

# All Saints Alive

## VICAR'S VIEWPOINT

### Reflections on Words from the Cross.



Dear Friends,

I had to dash off to take part of the Lent course and left this letter half written. Doug passed by and thought of a few more ideas, so here it is - a joint composition from a Vicar and a Hospital Chaplain!

*"Father forgive them for they know not what they do"* Luke 23:34

The Roman soldiers certainly did not know what they were doing – but did anyone else really know or understand? How could they? Human folly and malice brought unjust suffering then as they so often do today. That Jesus was willing to forgive those who caused him pain is a sign that God's love remained active in his Son even in these terrible circumstances.

When Peter and the other disciples decided to follow Jesus they did not know that they would end up at the foot of the cross. We, too, don't know what will happen to us as we follow Christ. Hopefully we will find that it makes us more sensitive to the suffering around us and also more aware of our own journey in faith, becoming bearers of hope and love, even – and especially – in times of pain and sorrow.

Too often, of course, like the disciples and the others, we don't really know what we are doing. And there are other times when we do know what we are doing, but we refuse to recognise the likely consequences of our ungodly actions, even to ourselves. Sometimes what we are doing is hidden from us by our carelessness and insensitivity or just by the urgency of having to complete a task. That is when we need to stop, to look at our

actions and listen to our own words, and ask "Where is Christ in this?"

There were two criminals hanging with Christ: one derides him and the other acknowledges his guilt (Luke 23:39-43).

Can we be courageous enough to admit our faults and ask forgiveness? The penitent thief is assured *"Today thou shalt be with me in paradise"*. The promise of eternal life is there for us all, yet we need to take hold of this true life. The thief's relationship to God was changed instantly, and ours can also be transformed. While our ultimate destination may not be quite so immediate, we too can have that assurance. In our mortal journey, we can have the fulfilment of going with Christ wherever he may lead us.

From the cross Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved and said *"Mother, here is your son"* (John 19: 26).

Even in the place where there is anger, hatred, violence and death there is love and care. Even where loyalties have broken down and the disciples have run away, new relationships are made. In the place of rejection there is acceptance. At the foot of the cross, in the midst of alienation and despair, there is concern and love in Jesus' heart for those closest to him.

Jesus cried out *"My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Mark 15:34).

As the pain wore on, the question of God's loving presence became a question, even for Jesus, as it does for so many people enduring agony or injustice. Jesus understands how human beings can sometimes feel cut off

from God, how evil and pain can assail the soul. Jesus was troubled not only in body but in spirit, and we may wonder how it could be otherwise – for this man on the cross is not an invulnerable superman, but one whose life is truly one with ours.

Jesus later says "*I thirst*", again underlining the human side of the brutality to which people have subjected a fellow human being. Little can be done, apart from raising a little cheap wine on a sponge. Jesus is spiritually and physically drained by the experience of crucifixion – it was a deliberately cruel form of execution which the Romans had created. It reflects the outpouring of blood and water from his side, which Christians see as his life force poured out for us. He has given all anyone can give, and now he must surrender himself into the hands of God. "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit".

When Jesus had received the wine he said, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30).

There is a sense of accomplishment about these final words, spoken as they are from the depths of pain in a seemingly hopeless situation. There is a suggestion that God's will has been done, however difficult it may be to see this at the moment. The work is complete, the laying down of his life in sacrifice, and we are left to marvel that the Son of God would endure such suffering for us.

Jo and Doug.

## **Mothering Sunday**

This year we will have our main celebration of Mothering Sunday at the 11.30 am Family Service. Please join us and support us in renewed venture of reaching out to parents and children. Please take a few invitations from the back of the church or copy the one alongside and give them to families that you know. Research has shown that personal invitation and possibly the assurance of "we'll be there to sit with you/ greet you ....." works much better than just blanket publicity. There will be flowers at the Matins service as well for those who attend too, but we will be making our 11:30 our outreach service.

## **Family Service on Good Friday**

This service will start at 9.30 to allow us reasonable time before the Act of Witness at Bircherley Green. During our service we will create part of what will become our Easter Garden – and don't forget our Easter Egg competition – details on page six.

## **Confirmation**

There will be a confirmation service later this year in Bengoe Church. All Saints will be having a confirmation service in May 2009. If anyone is keen to be confirmed this year please let Jo know as soon as possible so that she can arrange classes.

At least two classes, for adults and young people, for the 2009 confirmation, will begin in Summer 2008 meeting, initially, once a month.



***Mothering Sunday***

*You are invited to come and join us at a Mothering Sunday service on*

***11.30 am March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2008 at***

***All Saints' Church, Hertford***

*A short service with story, hymns, prayers and flowers*

*Coffee/drinks and cakes  
Will be served afterwards*

*For more details please ring:  
Rev Jo Loveridge on 01992 584899*

*Look forward to seeing you there!*