

Reflection for Friday 5th June 2020.

Whatever your views on the lockdown, one thing has been required of us all recently is endurance, 'the ability to endure an unpleasant or difficult process or situation without giving way.' Endurance means sticking it out, putting up with difficulty and keeping going because it's worth it in the end, and we've been encouraged to stay at home and to make sacrifices because the end result of fewer infections will be worth it.

Though it might not be the first characteristic you'd think of to describe a life of faith, it's a word that actually describes quite a bit of our experience. Being a Christian does not mean that problems disappear or that all our questions about life are answered - in fact there's a lot of just hanging on in there. Faith means to believe in what you cannot see, and sometimes faith is more of a decision or an act of will than a fuzzy feeling inside. But as true sports fans stick with their decision to support a team even when things are going badly, not just when they are winning, so we need to persevere in faith and trust in God.

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews also uses a sporting analogy:

'Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus'
(Hebrews 12:1-2)

Like Mo Farah or Paula Radcliffe, rather than Usain Bolt, as Christians we need to be in it for the long run, setting a realistic pace, gritting our teeth and keeping going through the pain to make it to the glory. To push that analogy even further, we can take advice from experienced coaches (experienced Christians), train and build up strength in small groups (prayer and Bible study groups), and benefit from the support of the crowd (congregations). Long distance running isn't easy, and although you may not be alone, no one else can do it for you. You need endurance, but (I'm told....) there are high points along the way, and it's worth it in the end.

With all analogies, there are limits to their aptness, and this one fails to mention a key element. We believe that the Holy Spirit lives within us, sustaining us and guiding us, and we believe in a God who works miracles. So our endurance is not about our own strength - that leads to exhaustion and illness - but about God's gift of strength, and His gentle shaping of our lives. Let's invite Him daily into our lives to help us run our race with endurance, wherever that race takes us.