

A message for November from Revd. Malcolm Strange



As I write, once again the tinder box which is the Middle East has erupted into flames with over a thousand people killed, mainly civilians, as the conflict between the Palestinians and Israelis deepens once more. Whatever your view on this historic conflict, the demand by Hamas for the total destruction of Israel is totally unacceptable in a civilised world. Our Government is right to challenge these actions and the rhetoric which underpins them. They are the words of extremists who are whipping up the belief that only violence

can succeed, spreading fear in a way that leads sadly to the dehumanisation of those who are different as a result of their belief, ethnicity or colour. I am sure we would all agree that these words and actions have no place in a world, built on respect, understanding and peace.

In 1968 Enoch Powell delivered his 'Rivers of Blood' speech where he attacked liberal attitudes towards race and immigration. It was widely condemned at the time and led rightly to his dismissal from the Shadow Cabinet. In a television debate Powell's vision of difference, portrayed in the language of fear and horror was challenged by Jonathan Miller with these words; 'You would have done your duty as an ethical politician much more productively if instead of exciting the notion of future strife, you had encouraged the notion of future cooperation on the basis of understanding'.



It appears that after her speech to the political right in the USA, the Home Secretary Suella Braverman turned down the Archbishop of Canterbury's invitation to tea at Lambeth Palace to discuss her views and comments, perhaps she feared a similar challenge (and chastisement) to an equally uncaring and unethical position towards vulnerable people in a troubled and divided world.



When elected Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher quoted St Francis of Assisi when she uttered these words which she felt appropriate to what we were facing as a country and a world in 1979; 'Where there is discord, may we bring harmony. Where there is error, may we bring truth. Where there is doubt, may we bring faith. And where there is despair, may we bring hope'.

Perhaps our Government, other World Leaders and all those who claim to stand up for ethnic groups, Black or White, Muslim or Jew, Catholic or Protestant would serve our world and their people so much more effectively if they too embraced the spirit of Francis's words.

Fr Malcolm Strange