

## 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity

A dear friend of mine sent me the headline from 'The Times' which you may have seen: "Skip worship and pray for the Lionesses, says church." Perhaps then, if that's true, I should **thank you** for joining me today!

I promise to be brief, and you can all run home after our Parish Eucharist; I won't be offended. With a wedding at 1pm, I just hope the match doesn't go to penalties! I remember a previous World Cup Final when I was just 10 years old – and captain, Bobby Moore lived in Chigwell, Essex, where I went to school. Just think, if I had kept his autograph safe, I could be retired by now!! Ah well...

I spoke last week about joining me for evening prayer in our Epiphany chapel here; on Monday I was joined by a resident of Norwich who knew Fr Aidan (Precentor at the Cathedral) well; she is soon to become an Ordinand and train to become a priest based at Ridley Hall, in Cambridge. I mention this because I forgot to tell you that you can download an excellent C of E 'app' called '**Daily Prayer**' which has all the 'offices' there in front of you for each day (wherever you are in the world) and the beauty of it is: that you do not need books and markers and extra fingers and thumbs to find the psalms and readings! So there I was with a stranger and we each shared our prayers together using our phones but, silently, with no bleeps or interruptions. It was lovely.

On Friday, I was joined by a couple, one from Colombia and one from Australia (I didn't mention football) – who began by apologising - that they were Roman Catholics! 'No need to apologize', I whispered, 'all of our serious prayers and opportunities to pray are surely ecumenical'. They are also international.

Thinking very briefly about today's Gospel encounter between Jesus and an unnamed Canaanite woman – again a stranger – he is initially disturbed by her pleading and shouting. He remarks 'I was sent only

to the lost sheep of Israel' as if to challenge us all that we are not called to be a 'private club' but a people called out to serve and minister to those of all faiths or no faith at all. Our prayers genuinely help us to be more outgoing and mission-minded, especially when we come to the altar with hearts of mercy. The cry and echo of those words, "Have mercy on me, Lord" literally stop Jesus in his tracks and from walking by on the other side. He not only affirms the woman's great faith but he also heals her daughter from her demons.

His generous response and attention is really the springboard for all our praying and today's collect is an inspiring example to use, **every** day, in this coming week. To "give all that we have to gain the pearl beyond all price" is a common Christian calling whatever our doctrinal or ecclesial differences, so much so that the call to greater unity must never be overlooked or, undermined.

In a very interesting article (and different context) about the Book of Common Prayer in 'The Oldie' by Michael Coren, a priest in the Anglican Church of Canada, he ended by saying:

"Last month, I was at the bedside of a woman in her final moments. She asked me to read from the BCP: 'Hear what comfortable words our Saviour Christ saith unto all that truly turn to him.'

'Oh, the comfy words,' she said. 'I so love the comfy words.' And she died.

The comfort of Christ, the comfort of great liturgy, and the comfort of comfy words."

Prayer can't always be like that of course any more than it can be about willing your own football side to victory. But I do believe the practice and rhythm of daily prayer can only bring joy to our world and purpose for one another.

AMEN.

