



PASTORAL LETTER 24/3/2021



By the time that you read this Jon and I will have both had our first vaccination, and will no doubt, feel safer. But what does safe feel like? Did Jesus feel safe when he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey/colt (depending on which version you are reading?) Did Jesus feel safe when he was having a last meal with his disciples in the upper room? Did Jesus feel safe when he was brought before Pilate? Did Jesus feel safe on the cross?

Jesus knew he was safe from mortal harm, he was held in the love of his father, but he knew that physical harm was something that he would have to endure. How much physical harm are people suffering in our world today? At this time of Lent it is important to reflect on keeping all people from harm. John Polhill has written a modern parable:

The parable of the churchgoer and the asylum seeker

Jesus told this parable to people who were sure of their own lifestyle and despised everyone else:

'Once there were two men who went to the corner shop to buy a newspaper – one was a churchgoer, the other an asylum-seeker. The churchgoer stood apart by himself and thought: I thank you, God, that I am not idle, sponging off the benefits system and the health service. I thank you that I am not like that asylum-seeker over there. I have provided for myself financially, I buy organic vegetables, I live in an energy-efficient house, and I tithe my income.

The asylum-seeker stood at a distance with his head down and thought: *God, have mercy on me.*

'I tell you,' said Jesus, 'the asylum-seeker, and not the churchgoer, was in the right with God when he went home.'

Taken from Eggs & Ashes, Wild Goose Publications

Did the asylum-seeker feel safe? Did the asylum-seeker feel loved in this encounter, or even did the asylum-seeker feel wanted? No, the asylum-seeker knew that the perceptions of society were that s/he was a burden, and a waste of resources, as many other groups in society feel. During this week I have recalled the powerful work going on with the vaccination programme in Blackburn in Lancashire where homeless people have been prioritised to receive the vaccine. By protecting the weakest, we in turn, protect the strongest. Safe feels different depending on the situation you are in, and there are many ways to be Christ-like and make people feel valued and loved. Sometimes Lent is not about what we give up, it is about what we give.

I end today with a prayer from St. Patrick:

I bind unto myself today,
the Power of God to guide me,
the Might of God to uphold me,
the Wisdom of God to teach me,
the Eye of God to watch over me,
the Ear of God to hear me,
the Word of God to give me speech,
the Hand of God to protect me,
the Way of God to prevent me,
the Shield of God to shelter me,
and the Host of God to defend me...Amen.



Stay safe, every blessing,

Jacquie