

## An Address by Bill Pattinson, 8 November 2020, Remembrance Sunday

### On Grief, Fear and Hope

I've just finished reading a most remarkable book called "The Breath of Sadness" by Ian Ridley. It's a very honest portrayal of Ian's journey of grief following the death of his wife, Vicky Orvice, of cancer in February 2018 at the age of 56. Vicky was a well known sports journalist who worked for the Sun, covering all Olympic Games since Sydney, but best known as the leading pioneering woman football journalist, who fought and exposed male chauvinism wherever she found it. All life is here - you cry and sob, laugh and smile while following the pain and madness of a grief born of great loving. I was unusually attracted to such a book because as well as love and grief, watching cricket was a refuge Ian found as a context where he could "grieve in solitude with humanity close at hand." He also makes reference to CS Lewis' book "A Grief Observed" which begins, "No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear."

Grief and fear have been frequent, yet very unwelcome, visitors in our lives this year. This is always the case when death calls or when a national, indeed global, pandemic or crisis strikes. Today, on Remembrance Sunday, we remember especially those who died, so that others might live, during the two twentieth century World Wars and all other areas of conflict between and since then, unfortunately too many to name. The war against the Covid 19 virus in this year of 2020 has been referred to as the 3rd World War. Many have died; there is much grief and no little fear as to what will happen next.

But just as Paul in our first reading writing to the Thessalonians says, "we need not grieve as others do who have no hope.". So our belief, our faith that Jesus died and rose again gives us hope, even in our ignorance, that we all shall feast with those who have gone before us in His eternal kingdom. We may grieve over what we have missed this year; physical contact with those we love; our friends around the table; opportunities to visit our favourite places, the theatre perhaps; even an enforced absence from a close friend's funeral. But we do so with hope and with prayer for we live with Jesus present with us, serving Him and making Him known to others. We may grieve for the thousands who have died, but we do so with hope and prayer as we feast on God's word, sharing it with others, as we focus our lives on how we personally and corporately respond to this pandemic, to this Remembrance Sunday.

We may fear what might happen as autumn turns to winter; as a second national lockdown begins; as seasonal illnesses and Covid 19 patients threaten to overcome

our hospitals and front line workers; as the death toll rises; as terrorists attacks continue in lockdown Europe; as migrants and refugees perish in desperate attempts to seek safe harbours. But we do so with hope and prayer, for like the five wise bridesmaids we are prepared, or perhaps I should use the in word “alert”, through God’s loving for us, through the example of our Lord Jesus Christ to love and care for all. What energy, what strength we possess in our faith in God’s Son, in our love for others, in our hope... and the knowledge that God will forgive us when we fall short. Turning the second person plural into the first person, I shall finish with Teresa of Avila’s famous prayer:

“Christ has no body now but ours. No hands, no feet on earth but ours. We are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world. Ours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Ours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Ours are the hands, ours are the feet, ours are the eyes, we are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but ours.”

I have written a full review of “The Breath of Sadness” by Ian Ridley in November’s edition of “New Leaves” which can be found on our websites

[www.stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk](http://www.stdavidschurchexeter.org.uk) or [www.stmichaelsmountdinham.org.uk](http://www.stmichaelsmountdinham.org.uk)