

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY MONDAY 3rd AUGUST 2020

Good Morning,

A few weeks ago in the Sunday Times Robert Colville wrote about the death of his wife Andrea and the impact on him and his two small children. At bed time his five year old son Edward shared his plans for storming Heaven. Heaven is, to use his words, 'the yuckiest place'. It's where Mummy now lives – and he wants her back.

All over the world countless adults have been trying to explain to millions of children what's happened to those they love who've died.

Grief is a journey without destination. Along the way many of us, with faith smaller than a seed, find ourselves listening to children talk about Heaven as a place. Not wanting to douse their hopes we go along with their faith while doubting their air of certainty.

When it comes to death children often seem to have the conviction of an adult whereas adults appear clouded with the unknowingness of a child.

But child or adult we're all left groping for pictures that will carry us on our different journeys of grief.

For Christians our greatest story is of Jesus rising from the dead. To a world where disease and death seemed to be the last word on human existence this was a drama that gave hope to the dying.

But beyond the Bible hope is also to be found in the story of nature itself where life flows out of death.

Years ago I was taking my uncle's funeral. During the service a Red Admiral butterfly caught everybody's attention as it fluttered through the rafters. As I was about to pray it landed on my prayer book. This butterfly, I said, had once been a caterpillar. The same creature but a different body. When we die we live on in a different form, but we're the same creature.

The latest figures from the World Health Organisation show that over 680,000 people around the world have died from Covid 19.

The restrictions imposed on funerals leave us groping all the more for understanding. And stories from faith and nature can help us come to terms with the mystery of death.

John Donne, the poet, wrote about his own sickness and dying:

“Since I am coming to that Holy Roome,
Where, with thy Quire of Saints for evermore,
I shall be made thy Musique.”

Such pictures won't staunch our grieving, neither should they; but they offer translucent images to see and to feel our sadness – and even our own future.

The Right Reverend James Jones KBE