

November 25, 2012



Dear Friends

### SDA n PDA

One of the many college taboos was the 'public display of affection'. Canoodling in company was just off limits! Maybe this unwitting repression has contained our ability to be emotional about our witness?

While travelling on the Northern Line last week, my sensibility was rattled by the doting expressions of two fairly attractive she lovers. Were they trying to say something about their relationship, or were they just serenely oblivious? If so, why did I find their public display of affection curious? Less striking perhaps is the invitation to grow a Mo? Would my wispy whiskers change people's relationship to a cause? Or should I wear a poppy? Would it speak to my preference for pacifism or the militarism of my belligerence?

So, **how do we display our beliefs in the public square?** or use our TED theme, **How do we make God Known?** Too overt, and people recoil, if we fabricate a context, we risk abuse and failure. If we restrict our passion to the privacy of the church cloister, we fail to witness?

Rowan Williams has recently published his musing on the role of Christian faith in the public square. He insists that Christian faith is the moral framework and conscience of our society. Every King needs the voice of the Prophet to inform public policy and practice. For him, the Church and State have distinct dynamic voices that neither shout nor whisper, but are clearly heard. Faith must be on public display. We need to speak to the Controversy between 'good and evil' as it is, rather than as it was.

Justin Welby appointed Archbishop this month is a former Oil executive versed in the ways of trade and commerce. He has clearly been appointed to reinforce the ethical voice in the city. How will it be heard? How will we contribute?

Reflecting further on our approach toward 'mission in the city': One almost admires the chutzpah of those bikers who rode into Brent Cross to smash and grab. Outrageous, yet some of us seem to believe that they we can live in the country, dart in to town, make a few conquests and buzz off before being caught. It may be called impact, but three days later it is business as usual.

OK, not so violent. Let's say stalking around town while praying for some straggling soul? Given the outrageous behaviour of some celebrities, you could get arrested for loitering with intent. Or do we better achieve our objective by offering a touchy feely blood pressure check in aid of long life, before telling them with conviction that the world is soon to end?

There are many things that capture our fleeting attention, but it seems to me that we best display our affection, through consistent service where we are, with thought and excellence. If anything, our Public Display of Affection should encapsulate with panache the values of truth, beauty and goodness, not in isolation but in concert. Thank you for your considered public display of affection.

Best regards

Victor