

## Friends

The news over the last couple of weeks has been pretty ghastly with shot-bow murders and bodies in suitcases making the BBC news pages look more like an episode of a favourite American detective show than the daily life of the country. Even writing this opening sentence, I worry that it looks too flippant as a reflection on something so awful. Our prayers are with the families of those who have died, but we may also wonder, what is going on? Are things getting worse, or are we just exposed to more because of the twenty-four hour news cycle?

The answer is probably a bit of both. However, there is a third element to it which is to do with our fascination with bad news. I looked in one of my very old (1950's) books of reflection today to see if there was inspiration there, and it asked the reader to look at the newspaper and refuse to put it down until they had found one item of good news, one item that left them with faith in humanity and hope for the future. I wondered if it would be possible nowadays, over seventy years since it was first written, although typing this on Saturday the 13<sup>th</sup>, there is still hope for the football results!

I'm not sure where that interest in the bad things comes from. It's not that we never experience bad things ourselves, for all of us at different times and to differing degrees experience grief and sorrow and fear. I hope its not schadenfreude, the German word that expresses the emotional experience of pleasure in response to another's misfortune – surely we are better than that! Whatever it is though, these stories grip us.

I wonder if our Biblical stories grip us as much, or if familiarity with the outcome means that we are not as fascinated by what happened to David, Elijah, Joel or even Jesus. The Bible has stories that are just as shocking, blood-thirsty and worrying as those we read in our contemporary newspapers. But they are stories that end with redemption, with light surviving in the darkness and life overcoming

death. If we read our Bibles as avidly as we scour the news, we may indeed find that things are not worse, nor are we to live in fear, but that we await the return of the King, the calling of the Good Shepherd, the enlivening presence of the Holy Spirit. As we move towards the end of the academic year and the holiday season, may we continue to trust in God, whatever the news may bring.

God bless, Vicci