

## **Westminster Attack, Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017**

It is right that in our time of prayer for peace and reconciliation today our focus should be on the terrible events in London on Wednesday. We will remember those who were killed or injured, and all affected by that violent act.

It does not seem that long ago that we were praying for the victims of violent acts in France, Belgium and Germany. We have now experienced a similar violent act in our own country, and at the very heart of our democracy.

We may never understand why people are drawn to extreme views and why they then put such convictions into practice by killing and injuring innocent bystanders. When they do so in the name of God this becomes even more incomprehensible.

Religious leaders have rightly condemned such acts. They also correctly warn against responding with retaliation and hatred. That was the clear message of Provost Dick Howard after the destruction of Coventry Cathedral in 1940. He firmly believed that our prayer should be not “Father, forgive them” but “Father, forgive” – forgive us too. The way forward is not revenge but reconciliation. We just heard the Beatitudes, those marvellous words of our Lord from his sermon on the mount (Matthew 5.1-12). That is how we are all called to live. Those are the values and attitudes we are called to espouse.

It is of course extremely difficult to seek reconciliation with those whose minds are closed to anything other than their own extreme and misguided views. That does not mean that we should not try, though.

Our prayers have to be for them. For our Lord taught us that we should love our enemies. Yet our prayers are particularly for the victims: for those who were killed, their families, friends and colleagues, for those who were injured, for the security and emergency services, for those who witnessed those terrible events.

As we do so we pray too for those who in different parts of the world experience such acts of violence on a daily basis. It has become for them a cruel and painful way of life.

24 March 2017  
Kingsley Boulton