

The Revd Stan Evans

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ANGLICAN PARISH
ST. LAURENCE IN LANZAROTE

Sermon on First Sunday after Trinity – June 14, 2020

I couldn't leave Barnabas out this week because on Thursday, as we prepared for this Service, we looked forward to our Annual Meeting, I felt that we needed someone who would lift our hearts and have great words of encouragement for us.

Barnabas, the Apostle, the Patron Saint of Cyprus, is remembered and celebrated in our church calendar. He wasn't one of the twelve disciples, but he was named by St. Luke and he was seen as a man of encouragement. How we all need someone alongside us with that quality.

When Paul came to Jerusalem three years after his conversion, it was Barnabas who took him by the hand and introduced him to those Apostles who needed confirmation of his conversion.

We all need that encourager. And we all need someone to vouch for us.

That's what I think we've been doing over these past 12 weeks where we have tried to lift people's spirits and hearts as we've coped with the terrible and wretched virus that we all have to contend with.

It's been a tough time. A very tough time, indeed.

But it's been one where we've actually found ourselves as we've searched during the time of lockdown.

During lockdown, as a family, we had a very difficult time.

My younger brother, his son – his only son – was struck down with a terrible brain tumour and was operated on last year. When I went to see him before his illness, I tried to be encouragement to him to lift his heart as he really didn't know as to where he was going, what he was going to do as far as a job is concerned.

But there was this wonderful young man, who had everything to live for, and then was struck down by this brain tumour. And he was operated on it last January.

The terrible thing was that he lost all movement in his face. He couldn't smile anymore and he has really, really struggled to come to terms with all that has happened to him. It's difficult for him to walk and his eyesight is affected, but at every moment of every day and every night, his dear Mom and Dad have been alongside as encouragers.

They have worked with him, they have persevered with him, they have lifted his heart when he was down. They've helped him to walk again.

And this last week was quite wonderful. Because after all the prayers, he had for the surgery to see if there was any way in which his face would be able to return a little towards what his smile would show.

And then this week, it happened: There was movement in his face and his dear Mom spent an hour crying with him on the bed. I should think she was because she had been alongside him and given this sacrificial love during the whole of this past year. What a wonderful, wonderful result that was.

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Never giving up, always encouraging. And it was that kind of self-giving and concentration of the needs of that dear, dear lad. Something just tells you about the quality of God's love in Jesus because Jesus' hopes that we will choose to keep on giving ourselves in love as his dear mother gave to him, even when giving hurts. Even when we feel we have nothing left but our exhausted presence.

But it's that kind of love that mirrors God's kind of love.

As Jesus said himself:

"Love is the giving of self.

The communication of self. Handing over of self."

And we have to admit that few of us have the freedom or power to accomplish this.

We can only choose to try. Confident that our struggle is backed by God's energetic love.

Somewhere in the struggle, we can hear the voice of God cheering us on.

How wonderful and encouraging is that!

Amen