

## **Vulnerability...**

So are we settling into Lent...? If anyone *should* ever “settle” into Lent! But as the days draw closer to the events we remember every Holy Week, whether we have “given up” or “taken up” how is this season preparing us?

Over the last few months I have become increasingly aware of vulnerability, and the role, or place, of it in the Christian walk. It started with a trip to Haiti after the last major earthquake in 2010. I went to the country as part of a medical team, ostensibly to work with the Haitians in the north of the country - in the second city: Cap Haitien. I am an anaesthetist, and was asked to go into the theatre and stand alongside the trained (and training) doctors in the hospital there. And human nature being what it is, I went with a sense of nervousness, but also a sense of bringing to those less well off things I could give - experience, equipment and energy to name a few.

And that is how it all started - equipment surplus to the requirement of UK and New Zealand Hospitals was lapped up and immediately put to use. And I found a limited role in teaching a very gifted and enthusiastic trainee some basic skills. (As well as my trying hard to learn French and Creole - I found the wonderful people there far more adaptable and accommodating in their grasp of English!) But from this position of strength - the feeling of being able to disseminate my expertise and learning I became ill, and found myself being looked after by the very people I thought I had come to help. (For the medically inclined I contracted Dengue Fever, once colloquially known as “Break-bone” fever, which is similar to malaria in that it is transmitted by mosquitos, and for me was characterised by headache, vomiting and extreme lethargy.) The love and care I received from the people of Haiti was very humbling - given that I thought I had so much.... or was it that I thought they had so little?

Feeling vulnerable is not much thought of as a virtue nowadays, if ever. But we see it so completely demonstrated by Jesus Christ: starting with his birth - to an inexperienced couple, themselves on a steep learning curve, through to a climax where we see him on the cross - naked, exposed to ridicule and pity, and having been through the hands of an Roman execution squad. Vulnerable to anything human beings could do to him, and vulnerable to the departure of God.

But it was through this vulnerability that God’s greatest work was done, and it’s a theme we see repeated throughout the Christian Church - from Sts Peter and Paul to John Wimber and Fr Maximillian Kolbe: as the people of God become more and more vulnerable to the move of the Holy Spirit, so God’s greatest works are done.

Can we volunteer for vulnerability? Maybe God will give us the grace to allow us to go with Jesus Christ to the cross, and then to live with him his resurrection life.

*Steve Benford*

*Parish Priest and part-time anaesthetist.*