

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Monday 4th January 2016

Good Morning

In what seemed an act of self-effacement on the part of Radio 4 last Wednesday Justin Webb told listeners affected by the stormy weather to tune into their local radio stations!

Well, here I am in the studios of BBC Radio York. But only just! Because last week they had to abandon this building as the floods took out the lines of communication. They carried on broadcasting from a borrowed studio as listeners tuned in for news of all the heroic stuff being done to make good a bad situation.

Around the country local radio stations have come into their own.

Over twenty years on Merseyside and in Yorkshire I've seen the power of local radio and regional television to connect with people differently from the national media.

What happens to us, most of the time, happens in a local place. It may on occasion find its way into the nation's headlines but the impact is primarily local. Something that may merit two or three minutes on a major channel can be explored at length on a local station.

As politicians rediscover the power of localism with elected Police Commissioners and Mayors not to mention the Northern Powerhouse it's the local media that can provide the forum for debate and accountability.

Yet it's quite natural to think that the national's more important. That's where the power lies. It's mirrored in the direction of travel of some people's careers. They start local and end up in a national job. That's the trajectory of power.

And it's why the trajectory of Christ's life is so moving. For it went in the opposite direction – from the cosmic to the local.

It was said of him 'he didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped'. In a different and dramatic act of self-effacement he went from the stellar to the stable. Bethlehem and Nazareth - where he was born and lived. All local events. True, as we complete the twelve days of Christmas, they eventually assumed international significance.

But by coming to a specific place he showed that it was in the local battle to do good that God was to be found. In a riposte to those who had difficulty in seeing where exactly God was at work in a troubled world he said, "The Kingdom of God is among you".

It's as if he was sanctifying what was local and sending a note to those with power, 'don't ever be blind to what is happening on the ground'.

The Rt Revd James Jones