

'THE GLORY OF GOD IS A HUMAN BEING FULLY ALIVE' ST IRENAEUS

S3-W1

FULLY ALIVE (SEASON THREE)

MISSION: MAKING THE LOVE OF JESUS KNOWN IN WORD AND DEED.



WEEK ONE: SALT AND LIGHT – THE LOCAL CHURCH AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE.

Sharing News - 10 minutes

Prayer and Quietness

Setting the Scene - 15 minutes

Spend a short time talking about these passages, and reflect together on what they are saying about our society and God's call.



'We're Officially Fairtrade!' – News Item from The Sarum Link (June 2010)

Members of the Diocesan Fairtrade Steering Group were delighted with the news last month that, after several years of working towards it, the Diocese had been awarded Fairtrade status, writes Colin Brady. Many people might have assumed that Salisbury was already a Fairtrade Diocese; Diocesan Synod approved a resolution to become a Fairtrade Diocese in 2003, and Fairtrade tea and coffee are used in Church House as well as in many parishes around the Diocese. But actually achieving that Fairtrade status required evidence that over half of the parishes in the Diocese are committed to using Fairtrade goods whenever possible. Thanks to telephone surveys, emails, and information from members of the Mothers' Union, that evidence was finally completed and submitted to the Fairtrade Foundation. Colin Brady, Social Responsibility Adviser for the Churches, said, "Being recognised as a Fairtrade Diocese is a great achievement but it also commits us to promoting wider use of Fairtrade products in our churches and homes. "Our plans include encouraging many more churches in the Diocese to apply for recognition as Fairtrade churches in their own right. It's really important that we don't forget that the diocesan policy on Fairtrade includes support for local farmers in Dorset and Wiltshire who also deserve a fair price for their produce."

The Bishop of Salisbury's wife Sarah Stancliffe, who has been particularly committed to the promotion of Fairtrade and to obtaining Fairtrade status for the Diocese said, "It's just the beginning. There's so much more that we could be doing so that every parish is involved and supporting Fairtrade." The Diocesan Fairtrade Steering Group is recruiting new members to continue the work. Enthusiasm for the cause and a good spread of representation across the Diocese is needed for this next stage which will include highlighting Fairtrade Fortnight and encouraging many more churches to become fair-trade churches. ¹

'A choice in the wilderness' – The Guardian.



Without fanfare or triumphalism, evangelical Christians have opted to live and work in blighted areas of Manchester to tackle inner-city social problems. David Ward reports

Eden Project volunteer Liz Askew in Openshaw, Manchester:

"As a Christian, I have really tried not to be all religious." Photo: Don McPhee

If you ask Gary Bishop what biblical text he would hang over the door of his Salvation Army hall in east Manchester, he replies, without hesitation: "Isaiah 62..." "No longer will they call you deserted or name your land desolate . . ." This is Openshaw...built more than a century ago to house the workers in Manchester's emerging heavy industry...

¹ Text and picture courtesy of The Sarum Link.

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Now the factories have gone and problems of modern urban life have come...

Bishop runs the Eden project, one of nine established in rundown areas in and around Manchester. They were the idea of Andy Hawthorn, evangelical activist and director of the Message Trust, who in 1996 led 30 Christian youth workers to work and, crucially, live in Wythenshawe, the massive Manchester overspill estate.

"The gospel changes people's hearts and makes them better citizens," Hawthorn says. "But we have been hiding the light of the gospel message under bushels in church buildings. Our work is incarnational..."

The project team launched a youth club and an after-school club in the Salvation Army hall, and began working with young people at risk of getting into trouble. They were often the children of parents facing problems with drink, drugs, debt and domestic violence, so Bishop and his team offered family support. "Often children are innocent victims," he says. "But they are not seen as that because often they are in trouble in school or get an Asbo...When you look at the situation at home, you can see why."

...Karen Abbad, who has lived in Openshaw all her life and is a member of the steering group for the housing renewal project, [says:] "The council has taken everything out of the area, so what do the kids do? Cause trouble on the streets. The Eden people have done something for them...It's a real community place."

John Longsdon, a Manchester city councillor, is also impressed with their work. He says: "I was at their fifth anniversary celebrations recently. I think they do a fantastic job and it has to be good for the whole area. There is a strong feeling here that their work is valuable. They are working mainly with young people, and if those youngsters are gainfully employed in enjoying themselves at the project's youth club, then they are not causing trouble on the streets."²

Listening to the Word - 45 minutes

Both passages are read aloud and this is followed by a short time of reflection.

- a) Amos 5: 21-24
- b) Matthew 5: 13-16

Questions

1. What are the qualities of salt and light that Jesus is telling his disciples that they should have?
2. The prophet Amos speaks out against the religious rituals, feasts and festivals that were taking place in his day. What has this to say to the church today?
3. How can we be salt and light in our daily lives?
4. Can you think of examples of the church or Christians being agents of transformation in their community?
5. In what ways does your church hide its "light under a bushel"?
6. What changes do you think your church should be advocating locally and nationally?

What shall we do? - 10 minutes

Spend a short time together thinking about what these reflections mean for us and what we should do about them.

Closing Prayers

² Ward, D, (2005), A Choice In the Wilderness, Available:
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2005/nov/02/socialexclusion.guardiansocietysupplement>
[Accessed 26th July 2010]

'THE GLORY OF GOD IS A HUMAN BEING FULLY ALIVE' ST IRENAEUS

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FULLY ALIVE (SEASON THREE)

MISSION: MAKING THE LOVE OF JESUS KNOWN IN WORD AND DEED.



WEEK TWO: CROSSING THE BOUNDARIES – WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

Sharing News - 10 minutes

Prayer and Quietness

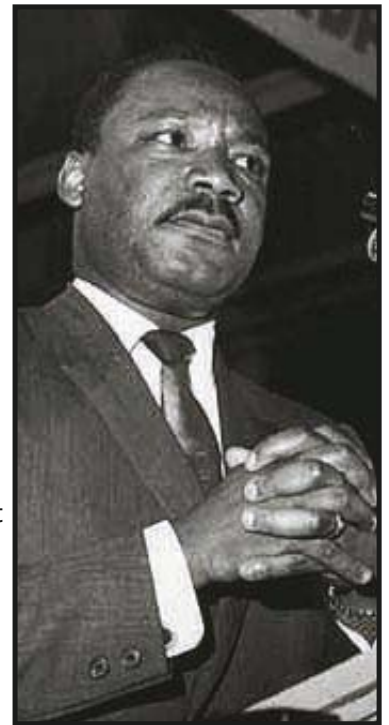
Setting the Scene - 15 minutes

Spend a short time talking about these passages, and reflect together on what they are saying about our society and God's call.

Extract from a speech by Martin Luther King delivered on 3rd April 1968. This was his last public appearance before his assassination the next day.

Let us develop a kind of dangerous unselfishness...Jesus...talked about a certain man, who fell among thieves. You remember that a Levite and a priest passed by on the other side. They didn't stop to help him. And finally a man of another race came by. He got down from his beast, decided not to be compassionate by proxy. But with him, administered first aid, and helped the man in need. Jesus ended up saying, this was the good man, because he had the capacity to project the "I" into the "thou," and to be concerned about his brother. Now you know, we use our imagination a great deal to try to determine why the priest and the Levite didn't stop...

But I'm going to tell you what my imagination tells me. It's possible that these men were afraid. You see, the Jericho road is a dangerous road. It's a winding, meandering road. It's really conducive for ambushing....In the day of Jesus it came to be known as the "Bloody Pass." And you know, it's possible that the priest and the Levite looked over that man on the ground and wondered if the robbers were still around. Or it's possible that they felt that the man on the ground was merely faking...And so the first question that the Levite asked was, "If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?" But then the Good Samaritan came by. And he reversed the question: "If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?"³



Defining moments: Desmond Tutu

The biggest defining moment in my life was when I saw Trevor Huddleston [see picture] and I was maybe nine or so. I didn't know it was Trevor Huddleston, but I saw this tall, white priest in a black cassock doff his hat to my mother who was a domestic worker. I didn't know then that it would have affected me so much, but it was something that was really - it blew your mind that a white man would doff his hat. And subsequently I discovered, of course, that this was quite consistent with his theology that every person is of significance, of infinite value, because they are created in the image of God. And the passion with which he opposed apartheid and any other injustice is something that I sought then to emulate.⁴

³ Luther King, M, (1968), Available: <http://www.mlkonline.net/promised.html>. [Accessed 25th July 2010] Image available at: <http://www.drmartinlutherkingjr.com/ivebeentothemountaintop.htm>. [Accessed 25th July 2010]

⁴ BBC News, (2003), Defining Moments: Desmond Tutu, Available: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/afri-ca/3052274.stm>. [Accessed 15th July 2010] Image available at: <http://www.photographersgalleryza.co.za/jur-gen-schadeberg/selected-works/father-trevor-huddleston.jpg/>. [Accessed 1st August 2010]

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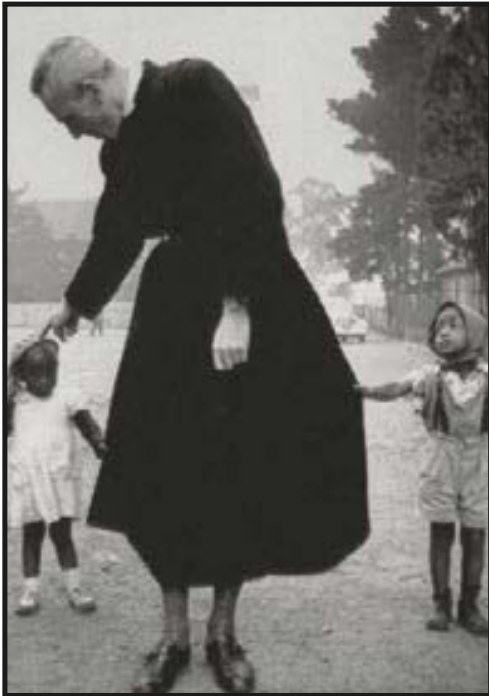
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Extract from *Open to God*, by Brother Bernard.



I heard the story of St Francis and the leper for the first time in 1950 in a sermon on the love of God in Christ. One lovely sunny day, the young Francis, full of the joys of spring, rode out of Assisi into the glorious Umbrian countryside. His heart was full of the praise of God, a troubadour song on his lips. His future direction in the will of God was far from clear to him but at that moment it was the sheer delight in all God's world which filled his heart and mind. Ahead of him, from a ditch at the side of the road, he heard a cry for help. Francis was irritated at being interrupted; he prepared to ride by. But as he got nearer he saw that the man in the ditch was a beggar, filthy, and in rags; and nearer still, that he was a leper, his face partly eaten away. What a travesty of a man "made in God's image"! Lepers were "unclean", highly infectious, so Francis pushed his heels into his horse's side to ride quickly by. But as he passed, he caught the words, "For the love of God, help me." The words struck home. Francis turned his horse's head, felt on his belt for coins to throw to the man...But then he paused...God's love did more for me, for us, than to throw a coin, Francis thought. He came to us in Jesus. Forgetting his fear, Francis went down into the ditch, gently lifting the beggar to his feet, and kissed his hand. "Brother Leper," he said, and went to serve lepers. ⁵

Listening to the Word - 45 minutes

The passage is read aloud and this is followed by a short time of reflection.

a) Luke 10: 25-37

Questions

1. Can you think of an incident that might happen today which may be similar to the events that Jesus described.
2. What did the three people who encountered the wounded man represent in their society?
3. Who is the neighbour in my own community?
4. Why is it so difficult to cross the boundaries in our own culture and society?
5. Who would be the equivalent of the Samaritan in today's society?
6. What boundaries would you not be prepared to cross to help someone in need?

What shall we do? - 10 minutes

Spend a short time together thinking about what these reflections mean for us and what we should do about them.

Closing Prayers

⁵ Brother Bernard of the Society of St Francis, *Open to God: The Franciscan Life* (Fount Paperbacks: 1986), p.1