

January 2016, thoughts from Father Charles:

World Meteorological Organization (WMO) predicts 2015 to be hottest year on record

These few weeks around Christmas have rather focused our attention on the weather. It feels as though we have had constant storms rolling in from the Atlantic, one after another. Each carrying huge amounts of water to be precipitated on already water logged ground. The result has been unprecedented floods in the North, causing untold misery for those who suffer in so many ways.

It's not as though we are alone in this. The forest fires in Australia, flooding in South America, heat waves in India and Pakistan, severe droughts in sub-Saharan Africa and Central America.

The combination of these extreme weather conditions is likely to have an impact on food prices in 2016 and will push large numbers of the world's population into food insecurity. In Africa alone the estimated increase in numbers facing food insecurity, between January 2015 and January 2016 is 70%. This gives a total of 39 million people in need in Africa during 2016.

'Charity begins at home'

In Britain, our focus has been on flood water. It has been brought to our screens and newspapers, and seeing the plight of the people is truly heart-rending. Especially when we see areas we know so well flooded, and the victims repeating the drying-out processes of the last few weeks.

As I write this, I gather that a solution has emerged from some groupings within UK society. This solution would be to divert Britain's foreign aid budget from alleviating poverty and helping crisis-hit areas of the world and spend a proportion of it on more effective UK flood defences.

To support this position, we hear the proverb that 'charity begins at home' rolled out in headlines and text. Now, of course this isn't a biblical quote (though it sometimes gathers the significance of one), and I appreciate we know that it isn't talking about charity (the giving of alms, funds and resources) as we now think when we talk about 'charitable giving'.

But it is perhaps worthwhile reminding ourselves that the concept of charity here, whether it's from the pen of Paul ('Now abideth faith, hope and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity') or John Wycliffe ('Charity should begin at himself' 1383), is focused on 'love'. The person whose actions and words are shaped by love, in his or her home and local context, is likely to be the very person who will reflect the same values and actions in the wider context of our world.

In this context we often see reference made to Sir Thomas Browne (an English physician and theologian), who in 1642 wrote:

"How shall we expect charity towards others, when we are uncharitable to ourselves? 'Charity begins at home' is the voice of the world; yet is every man his greatest enemy, and as it were, his own executioner. Non occides [You shall not kill], is the

commandment of God, yet scarce observed by any man.” (Sir Thomas Browne, Religion Medici, 1642)

Perhaps it is Browne’s positioning of the commandment, ‘*non occides*’, alongside this popular quote that gives us pause for thought.

The question that might be at the heart of Sir Thomas’ thinking is that a distant consequence of our inability to translate that aspect of God’s nature, which we describe as the virtue of charity (love), may be the suffering and death of others, not directly, but at a distance. And in doing so, we become our own, spiritual, executioners.

From Pause, to Thought

Flooding in the UK is very clearly a serious event and it is vital to provide help for those who are affected in the most appropriate, effective and speedy of ways. But the proposal that UK aid be diverted from the poorest and most needy people on earth so that we may avoid paying for the cost of flooding from our own resources is morally questionable.

In our use of this supposed proverb ‘charity begins at home’, we need to be careful. If we are suggesting that a better use of aid, and a clearer demonstration of ‘love’, is through improving flood defences in the UK rather than enabling millions of lives that can be saved through charitable aid programmes throughout the world, we are taking a position that may be in conflict with one of the theological values that allow us to share in God’s nature, and is a characteristic of the Children of God.

With Every Blessing and Good Wish for 2016



Advent 2015

Julian Trust

On behalf of the Trust and our guests, many many thank yous for your generous donations.

Should anyone wish to see the Night Shelter at work I would be very happy to take them one evening to observe. Please feel free to contact on 01275 814002

Many thanks,

Vera Sanders

IN THIS MONTH.....JANUARY 1897

A FAREWELL TO MR FORSTER ALLEYNE

Firstly, excerpts from the Vicar's address on the retirement of Mr Alleyne, who had served as Churchwarden for 10 years, given on December 3rd 1896.

“Dear Mr Alleyne, with singular devotion and self-denial you have made our interests your own, and in every department of our church organisation you have worked with an enthusiasm which is beyond all praise. You have proved yourself to be an able financier, coming to our rescue at more than one crisis in our parochial history and the maintenance by purely voluntary offerings has been largely due to your wise counsels and energetic action. As originator and joint editor of our *Parish Magazine* you have been able to place it in the very front rank of such publications; they form a lasting memorial of your single-hearted devotion, literary ability and cultivated taste. Your history of our church and Parish, published at the close of the last vicariate, holds a unique place in the far too scanty number of parochial histories. We venture to predict that a portion of its usefulness lies in the far future. To such a record the historian of a later generation must turn, if he would understand the methods by which the principles of the Catholic revival came to commend themselves to the English people.”

In Mr Alleyne's response, he said he had seldom spoken in that room [the Parish Hall] except under an assumed character, [*he was a redoubtable amateur actor and producer of parish dramatic events*]. He found the part now assigned to him a very difficult one to fill. He had intended to be remembered as the Silent Churchwarden, because he considered a churchwarden should work, not talk. He congratulated the congregation on the present satisfactory state of the church's finances, and said that after all it was to the congregation that the credit must be given. He urged everyone to their utmost to keep the Church funds in their present happy position. He then referred to the *All Saints' Parish Magazine*, which he said was a particular pet of his. With reference to his book, *The History of All Saints' Church*, he said there were a few errors in it, which would be amended in the second edition. He thanked the congregation on behalf of his wife and children, saying that the training and traditions they took with them would cause the light of All Saints to shine in the far distant island where they were going.

Auld Lange Syne was heartily sung at the close of the meeting.

An autotype portrait of Mr Alleyne was presented to Mrs Alleyne, and a copy to the All Saints' Hall. Both pictures are faithful likenesses, capitally executed on opal and handsomely framed. They were the work of Messrs. Villiers & Quick, of Park Street.

The Address is beautifully engrossed on leaves of choice vellum, with richly illuminated borders and initial letters, the handiwork of Mr James Hudd, fine art dealer, 7 Unity Street, College Green. The album - itself a work of art - is of rich ruby morocco, partly crushed and panelled in chaste designs, the inside covers being lined with silk, inlaid and tooled and lettered in gold. It was bound in the workshop of Messrs. Baker & Sons, The Mall, Clifton. A lovely watercolour drawing of the Church, by Mr A. Wilde Parsons, made a charming feature in the address.

The Sneeze: students aren't stupid

They walked in tandem, each of the ninety-two students filing into the already-crowded auditorium. With their rich maroon gowns flowing and the traditional caps, they looked almost as grown up as they felt. Dads swallowed hard behind broad smiles, and Mums freely brushed away tears.

This class would NOT pray during the commencements, not by choice, but because of a recent court ruling prohibiting it "for fear of offending non-Christians". The Principal and several students were careful to stay within the guidelines allowed by the ruling. They gave inspirational and challenging speeches, but no one mentioned divine guidance and no one asked for blessings on the graduates or their families. The speeches were nice, but they were routine until the final speech received standing ovation. A solitary student walked proudly to the microphone. He stood still and silent for just a moment, and then it happened. All 92 students, every single one of them, suddenly SNEEZED in unison!! The student on stage simply looked at the audience and said, "GOD BLESS YOU", and then walked off the stage. The audience exploded into applause.

This graduating class had found a unique way to invoke God's blessing on their future, with or without the court's approval. This claims to be a true story; it happened at Eastern Shore District High School in Musquodoboit Harbour, Nova Scotia.

Sent in by Fr Ian Tucker