

Vicar's Pastoral Letter

Date : November 2009

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Subject : Success, failure and looking to the future of our Churches

Dear Friends,

You may have read recently of how some of our wounded and disabled soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have been verbally abused as they attempt to regain a "normal" life in society. It's really beyond belief that some people can act in such a cowardly, callous and wicked way because no matter what your personal view on the armed conflict you surely have to acknowledge the courage and conviction of those young men and women who are out there. It's no wonder that we're earning a reputation of being "broken Britain."

There is no doubt that the war is being waged against an evil enemy with a medieval mentality, fired up by religious and political extremism, who would seek to subjugate and enslave not only their own people but the rest of the world given half a chance and all in the cause of doing "God's Will." I wonder if it's God's Will that hundreds of thousands in our Western societies are hooked on heroin that has its origin in the poppy fields of Afghanistan? It's a strange God that would seek to enslave and destroy the lives of people in this way! It's a strange God who would seek to blow to bits the lives of innocent people caught on the 100th floor of a skyscraper or the upper deck of a London bus! And our young men and women fighting in Afghanistan are making a valiant stand against the spread, indeed the existence, of such evil and they should be honoured not condemned or insulted. It is such as these that we shall be remembering and paying tribute to during our Remembrance Day services.

In all probability the conflict in Afghanistan is a lost cause for there is little likelihood of any civilised nation being able to effectively control that part of the world. Its rugged and desolate terrain has successfully defied many armies and in its remote mountain caves and valleys there is always space for evil to breed. And even if we successfully administered the country how on earth is anyone ever going to introduce western style democracy to a people for whom it is not only incomprehensible but also alien? Indeed, is it morally right to try and do so because nations should have the right to forge their own futures in their own way as long as they then don't seek to inflict it on others. The days of Imperialism, whether western or eastern, should well and truly be confined to history.

So, does this make the conflict invalid? Certainly not! **You don't make a stand against evil or wage war against wickedness because you're assured of success but because it's the right thing to do.** Jesus died on a Cross because He stood up for what was right and not because He was promised success in rising again after three days. It's my personal view that Jesus didn't know that He would rise again for otherwise His suffering and sacrifice would have been a sham and a pretence. He did it because it was the right thing to do even though it broke the hearts of those who loved Him on earth. Failure in the eyes of the world is seen as success in the eyes of God.

I believe in worldly failure even though I seek strenuously to avoid it and hate it when it happens. It's happened recently at St. Mary's because when ten of our friends recently left the church we lost an opportunity to become a modern evangelical church that would hopefully in the course of time have attracted more young families. I personally had staked a lot on such a development and so it is a blow for me and could be seen as a failure. But earthly failure often provides the key to spiritual success and there is so much happening at St. Mary's that is positive and good and that we can build on for the future. God's perspective is not ours and certainly not often mine on a personal basis. So, let's thank God for all the good things in the past but let's put it behind us and seek the new thing that He wants to do. Do not be frightened of your failures because the only true failure is to have done nothing at all: embrace failure and use it as the gateway to success.

We may ultimately fail in Afghanistan but the conflict is still worth fighting because we're standing up for truth and freedom. We may experience failures and lack of visible success in our Churches but at least we tried and there is always tomorrow and God's new day with all the opportunities it provides.

May God bless you in your quest as long as it is a quest and not a standing still.

Peter

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The Parish Gift Day

SATURDAY 21st NOVEMBER: PARISH GIFT DAY

9.30am to 6.0pm at ST MARY'S CHURCH

As detailed in last month's Magazine, St. Mary's Church will be open for anyone to bring their contribution to the funding appeal for the much needed restoration work at St. Mary's. The current project to restore and repair the North Side of the Church requires us raising £110,000 before work can commence. This work is necessary for the ultimate preservation of the Church and any and every financial contribution is most gratefully received. I am hoping that this Appeal and our Gift Day will be highlighted in the Worcester News so that more people will be aware of it but please let your own friends and neighbours know about it.

I know that many of you value St. Mary's Church and the pastoral work and witness that it seeks to provide within our community and I thank you for your love, support and encouragement in the past. I would ask you, please, to support St. Mary's at this time for your contribution, however large or small, is highly valued and will help ensure the life of our village Church of St. Mary's into the future.

Many Thanks

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