

## Because of love.

Although it is not making the same kind of headlines that it was, Ebola virus still remains rampant in the three West African countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. We must not fall into the trap of thinking that the situation is under control, and as such is now no longer of concern for us. The virus is still rampant and its effects are devastating for the families and communities of those countries where it continues to spread. It is a disease which in its effect, means that the infected have to be isolated and removed from any form of physical contact with their loved ones. The impact on people of this removal and isolation was eloquently described by Bob Geldof on the radio this week, when he spoke of how parents could no longer cuddle their dying children, leaving them bewildered and nonplussed. A spouse could not embrace their dying partner, at the time when every instinct in their bodies cries out for such an exchange of tenderness and compassion. Let us pray that the tests on the vaccine will prove successful.

I mention this on the Feast of Christ the King, because the gospel offers us a very potent reminder of how compassion and tenderness are essential elements within the Christian psyche. The gospel speaks of expressing our love of Christ through our love and care for our fellow brothers and sisters irrespective of whether we know them or not, and this is the radical element of what Jesus is saying. We are all of us stirred by the plight of the sick, the hungry, the homeless, and of those less well-off, but are we similarly stirred to take the next step, and act to do what we can to alleviate the sickness, the hunger and the homelessness? We may argue that there is very little we can do, or think that our efforts will make little difference. But in our world of today with all its interconnections and social media facilities, such responses no longer really cut the mustard. There are so many ways and so many opportunities for “getting involved” that inaction through ignorance is no longer really justifiable. Workplace giving, volunteering, school activities, fair trade shopping, all of these have become so accessible that we really should embrace them as opportunities to put the gospel values of justice and peace into action.

Our parish too should make a similar choice. In the parish we are about to launch our new initiative The St Thomas More Parish Good Neighbours Group, through which a number of parishioners have got together to form a group to offer help and assistance to other parishioners who may wish to request visits or companionship in times of need. Also during next year the parish will also be holding two special coffee mornings as fund raisers for Macmillan Cancer Support and Cafod, to raise money and awareness of these two important charities. But of course there is always more we could do. For example, our Parish could become a *LiveSimply* Parish, by applying for the *LiveSimply* Award from Cafod. All the details to enable us to do this are on the Justice and Peace section of the notice board at the back of Church. If there is sufficient interest, then we could make a start in the New Year and make it a parish project over the coming months. I’m sure it would encourage and strengthen our community and sustain us in our Christian living.

The gospel call is to “change” our lives; the word “repent” means *to turn around and change*. As we get ready for Advent and Christmas, we will hear that word spoken as a call to each of us individually. This change is a challenge to examine ourselves in the light of what we hear Jesus telling us this weekend: *in as much as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.*