

Destruction

Human beings are capable of great creativity but they can also be very destructive. In all conflicts down the ages and in our world today the greatest victims are other people. And yet the heritage of the past is often also a victim, either deliberately or incidentally. We think particularly of Syria where ancient buildings have been targeted for destruction. And such acts are directed not simply at bricks and mortar but at what such buildings and artefacts stand for and mean to people.

Any wanton destruction is terrible but it is arguably particularly distressing when sacred sites are affected. Our Bible reading alluded to the destruction of the great Temple in Jerusalem which indeed occurred in the year AD 70. The Temple was the centre of Jewish religious and national life. It was the very symbol of the identity of the Jewish people. Which is why the remaining Western Wall is so important to Jewish people today.

Today marks the 74th anniversary of the bombing of this church in the air raid of 29th April 1942. That was in retaliation for our bombing of the historic city of Lübeck in northern Germany. Before then, on the night of 14 November 1940, Coventry Cathedral was destroyed in the air raid that devastated that city.

It is of course easy to dwell on the past, to be sorrowful or angry for what happened then. But it is much more fruitful to focus on the present and to look forward to the future. That was the vision of the then Provost of Coventry Cathedral, Dick Howard, and it should be our vision too – to help to create a better world, a world where there is real peace, true justice and honest and lasting reconciliation.

In the last few years we at St Martin's have formed a very meaningful link with St Mary's Church in Lübeck, and some of us will be going there again at the end of June. That is a good way of getting to know one another and of finding ways of working together for God's kingdom.

However, the Community of the Cross of Nails is more about simply healing the wounds of history. Its aim is also about learning to live with difference and to celebrate diversity, and about building a culture of peace. Our model is of course Jesus himself who embodied all that in this life and teaching. Our Bible reading may have alluded to the Temple in Jerusalem but it is really about Jesus himself, about his death and resurrection. And it is those saving acts that give us hope for both the present and the future.

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Kingsley Boulton*