

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY MONDAY 18TH OCTOBER 2021

Good Morning

The reverberations of the merciless killing of Sir David Amess will continue into the week ahead. First and foremost for those dearest to him as they wake up each day to realise that the nightmare hasn't been a bad dream but a heart-aching fact that they will have to live with.

Sir David's name is now added to that Roll Call of public servants who've died doing their duty. This lengthening list has filled the weekend papers with a thesaurus of questions about the state of our society and has deepened our anxiety about the future.

One dimension that's come under scrutiny is the tone of public debate. The so-called cancel culture cuts people down to less than their size and even on some university campuses there are those who are determined to outlaw rather than outwit their opponents.

If I had to choose one word to describe the mood of our public discourse it would be precisely this: merciless. The quality of mercy seems to have drained away from relationships between different factions. To bowdlerise Shakespeare 'it droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven' only then to evaporate in the heat of conflicting opinions. There seems little mercy for those who dare to disagree.

Shakespeare went on to say that mercy was 'an attribute to God himself'. It's to be found in all religions. But if we haven't tasted mercy for ourselves, I fear, we're less likely to show it to others.

The Methodist Church where Sir David was killed and the Catholic Church where that night there was a Requiem Mass for him are both Temples of Mercy echoing with the prayer 'Lord, Have mercy'.

Of course, some will say that the different religions have down the ages betrayed their own beliefs through their merciless dealings with one another. And they're right. So much of the strain in this world is still down to tensions between and amongst Muslims, Jews and Christians even though paradoxically all three confess a faith in the God of Mercy.

To us and to all who wield any sort of power in this world
Shakespeare stressed that mercy goes hand in hand with justice:

'earthly power doth then show likest God's
when mercy seasons justice'.

The Right Reverend James Jones KBE