



Image of the day

**Looking across to Rathlin
at night from Port Ellen on Islay**



Former Archbishop recalls 'very terrifying' experience of preaching to Prince Philip

The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Baron Williams of Oystermouth, has recalled with humour his experience of delivering sermons to the Duke of Edinburgh, who died last Friday at the age of 99.

Baron Williams said it was a "very terrifying experience" to preach in front of Prince Philip because of his strong feelings on the length of the sermon.

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"He made it very clear what he thought a good sermon required and what it didn't require, and it certainly didn't require more than eight minutes in delivery," he said.

"I was told very, very firmly that going over eight minutes would probably land me in the Tower of London!"

Baron Williams, who was the guest speaker at the Religion and Media Centre's 'Exploring Belief' festival on Monday, said the duke "would listen very, very carefully" and "argue very closely" over the points in the sermon.

He also recalled being "really struck" by the duke's familiarity with the Greek New Testament - Prince Philip was the son of Prince Andrew of Greece and Denmark.



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Asked whether he agreed that there was "no parole" from life as a royal - a reference to recent comments by his successor Justin Welby - Williams said, "None at all, no ... As Woody Allen famously said, 90 per cent of life is just turning up.

"I think that's more true for the royals than anybody else and to do that with a measure of grace and humanity is quite an achievement."

Prince Philip died peacefully last Friday morning with the Queen by his side.

Church Leaders' Group meet with PSNI Chief Constable

The Church Leaders' Group met with PSNI Chief Constable Simon Byrne by Zoom yesterday to express concern for officers injured in recent violence and to encourage the PSNI's ongoing commitment to political and civic engagement to address root causes of violence.

Archbishop gives Radio 4 'Thought For the Day' on HRH Prince Philip

The text of Archbishop Justin Welby's Thought for the Day on Radio 4 on the morning of 10/04/2021 -

To set aside your own rights and interests in order to serve others is always difficult, but as we reflect on the life of His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh, we are reminded of

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how much it is possible to achieve when we dedicate our lives to larger causes than ourselves. Prince Philip shows how someone dedicated to bringing people together and encouraging the journeys of others achieved so much more than we can ever hope to on our own.

Like all of us, Prince Philip had visions and dreams. He was amusing and witty. He had remarkable intellectual gifts and a willingness to test his opinion against others and listen to them. He was impatient with complacency about bad things happening. Whether in wildlife conservation and climate change, in working with young people, in interfaith relations in a world where more than eight out of ten belong to a faith he was 50 years ahead of his time. And he was criticised for that, but sooner or later others followed. He was a founder and a pioneer himself, but the way he achieved these dreams was through helping unlock the potential of others, through encouragement, support and seeking and providing opportunity.

We might be capable of doing remarkable things by ourselves, but Prince Philip set the example of something even better. His life's work showed that serving others might not always be visible, but it is always essential.

Above all he served the Queen, for 73 years. That meant setting aside those things to which many people might have felt entitled, a glittering naval career, prominence in his own right, and counting everything else as less important than serving Queen and country, following his duty in that service, walking behind. In that he followed the example of Christ who calls every person to follow him.

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Grief is not alien to us at the moment: so many of us have experienced loss during the pandemic. To lose someone after such a long life is a unique and particular pain to those who love them. I pray we can comfort ourselves by seeing their life and legacy live on in the opportunities and dreams they have inspired in others.

Perhaps the challenge which Prince Philip sets us is to look afresh at what we hold onto out of entitlement which, if humbly set aside, will make our lives transformative for others.

May His Royal Highness rest in peace, and rise in glory, in the eternal arms of the Servant King

Pope Francis explains prayer and the communion of saints

Below is the text of Pope Francis' weekly Wednesday audience, delivered on April 7, 2021, the first Wednesday of the Easter season.

Today, I would like to reflect on the connection between prayer and the communion of saints. In fact, when we pray, we never do so alone: even if we do not think about it, we are immersed in a majestic river of invocations that precedes us and proceeds after us. A majestic river.

Contained in the prayers we find in the Bible, that often resound in the liturgy, are the traces of ancient stories, of prodigious liberations, of deportations and sad exiles, of emotional returns, of praise ringing out before the wonders



of creation... And thus, these voices are passed on from generation to generation, in a continual intertwining between personal experience and that of the people and the humanity to which we belong.

No one can separate themselves from their own history, the history of their own people. We always bear in our attitudes this inheritance, even in the way we pray. In the prayer of praise, especially that which unfolds from the hearts of the little ones and the humble, echo parts of the Magnificat that Mary lifted up to God in front of her relative Elizabeth; or of elderly Simeon's exclamation who, taking the Baby Jesus in his arms, spoke thus: "Now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word" (Lk 2:29).

Those prayers that are good are "expansive", like anything that is good; they propagate themselves continuously, with or without being posted on social networks: from hospital

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wards, from moments of festive gatherings to those in which we suffer silently... One person's pain is everyone's pain, and one person's happiness is transmitted to someone else's soul. Pain and happiness, all a story, stories that create the story of one's own life, this story is relived through one's own words, but the experience is the same.

Prayer is always born again: each time we join our hands and open our hearts to God, we find ourselves in the company of anonymous saints and recognized saints who pray with us and who intercede for us as older brothers and sisters who have preceded us on this same human adventure. There is no grief in the Church that is borne in solitude, there are no tears shed in oblivion, because everyone breathes and participates in one common grace.

It is no coincidence that in the ancient church people were buried in gardens surrounding a sacred building, as if to say that, in some way, the hosts of those who have preceded us participate in every Eucharist. Our parents and grandparents are there, our godfathers and godmothers are there, our catechists and other teachers are there... The faith that is passed on, transmitted, that we have received. Along with faith, the way of praying and prayer have been transmitted.

The saints are still here not far from us; and their representations in churches evoke that "cloud of witnesses" that always surrounds us (see Heb 12:1). At the beginning, we heard the reading from the passage from the Letter to the Hebrews. They are witnesses that we do not adore – that is understood that we do not adore these saints – but whom we venerate and who in thousands of different ways

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bring us to Jesus Christ, the only Lord and Mediator between God and humanity. A “saint” that does not bring you to Jesus is not a saint, not even a Christian. A saint makes you remember Jesus Christ because he or she trod the path of living as a Christian.

The saints remind us that even in our lives, however weak and marked by sin, holiness can unfold. Even at the last moment. In fact, we read in the Gospel that the first saint canonized by Jesus Himself was a thief, not a Pope. Holiness is a journey of life, a long or short or instantaneous encounter with Jesus. But he or she is always a witness, a saint is a witness, a man or woman who encountered Jesus and followed Jesus. It is never too late to be converted to the Lord who is good and great in love (see Ps 103:8).

The Catechism explains that the saints contemplate God, praise him and constantly care for those whom they have left on earth. [...] Their intercession is their most exalted service to God’s plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world” (CCC, 2683). There is a mysterious solidarity in Christ between those who have already passed to the other life and we pilgrims in this one: from Heaven, our beloved deceased continue to take care of us. They pray for us, and we pray for them and we pray with them.

The connection in prayer between ourselves and those who have already arrived—we already experience this connection in prayer here in this earthly life. We pray for each other, we make requests and offer prayers.... The first way to pray for someone is to speak to God about him or her. If we do this frequently, each day, our hearts are not closed but open to

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our brothers and sisters. To pray for others is the first way to love them and it moves us toward concretely drawing near. Even in conflictual moments, a way of dissolving the conflict, of softening it, is to pray for the person with whom I am in conflict. And something changes with prayer. The first thing that changes is my heart and my attitude. The Lord changes it so it might be turned into an encounter, a new encounter so that that the conflict does not become a never-ending war.

The first way to face a time of anguish is by asking our brothers and sisters, the saints above all, to pray for us. The name given to us at Baptism is not a label or a decoration! It is usually the name of the Virgin, or a Saint, who expect nothing other than to “give us a hand” in life, to give us a hand to obtain the grace from God that we need. If the trials of life have not reached the breaking point, if we are still capable of persevering, if despite everything we proceed trustingly, more than due to our own merits, perhaps we owe all this to the intercession of all the saints, some who are in Heaven, others who are pilgrims like us on earth, who have protected and accompanied us, because all of us know there are holy people here on this earth, saintly men and women who live in holiness. They do not know it; neither do we know it. But there are saints, everyday saints, hidden saints, or as I like to say, “saints who live next door”, those who share their lives with us, who work with us and live a life of holiness.

Therefore, blessed be Jesus Christ, the only Saviour of the world, together with this immense flowering of saintly men and women who populate the earth and who have praised God through their own lives. For – as Saint Basil confirmed

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– “The Spirit is truly the dwelling of the saints since they offer themselves as a dwelling place for God and are called his temple” (On the Holy Spirit, 26, 62: PG 32, 184A; see CCC, 2684).

Clerical



The Revd Mark Harvey, rector of Shankill Parish Lurgan, who has accepted Bishop David McClay’s invitation to become a Canon of Dromore Cathedral.

Mark said: “It’s an honour to have been invited by Bishop David to join the chapter of Dromore Cathedral, both personally and on behalf of Shankill Parish. I look forward to working alongside Dean Geoff Wilson and my colleagues on the chapter to further the ministry of the cathedral in our Diocese as we proclaim the good news of the Gospel and seek to extend the Kingdom of God.”

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Since ordination in 1993, Mark has served in St. Columba's, Portadown, as Curate Assistant, as incumbent of the Monaghan Group of Parishes (1996–2001) and St Mary's Ballybeen (2005–17) and also on the staff of CMS Ireland (2001–05). He became rector of Shankill in June 2017.

Before moving to Dromore Diocese Mark was a canon of Down Cathedral (2015) and served as Clerical Honorary Secretary of Down. He is married to Joanne, and they have a daughter, Lydia. Prior to ordination, he worked as a primary school teacher in Bangor.

The Archbishop of Armagh has asked Bishop–Elect Ian Ellis to act as the Archbishop's Commissary for the Diocese of Clogher, effective from 5 April 2021.

The Archbishop has recorded his thanks to the Ven. Brian Harper, Archdeacon of Clogher, who has been acting as Archbishop's Commissary since 28 April 2020, in the context of an unusually long episcopal vacancy caused by pandemic restrictions. The Bishop–Elect's consecration is planned to take place on St Mark's Day, 26 April.

Books, Broadcasts, resources and webinars

Interfaith Forum - Anti Racism Training Programme starts online this week

Dublin City Interfaith Forum is running its anti–racism training programme, Safe Haven, online starting on Wednesday April 14.

‘Safe Haven’ is the hate motivated incident response project of Dublin City Interfaith Forum (DCIF). It uses existing online reporting mechanisms for reporting and recording faith-based hate motivated incidents through engagement with faith communities, civil society, relevant government agencies and intergovernmental agencies

Furthermore, ‘Safe Haven’ seeks to provide the effective reporting, recording, responding and referral of Hate Crime and hate motivated incidents through community-based victim supports.

Safe Haven training aims to provide advocates to recognise, report and support victims of hate motivated incidents. Advocates learn to appreciate the significant impact on both individual victims of hate motivated incidents and the communities to which they identify. Though the initial victim suffers greater psychological distress, it goes to the heart of their identity affecting their sense of belonging.

Commencing online from April 14 2021, attendees will start sessions online from 7.30 pm. Over 6 weeks, Safe Haven training will help advocates learn to:

- Recognise – hate speech, hate crime, radicalisation and violent extremism
- Report – through statutory and non-statutory mechanisms such as the independent iReport, An Garda Síochána, Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission and Intergovernmental Agencies
- Support – through interfaith activities, victim support referral, pastoral care, restorative practices and coalition-building

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For further details and registration please contact:

info@dcif.ie or projects@dcif.ie

Eco–Congregation Ireland’s latest newsletter - is now available, highlighting examples of environmental projects undertaken by churches across the island of Ireland. The view below shows Strangford Lough from Scrabo, Co. Down.

<https://www.ecocongregationireland.com/>

Webinar – ‘Back in the Pews, Back to Normal’

Care4clergy is hosting a webinar on the experience of ministry in the past year of pandemic and what returning to church might mean.

In this webinar – Back in the Pews, Back to Normal – Dr Gladys Ganiel from Queen’s University Belfast will facilitate discussion around themes that have emerged from her research on how faith leaders and churches have responded to the Covid-19 pandemic.

There will be discussion around how clergy have coped with pastoral care challenges under social distancing regulations; how church ministries are changing going forward (included blended online/in-person approaches); and how churches can seize new opportunities for ministry that have emerged during the pandemic.

The webinar will take place on Thursday April 29 from 2pm-3pm.

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St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh on RTE

Mass will be broadcast from St Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh on RTE Now on Tuesday 20 April @ 10.30am.

Media review

Prince Philip: NI Assembly pays tribute to Duke of Edinburgh

Belfast Telegraph

The Stormont Assembly has paid tribute to Prince Philip, commending a "life well lived" for a man who had a "desire for a better future" for young people.

Over the years the Duke of Edinburgh visited Northern Ireland on more than 50 occasions and many MLAs commented on having the opportunity to meet him in person, witnessing his famous "forthright" manner.

First Minister Arlene Foster spoke of the impact of the loss of Philip's uncle, Lord Mountbatten, who was killed by the IRA in 1979, and of his military service. She also acknowledged the "respectful" way in which all parties have responded to his passing.

[[] <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/prince-philip-ni-assembly-pays-tribute-to-duke-of-edinburgh-40304029.html?utm>]

Unionists urge Irish government to stop lecturing them over NI Protocol

Irish News

DUP MP Sir Jeffrey Donaldson has lashed out at both governments amid growing anxiety about further street violence.

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Unrest in loyalist areas has been linked to anger over the Northern Ireland Protocol and a decision not to prosecute Sinn Féin members who attended Bobby Storey's funeral. Dozens of police officers have been injured in disorder.

Sir Jeffrey urged the British and Irish governments to do more. He said Prime Minister Boris Johnson should recognise that unionism felt betrayed.

People's sense of Britishness, he warned, was being stripped away.

[[] <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2021/04/12/news/unionists-urge-irish-government-to-stop-lecturing-them-over-ni-protocol-2284699/>]

Law to stop social media management abroad for political parties after Sinn Féin revelations

Irish Independent

New election laws will “effectively prohibit” political parties from allowing their social media accounts to be managed outside of Ireland.

Legislation on political donations and electoral reform are being expanded to ensure there is greater transparency around how parties are funded.

It comes after the Irish Independent revealed Sinn Féin’s Facebook accounts were being managed by people based in Serbia and Germany.

Facebook and library data shows Sinn Féin’s main account has been managed by people in Ireland, the UK, Germany and Serbia.

[[] <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/politics/lawto-stop-social-media-management-abroad-for-political-parties-after-sinn-fein-revelations-40301728.html>]

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Opinion - Horror and despair as the 'Ceasefire Babies' are used to reignite Troubles - Dearbhail McDonald

Potent ingredients such as poverty, policing and identity are stirring the pot in Northern Ireland, Dearbhail McDonald writes in the Sunday Independent

Two years ago I sat down at a table at Farmleigh opposite one of the most powerful women in global politics. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, was flanked by a US Congressional delegation including Richard Neal, Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

Invited to share my concerns about Brexit, I spoke of my fears of the prospect of a return to violence through either the return of a hard Border or a premature, knife-edge Border poll.

It is the fear that haunts my otherwise hopeful nature. It is the fear of the Troubles in reverse.

I was reluctant, as others invited to that roundtable were, to overstate the risk.

But as a Border girl, born and raised in Newry, I was and remain deeply concerned at the inherent fragility of our globally feted peace process, knowing how the stirring of the constitutional pot — with potent ingredients including identity, poverty, paramilitarism and policing — can be incendiary.

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It didn't take long to be proved right.

The following evening, as Congressman Neal received an honorary degree at the University of Ulster in Derry, the journalist Lyra McKee was fatally shot in the Creggan area of the city. Lyra (29), who was shot as she observed rioting, was renowned for embodying the hope of, and chronicling the intergenerational trauma endured by, the 'Ceasefire Babies'.

This is the generation born after the ceasefires, typically living in areas with high crime, poverty and suicide rates, living in communities cowed by paramilitaries peddling drugs and despair. Starved of opportunities and hope, these young people are living directly with the stress and legacy of the Troubles even though they did not directly witness the conflict.

I couldn't stop thinking of Lyra as I watched, with a weary childhood familiarity and renewed adult fear, images of a burning bus in Belfast last Wednesday night.

The horror of watching hundreds of Ceasefire Babies of the loyalist kind, some as young as 12, throwing their petrol bombs as they projected their fears at Lanark Way, one of the many 'peace walls' that separate the unionist and nationalist communities in Belfast.

Children provoked by paramilitary factions and fake accounts on social media platforms, as well as reckless adults on the sidelines, all goading them to "earn their stripes".

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Ceasefire Babies with their left-over Easter eggs and school uniforms hanging in their wardrobes, who could be "earning" their first criminal conviction within weeks.

That unionism is in deep turmoil in this, the centenary of the birth of Northern Ireland, is not in doubt. They are too numerous to mention, but we can point to a number of key factors for the current crisis within unionism that has the potential to destabilise us all.

They include Brexit, demography and identity, the latter keenly felt by many of the rioters who weren't even born when the 23-year-old Good Friday/Belfast Agreement — enshrining their right to British or Irish identity — was signed.

We can cite the failure of political loyalism and its strategic misfiring in bringing about the Northern Ireland protocol, failing to offer any credible alternative after thwarting Theresa May's backstop efforts, thereby catapulting Boris Johnson into Number 10.

We can cite the betrayal felt by Ulster Unionists at the very same Johnson, who vowed there would be no sea border, only for him to commit to the protocol.

It is the same Johnson, nervously eyeing a future trade deal with the US, who knows that the UK — a founding, permanent member of the UN Security Council — will have to uphold the Good Friday Agreement. Who knows that he will have to form some class of a trading relationship with Europe. The same Johnson who knows that he may yet go down in history as the man who broke up the United Kingdom, via a successful independence referendum in

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Scotland. Who knows that many in Paris and Berlin may quietly welcome a major competitor being brought to heel by a break-up of its precious union.

We can point, too, to the rank indifference of Tory Ultra/English nationalism towards their Ulster unionist brethren. Adding fuel to the fire are the constant agitations for a Border poll by Sinn Féin, who want to leapfrog the hard yards of reconciliation and integration whilst issuing passive aggressive overtures about the need to protect unionist identity.

We can look to next year's elections in Northern Ireland which could see a further groundswell of the middle ground to the Alliance Party. It could also, for the first time, see an inaugural Sinn Féin First Minister at Stormont, an event that will likely send unionism over the edge.

We can look to more immediate events, including the furore over the Northern Ireland protocol or to the incredulous decision (now under review) by the Public Prosecution Service not to prosecute 24 Sinn Féin politicians who attended the funeral of Bobby Storey last June. Regardless of the legal nuances, the republican show of force during a pandemic was an offence to people of all faiths/tribes and none.

We can point, too, to the recent, stunning work carried out by the Paramilitary Crime Task Force for cracking down on the South East Antrim UDA's criminal empire.

That determination, aligned with the prospect of Unexplained Wealth Order laws finally being introduced in

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Northern Ireland, holds the sublime potential of finally breaking the curse of paramilitarism, especially if such policing is deployed with equal force in South Armagh as well as South Antrim.

For all its missteps, real and perceived, the PSNI — which was meant to be protected from political assault via bodies such as the Policing Board, Police Ombudsman and Parades Commission — deserves support. The impartiality of policing is one of the fundamental pillars of peace and both Sinn Féin and the DUP are treading a dangerous, despicable path through their respective political attacks on the force.

I could go on, such is the complexity of the moment we are in.

At heart though, these dynamics are poorly understood, if at all, by the Ceasefire Babies risking their lives (and that of others) every night.

"I don't think young people really understand the details in terms of the Irish sea border and stuff," one 19-year-old loyalist told the BBC last week. "I think what they're being told... is that Sinn Féin are winning, the republicans are winning, and that our identity is under attack."

Another youth was elsewhere reportedly angry at the PSNI for not arresting Bobby Storey. That is almost comical, yet it is precisely that febrile ignorance and mistrust that could fill graves.

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We stand at the precipice of a new, potentially lethal inflection point. But the pathway out — calm heads, consent, leadership, intense diplomacy, and seeing the bigger picture — remains the same.

It may involve a superhuman effort to manage the protocol. And Ireland, poised as it is between two unions, has some delicate diplomatic paths to tread.

Lyra told her 14-year-old self that "it gets better". Making sure it does is the legacy she and the Ceasefire Babies deserve.

Courtesy The Sunday Independent 11.04.2021



Pointers for prayer

Today we pray for Northern Ireland. Last week, violence broke out on consecutive nights in parts of Northern Ireland, as issues around Brexit have caused concern around peace

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in the country. God, we pray for your peace in Northern Ireland, and an end to divisions.

God, We reflect on and give praise for the life lived by Prince Philip.

We thank you for his faith in Our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Comfort the Queen at this time and strengthen her Christian faith.

Amen.

A prayer from the Church of Scotland...

Almighty and everlasting God, 'the life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.'

But You are forever, from everlasting to everlasting, and we put our trust in You for You have promised never to leave us nor forsake us.

Loving Lord, in this last year, through the worst of a global pandemic, we've been face to face with our fragility and vulnerability, perhaps for some of us as never before.

Against that backdrop of hurt and loss, we give you thanks for the life and service of Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. Some are called to the front of the stage, others to supporting roles and we rejoice in the way he supported Her Majesty the Queen through all of the years of her reign.

We remember, too, his work supporting charities and, perhaps most memorably for young people for over sixty

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years, his patronage of The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

In this hour of loss, we offer our heartfelt prayers for Her Majesty and her family. Comfort them in their loss, bind up their wounds and grant them the consolation of a store of treasured memories. Grant Her Majesty the peace that comes from knowing you and which passes all understanding.

These and all our prayers we ask in the name of Jesus, who through his life, death and resurrection offers us hope instead of despair, life instead of death.

Amen.

Some went down to the sea in ships,
doing business on the mighty waters;
they saw the deeds of the Lord,
his wondrous works in the deep.
For he commanded and raised the stormy wind,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
They mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths;
their courage melted away in their calamity;
they reeled and staggered like drunkards,
and were at their wits' end.
Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble,
and he brought them out from their distress;
he made the storm be still,
and the waves of the sea were hushed.
Then they were glad because they had quiet,
and he brought them to their desired haven.
Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love,
for his wonderful works to humankind.

Speaking to the Soul

Peter turned around and saw behind them the disciple Jesus loved—the one who had leaned over to Jesus during supper and asked, “Lord, who will betray you?” Peter asked Jesus, “What about him, Lord?” Jesus replied, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? As for you, follow me.”

John 21:20-22 NLT

Having received his commission from Jesus to care for his sheep and been given an insight into his future, Peter then becomes curious about others. He asks about how it is going to be for the disciple whom Jesus loved, who we assume to be John. Jesus' response was sharp and definite. Effectively Jesus said, “Mind your own business”. It was nothing to do with Peter. All he needed to know was that he was called to follow Jesus.

Let's face it, we are all curious about the people around us. We would be fascinated to know what their future will be. But Jesus' words remind us all that our responsibility is for ourselves and we don't need to know what will happen to other people. That is in God's hands. As John drew his gospel to a close, he wanted his readers to know that their greatest need was for each one of them to keep their eyes fixed on following Jesus.

In our busy, noisy world we face endless demands on our time and attention, and it is very easy for us to lose our focus on following Jesus. We can so easily get distracted by

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things that are not, in themselves, bad which lure us away from giving first place to Jesus. We need to work hard to ensure that we are tuned in to his voice. When I lived in India a key moment in my day was when I listened to the news on BBC World Service. The task of tuning in our old radio sounds simple enough but it never was! I often had to work for some minutes to get a proper signal. We need that kind of determination to keep our focus on listening to Jesus and following in his ways.

QUESTION

What do you need to do to guard against becoming distracted from following Jesus?

PRAYER

Lord help me always to make following you the priority of my life. Amen

