

Weekend reflections

in partnership with WMFF and BCF

2 August

Showing Appreciation



My mother died last year. She was 93 and had been suffering from dementia for several years. At the end she didn't even recognise me or my two brothers. We had lost her a long time before she died. So I felt that I would not be overcome with emotion if I talked about her at the funeral service.

I reflected that our parents were married in 1937, long before husbands were expected to contribute much to the domestic scene. Father was very preoccupied with running the family wholesale toy business, and as secretary of the local Christadelphian Church.

I spoke of how mother washed and ironed mountains of shirts, organised outings during school holidays, and alone attended parents' evenings at our schools.

Father's church responsibilities included pastoral care. He and mother would look out for the lonely and the sick, so that there were frequently guests at our dining table, and the spare bedroom would often house a church member needing convalescent care after an operation. All of this mother carried out with love and good humour.

After the service I mulled over what I had said and realised that the complimentary things I had said about her should have been said to her when she could have understood what was being said.

We human beings thrive on appreciation and encouragement. We could add to the quality of life of those around us if we didn't save compliments for funerals!

Geoff Purkis lives in Edgbaston and is a self-employed business consultant. He is a Christadelphian and a trustee of Christadelphian Care Homes, a charity with sheltered, residential and specialist care homes located in England, Scotland and Wales.

9 August

Indulgence Creates Misery



UR society has pleasure at its finger tips. We have become indulgent. But indulgence brings misery in its wake. To gratify a desire is to become attached to it, at worst addicted. While we indulge we're in heaven. But we feel frustrated when we can't get it, grieve at its loss, or are forever anxious that we may lose it and afraid when we know ourselves to be enslaved. To acknowledge the sufferings of indulgence makes us want to escape.

The escape is to 'fast' - a word that's gone out of fashion. It means to sit with the desire and suffer the pangs of renunciation. Not feed it. This heals, for the energy of craving is being exhausted, though it's not easy. Try sitting down for your favourite programme on TV - with tea and biscuit, of course. Then don't turn it on! When we realise that indulgence sits on a furnace, we'll seek a wiser way of enjoying the pleasures and joys of life.

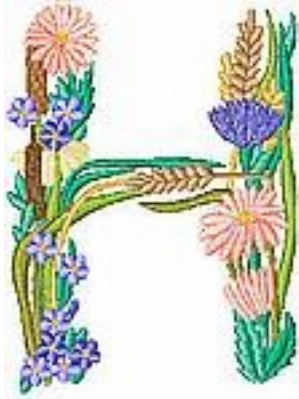
That is achieved by making wholesome and virtuous intentions. For instance, many people suffer from some eating disorder or another. Making a strong resolution to eat only to nourish the body undermines unskilful intentions to seek comfort there. We can be sensitive to the body when it says, 'Enough!' Then, if we sit patiently with the gnawing desire for that extra portion, the craving will diminish and in time not dominate us. This practice works for all kinds of craving.

Venerable Boddhidhamma is director of the Satipanya Buddhist Retreat on the Shropshire border. At one time an English lecturer at East Birmingham College, he ordained as a monk in Birmingham in 1986, then trained in various monasteries in Thailand, Burma and Sri Lanka.



16 August

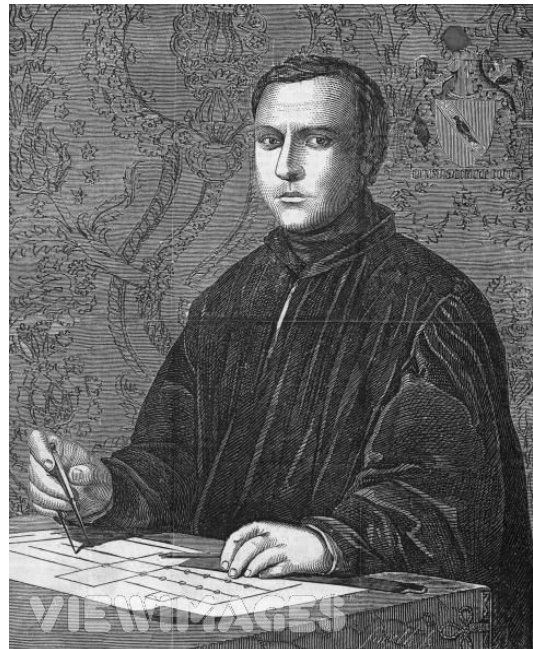
A Typical Teenager



He was your typical teenager, scruffily dressed and extreme in language. Having got hold of a boat, he wrecked it in Scotland and had to beg his fare home. He had been trained by his dad to follow him in his trade but for this young man it wasn't good enough. He had to go his own way. Of course the business he set up failed and he was imprisoned for non-payment of rent. At nineteen he married and, when his wife died in childbirth, was married again before he was twenty-one.

The following year he got religion and converted to what many perceived as the most dangerous faith in the land. So when the old Houses of Parliament burned down, you'd have thought any responsible police officer would have brought the young man in for questioning as a natural suspect. Instead the event made him and he was taken on to design its interior and exterior decorations by the architect commissioned to rebuild them.

That architect was Charles Barry, and the rash youngster he employed was Augustus Pugin. If he had not been prepared to take a chance on such unpromising material, Birmingham might not have had such strikingly designed buildings as St Chad's Cathedral, Oscott College and Erdington Abbey. Nowadays we seem set on denying our young people the opportunity to learn from their mistakes. All you'll get from such nannying is conformist fogies. I'll side with the rebels any time!



Jinba Tharchin was born in Birmingham and brought up in Kenilworth. He identifies strongly with Pugin (illustrated) and, like him, still hasn't left his troublesome adolescence behind

23 August

Accentuating the positive



HILST watching the Olympics, the gold medals won by Christine Ohuruogu and Rebecca Adlington caught my eye. They did not give up halfway when it seemed like they would lose. They saw it through to the bitter - or should I say, sweet – end.

This could be applied to other problems – such as dealing with gun and knife crime, for instance. Recently I was at a meeting in Handsworth also attended by the Home Secretary and Deputy Chief Superintendent. The event was convened by a high

profile national newspaper which gave me cause for concern as to the motives of those present on the panel.

In discussion came a disturbing question from a young man who asked “what was the alternative to the security of a gang and a lucrative career in crime?” I answered this from my faith perspective: “Life - the alternative is life”. Many people know only too well the short lived nature of the pursuit of wealth through dealing in drugs. The rivalry this brings about almost inevitably leads to death. I pointed out that there are literally millions of law abiding people who live their lives crime free. This being the case, it’s time we stopped being fearful and accentuated the positive: that avoiding a life of crime usually means you live a lot longer. You can’t enjoy the money you make from crime if you are dead.

Life like the Olympics has its own reward; my faith confirms it – does yours?

Gerald Nembhard is a member of Birmingham Council of Faiths & Chair of Perry Barr Multi Faith Network. The photo is of Christine Ohuruogu who maintains that it is her Christian faith which has sustained her through her life. It was taken in February this year.



30 August

Vocation in Retirement



OR over 19 years I have been the vicar of Ladywood. At 66 I have felt it time to retire – next week, in fact. That means my wife and I will move from the vicarage that has been our home because the house goes with the job. I shall leave Ladywood community, a great mutual support, and our beautifully redeveloped church building with its artistic and interfaith educational activities. I shall leave the church congregation with whom I have lived, worked, laughed and cried for so long. It has been a marvelous vocation.

It is sad too, yet I choose to retire four years before I have to! It feels the right time to move on because I doubt I could keep up the vicar's pace and variety of work. It is surely best to go when young -ish, still fit, healthy and happy at work. Fortunately we have a house in Birmingham to go to and a pension. The congregation I am sure will manage very well without me, for a while, till a new vicar comes. That is reassuring.

Chiefly, I want to use my experience and refocus my life afresh. Opportunities in society for retired people nowadays are countless, especially for retired clergy. My calling to be ordained is unchanged: I shall remain a clergyman. I look forward, thanks be to God, to my new phase of life with so many areas of interest like interfaith and race relations, environmental and family care, hill-walking, singing and table tennis.

The Revd Richard Tetlow, vicar of St. John and St. Peter's Church, Ladywood, May 25, 1989 - September 7, 2008. Executive member of Birmingham Council of Faiths. The photo is of Richard (at far right) in the choir at his church's 150th anniversary service in 2004.

