities, cultures.

Creativity requires peace. It requires an environment in which people can flourish and express themselves freely. And yet creativity can also help to foster peace, to bring people together. Creativity can also challenge injustice and prejudice. In the face of oppressive and totalitarian regimes it is often artists, writers and composers who speak out and refuse to conform. Christians are called to do so too, and there are some who do just that, though we have to admit that many of us fail.

Our prayer is that creativity may triumph over destruction.

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