

	<p style="text-align: center;">The Order of St James (UK) Newsletter</p> <p style="text-align: center;">June 2023</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.orderofstjames.info</p>	
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Reflections on May Ministry.

+Ian, OSJ

As I reflect back over May I find myself wondering if we as priests, pastors and ordained ministers really do make a difference.

I think we do but I cannot be sure.

Like the RAC, Green Flag or AA, we are there when needed and called upon, and people are very grateful for the help offered and then we are forgotten as normal life resumes and offers all kinds of other distractions.....

It's also amazing the number of people who are so thrilled to be getting married, have a wonderful service and who 'forget' that a service fee is required.

Appreciation is often short lived it seems, but we are not really in a position to turn people away in their need.

And how often are our urgent prayers to God oft forgotten when the crisis is past?

Maybe saying 'thank you' is difficult because it reminds us of our own weakness, and the fact we do need the help of others in order to get through life, and even death. We are not as 'invincible' as we thought we were.

But there are those who do make up for those quickly forgotten moments and remain lifelong contacts. Small gems unexpectedly found that were hidden amongst the pebbles and rocks of life's path.

So what of May?

There have been a good number of weddings, each with their own character and temperament but absolutely joyous, at least for the moment. A wedding is one of those things that can be properly celebrated and 'the rules' relaxed.

Obviously the service has its very serious parts and those need to be respected, but there are also less serious parts where laughter can be encouraged and some 'audience participation' enjoyed. It's amazing what a difference that can make and how important it is that people feel they matter and are a part of what is going on rather than just being silent witnesses and largely uninvolved in proceedings.

Making people feel as if they matter and belong is not just a matter of priestly duty but, putting it bluntly, is a universal faith requirement that all of us need to observe. How can we talk of a loving God who cares for each one of us when our actions tell a different story?

And then there was a funeral, a bride who I married in 2018, leaving a distraught husband and two young children.

What on earth can you say at times like this?

Is this the way God shows His love for us?

As it happens on this occasion, 'yes', as difficult as it may seem, is the appropriate response, but it was still hard to find some acceptance.

Cancer is a cruel and unforgiving master and the circumstances of our first meeting regarding getting married followed an unexpected hospital diagnosis.

It seems marriage is good for you, the time given her was unexpectedly extended and small targets found themselves being set, children's birthdays, another Christmas, wedding anniversary, first day at school, and so on.

All things that seem less important to those assuming they have a full life ahead of them but so very different for those living on short and unknown time.

This young woman was an absolute warrior but it was an unfair battle.

One last target, seeing and hearing about one of the children's first day at Beavers, and it seems that after that her strength was gone and there were no more resources to call on.

I met her husband a few days after her death and we decided between us that a celebration of life was more appropriate than a funeral service, where family and friends could share their admiration and appreciation for a life well lived in the most difficult of circumstances.

Her husband delivered the eulogy faultlessly, only stumbling over his words just once, a beautifully and honest retelling of a journey he had been privileged to take with a very special and beautiful person.

Friends and family similarly spoke.

I had been asked to say a few words but there was nothing that could usefully be added. It was an unnecessary courtesy requested by the husband given all that had already been said.

Then came the delivery of the words of commendation followed by the committal. These words all seemed so distant given all that had been said, but they had to be said to bring some kind of closure to the short service.

I was asked if I would like to join family and friends afterwards but I found myself in a highly emotional state and made up an excuse of having another appointment – all I suddenly wanted to do was to sob uncontrollably.

It seemed as if had absorbed the entire collective and overwhelming emotion of the occasion.

In a final twist to the event, I was found myself walking behind the hearse carrying the coffin as it slowly left the chapel premises, just me and the undertaker, one in front, one behind. Just us as friends and family had already been ushered away towards the provided refreshments and hospitality.

I can't particularly recall any of my thoughts at that time, but I do remember thinking that there were a lot of questions that I hope someday God would be able to answer.

Then there were baptisms.

One joyous moment was when I asked the 4 year old brother of a new family member to help me during the service by filling the baptismal chalice.

It was asking for trouble but this young man needed to feel he was special on the day too. There was water everywhere as the baptismal chalice filled and then overflowed.

The smile on his face was nearly as big as the puddle.

I used the opportunity to explain as demonstrated so ably, God's grace is always so much more than we need, often to the point of overflowing.....

I do like to hear laughter in church and see positive memories being created.

The four year old even helped with the anointing too and took great pleasure in giving his mummy, daddy and baby brother a blessing. I hope his parents will have that special memory for a very long time to come.

Unfortunately I had to leave fairly quickly as I had another service to do some 40 miles away with a very narrow margin of travel time being available. The parents of the child had been warned in advance but they kindly made sure I had a small picnic box of food to take with me so I didn't get hungry. That was a rather unexpected and very thoughtful gesture on their part and much appreciated by me.

As usual, there were lots of visitors visiting the different churches whilst I was setting up or preparing for services, many of whom are interested in the church history, engaging with the priest and occasionally talking over matters of concern. I never know what I will be confronted with but it is still enjoyable sharing a moment or two (or longer) with these people.

I have been quite concerned though at the number of older people who feel abandoned by the church, dismayed by reduced number of clergy being made available to them, upset by the church dismissing God's word out of hand, and overwhelmed by changes in society, gender fluidity and same sex relationships and the church's attitude to same sex marriages to name but a few.

I feel for them.

I agree with them.

And I feel just as helpless in the face of a society that seems to be shaped by small minority groups that only want their views recognised and their voice heard.

It seems that the majority view no longer counts for anything, that there is a rule for one and not for another, and that there are those people for whom there are no rules.

As frustrating as these things are, 'the battle' isn't over by any means. I hope these people take comfort in the words of the Lord's Prayer, especially at the beginning where it says 'Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth (just) as it is (done) in Heaven...', and at towards the end where it says 'Lead us not into temptation, but (instead) deliver us from (all) evil.'

The world may think it has disowned, discredited and disinherited God, and that God is no longer relevant, but that is far from the case.

As history has repeatedly demonstrated, people will turn back to God, especially in times of personal and national loss and tragedy.

Unfortunately, as quickly as they return to God in times of crisis, it seems that they are just as quick to abandon God when things return back to normal.

What it tells me is as priests, as Christians, we still have a lot to do. Our work is yet unfinished and we are still needed. God speaks to us in the words of Jeremiah.....

Jeremiah 3:14-15

¹⁴ "Return, unfaithful people" declares the LORD, and I'll bring you to Zion. ¹⁵ I'll give you shepherds after my own heart, and they'll shepherd you with knowledge and good sense."

But we cannot save everyone. That is something we must realise, and that is because God gives us free will, the ability and right to accept or reject God's love simply because He will not force it upon us – God wants us to love Him of our own volition, not because we have to.

The parable of the Sower is a reminder that whilst there is a great harvest to be reaped, there is also great loss in that which never comes to fruition.

Matthew 13v 1-30 NIV The Parable of the Sower

13 That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake.

2 Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. 3 Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. 4 As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. 6 But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. 7 Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. 8 Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. 9 Whoever has ears, let them hear."

10 The disciples came to him and asked, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?"

11 He replied, "Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables:

*"Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.*

14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

*“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.*

*¹⁵ For this people’s heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.’*

¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. ¹⁷ For truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.

¹⁸ “Listen then to what the parable of the sower means: ¹⁹ When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. ²⁰ The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. ²¹ But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ²² The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²³ But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

And following on from this text is a less well known and often overlooked text, the Parable of the Weeds. It is a reminder of what other force we are up against.

As the Parable of the Sower explains, as God tries to draw us into His Love there is another force which intends to undermine, distract, damage and destroy any of our good intentions before we realize what is happening, and it is clearly within and working amongst us. This is what the Parable of the Weeds is referring to.

So what are these ‘weeds’?

They are things not of God that are to be found amongst us and ultimately work against God and God's people.

The key thing is these things are to be found amongst us, not working against us from outside. It's not just the big stuff like division within 'the church' but it is the little stuff that seems often inconsequential. However there is no such thing as a 'small sin' – 'sin' is still 'sin' whether it comes with a capital letter or not.

For example - in an attempt to justify our own personal and oft perceived 'inconsequential' but spiritually/biblically wayward desires, are we really leading society astray by demonstrating it is ok to put our own selfish and sometimes unnecessary even unbiblical needs above those of others ? Is that latest new camera with lots of professional features we will never need or use really for the Glory of God? Are we really and truly serving God or somewhat gratuitously serving ourselves and using God to justify our rather obvious desires?

Why not just say the obvious – God wants us to have good things so long as we can be honest about it and so long as it doesn't hurt or take away from others. But do we really need to lie to ourselves and to those around us that we have been called by God to buy those thing for some make believe ministry or service?

What are we frightened of - that people may see through us and see we are not as spiritual or holy as we want people to think we are?

The fact is if we find we personally need to justify our actions then we are likely guilty of those very things and a whole lot more besides.

Or is it that we have fallen for temptation?

How many have bought something we really needed only to find we never/rarely/can't use it because it is too complicated to use it?

Dare we have so much spiritual pride to believe we are so firm in our faith and love of God that we are above temptation, that we can recognise it in all its forms, handle it, dwell on it and remain uncontaminated by it?

Let's face it. Even as priests, we are still tempted by temptation.

That new big print calf leather up to date translation of the bible won't make us walk any more closely with God when we already have a serviceable bible already. Neither will new vestments or that new altar cross or solid silver communion set.

We need to be realistic – who are we buying this stuff for and for what purpose?

Playing with temptation is playing with spiritual fire and not the nice Holy stuff either.

At low levels we might find ourselves lingering a little too long in our thoughts when we should not. When this happens, the casual 'what if' soon becomes the 'when' if we dwell on it too long. The seed is sown and it will germinate.

This harvest will be manifold and terrible in its judgement and punishment, far greater than we ever might have expected.

We are just as vulnerable, if not more so, because of our roles as priest. Wearing a white collar and having a theological degree is no protection and of little use when this happens.

And then we find ourselves trying to theologically justify our actions in a hopelessly vain attempt to avoid looking God full in the face..... not that we don't already know the expression will be one of condemnation for our willing deceit.

Sin is what it is no matter how neatly and beautifully it is wrapped up. The end result is still the same. And 'sin' starts with 'temptation', a little 'what if...' moment that leads to other and bigger and more destructive things if not dealt with.

Temptation is a lie, a deceit, a promise of things it fails to deliver, a means of entrapment, so see it for what it is.

We should be clear in our own minds – there will be a reckoning and it is already being progressed. And as priests, we need to be very clear and careful about what we proclaim and teach in God's Name rather in our own name, but most especially in how live our lives.

Not in the eyes of society but in God's eyes.

We can be the world's greatest preacher and teacher, (or whatever you care to put in here,) but if not justified by God and evidenced by our actions, words and behaviour, then all is lost and we live a lie.

We then become guilty of teaching and leading others away from God's Light. Condemnation for the 'mere sinner' will be great, but nothing in comparison to the condemnation of those who lead people away from God and away from His Word.

And when we take it to a denominational level then we are talking epic and global catastrophe if we get things wrong.

And we collectively are, by teaching and allowing things that are unbiblical and unscriptural and allowing society, not God, to dictate what we believe and how we express our faith or practice our religion.....

God help us all if this was to be the case.

Or is it the case already? Has it already happened? Personally, I feel as priests we have been compromised.

What have we become - are we weeds or are we wheat? Are we part of the problem or part of the solution?

It may not be too late to change things but I feel we are getting very close to running out of time.

The Parable of the Weeds

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ "The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'

²⁸ *“‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.*

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

²⁹ *“‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”*

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SOME LIGHTER MOMENTS/SOME SERIOUS David, OSJ (Wales)

An updated excerpt from my book ‘Trauma 999 Emergency’.

In the 1970’s, I used to perform solo motorcycle traffic duties in London. Most mornings, when on early turn, it was the motorcyclist’s duty to assist the mounted section in escorting the Life Guards and Horse Guards, from their barracks at Knightsbridge.

The route was through Hyde Park, down Constitution Hill, along the Mall onto Horse Guards Parade. The changing of the Horse Guards was each day at 11 am.

The foot-guards were at 11.30 am at Buckingham Palace and Clarence House. This was a very good exercise, not only for the police officers escorting, but the sightseers and foreign visitors too. It enabled them to see both the Guard changes.

I have to admit, this was one of my most enjoyable areas to work and both satisfying duties to perform.

I was paid to police London, to be stationed within two minutes of Downing Street, and be based at the garage and Station from the public view behind the five guards memorial at St James' Park.

I have so many wonderful memories of this location and my colleagues stationed there. On reflection most of the police officers were the happiest I have ever encountered. I used to smile going to work thinking what strokes colleagues were going to pull on me that day. We really did laugh and smile all day at work.

I dealt with and witnessed some of the most amusing things I have ever come across in my life. It seemed at that time everybody enjoyed their duties. We were all proud to be officers. More importantly in our case to wear the Queen's uniform.

Attached Royal Parks officers do not display any divisional letters above their collar numbers. It was a privilege to bear the Queen's crown and royal cypher above the number ie. 'E''R'. When I was given the opportunity to serve with this force, most of my colleagues were like me – all ex-service personnel. The majority former petty officers, chief petty officers, army sergeants with a few mid ranked ex-air force personnel.

On reflection, the job was done more professionally and better with higher arrest rates and more respect given by the public. I believe that it was due to officers being told what beat to cover then left to get on and do it. Nobody had to be told how to do the job.

All officers just got on with it. There were no handicaps put in the way of officers who suspected villains up to no good. It was a matter of stopping them, chatting to them.

If the individual officer felt uneasy about their manner, they would be thoroughly turned over and checked. If such person was in a vehicle, that too would be searched and checked. In the majority of cases, criminal connections were found and good arrests were made. This also led to convictions!

Much of these skills were honed into from our past military service. Sadly, that is not the case today. So many officers being selected today fall below the high standards we were expected to meet.

An aspect I can relate to were a few direct entry university graduates who entered the service, who could not even spell nor use grammar properly even compose an understandable report? The spelling mistakes were atrocious, I know too well having to return reports to officers. Little wonder if such mistakes were not picked up by sergeants and Inspectors who should check these reports! CPS will of course return them to the officer or write the offence off.

Who allowed these persons into the job?

By what criteria did the selection board allow entrants to join the service?

Composing reports and submitting accurate descriptive evidence is absolutely vital for submission to a court. These days the CPS at will and with the stroke of a pen on a submitted report can write it off with three simple letters NFA. (No further action).

What a waste of an officers time! Composing a Crime report, submitting statements, detailing exhibits in bags and attaching ID seals for security.

Why the unnecessary waste of paperwork, and in many cases repeated time after time.

Surely for a simple offence where the accused genuinely confesses committing it, even more serious offences why not compose a double sided A4 card / paper detailing the day, date, time and place of offence. A short summary of what occurred. The offence pointed out and cautioned. The accused's response. A few short questions to the accused ensuring they admit offence then being reported / charged and cautioned again. Obtain a signature from the accused admitting the offence.

This would save so much ridiculous waste of paperwork, and unnecessary officers time. Thus allowing a quick return to duty and to the streets instead of being unnecessarily delayed in the Station for hours on end. Why not use the body-cam footage if the evidence is available to prove the offence and admission?

Another fact I have noted is the height restriction. Officers these days joining are now able to enter the service at five feet six in height, effectively no height limit!

They really do look ridiculous at that height wearing a helmet! which makes them look even shorter. So many today are physically way below the standards for entry in the 60s and 70s.

My colleagues and I who were in excess of six feet tall would rarely encounter someone taking a pop at us, knowing what the consequences would be, we were capable of protecting ourselves in a bundle. I recall an elderly lady seeing a very short officer and openly stated 'What use is he in a violent situation? A young lad or girl of 15 could knock him over?'

That is why in the City of London Police the minimum height was 5 feet 11 inches. With a helmet on and above average height an officer could be seen, and stood out. The Royal Parks Officers were like the City Officers very tall, and looked impressive in uniform. Immaculately smart, shining polished shoes, well groomed and shaved.

Officers today have high tech equipment to aid them, ANPR Automatic Number Plate Recognition. Immediate verification if a vehicle is insured and taxed, and driving licence details with a photo to identify the driver / occupants of a vehicle.

A device called a 'lantern' by placing a finger print on the screen will immediately identify the person if on police records.

For their protection Tasers, tear gas canisters and more. With all the body armour weighing them down, restricting their movement, they are now unable to chase a suspect. No doubt the reasons for them now presenting back problems, which never existed at the current level. Why are officers taken off active duties then appointed and supporting families, as 'specialist officers'. This is not the role of police officers and I expect soon we will have more officers leaving the service quoting PTSD etc from dealing with such matters.

Health Services must take primacy for caring for the mentally ill, not police officers, this will allow officers to focus on their core responsibilities preventing and detecting crime, keeping our communities safe and supporting the victims by attending their homes where burglaries have occurred.

Legislation today appears weighed against the officer. They are less likely to stop and check a suspected villain. They know that doing so, when nothing is found, a complaint will greet them on return to the station.

It appears that from successive Parliamentary legislation, those who pass the new Bills and Laws have no idea of what the real world is like out there on the streets. If I may be bold to say so, all that has occurred is handcuffs have been put on the officers themselves, not on the villains where they so rightly belong.

It does make me wonder if Senior Officers today are really checking the new legislation and laws passed in parliament? The laws in existence are well capable of dealing with the crimes, and that of definitely rowdy and defiant demonstrators, so why complicate matters even more?

St James' Park, Green Park, Grosvenor Square, Victoria Tower Gardens situated next to the Houses of Parliament, and the Tower Gardens around the moat of the Tower of London were all policed by the Royal Parks police. The City of London also covered this area.

Sadly... the Metropolitan Police recently amalgamated the RP officers. Something that deeply hurt and was NOT welcomed by Royal Parks Officers. Knowing the reputation of the Metropolitan Police of late I can understand why!

One of the worst aspects of policing such venues was that of maintaining a watchful eye on the drunks or better known as 'the winos'. They were forever begging from people and generally making themselves a nuisance to visitors and holidaymakers.

It is an offence under the Park regulations and a constable may remove such a person.

This was forever a source of humour, by the City of London police and Metropolitan officers. It was a matter of escorting the offender from one border to another, and then the unfortunate Pc who had that area doing exactly the same back. The main object was that no Pc wanted to arrest a beggar or drunk if they could help it, and in the process tarnish their image / reputation.

Probably it did not do their crime fighting image very good either! However, it did keep those unfortunate individuals active with exercise, and in some instances kept them alive. At least they did not lie down on a freezing cold pavement, nod off to sleep, left to pass away and die from hypothermia.

The other individuals who had to be scrutinised very carefully were the 'dirty mac' brigade.

The 'flasher offenders' certainly did come out in more ways than one in the summer months! After a few months stationed in central London, officers become acquainted very quickly with the persistent offenders. I would advise new and junior officers that it was a good idea to check the cells on a regular basis, and the charge sheets when coming on duty, to find out who had been arrested, and identify them.

Those officers with service behind them did this regularly. This of course may be the reason why it was they who always came through the door of the charge room with a regular flow of prisoners. This could be said to be the intelligence gathering moments, whatever it was, it certainly reaped rewards. Primarily because they walked their beats knew their manor, local villains and their public.

Today officers very rarely walk their beats, what I see are officers sitting and driving about in cars, not getting out, certainly not communicating with the public! Failure to do this will hinder and prevent the public offering intelligence gathering information of what is going on to apprehend offenders.

Some may say the PCSOs do walk around etc.

Yes they may do so but they have no powers of arrest nor detention. I am unhappy as many former colleagues are calling certain individuals POLICE Community Support Officers and wearing uniform very similar to POLICE OFFICERS.

I would have suggested the proper title be Community Support Officers to the Police.

The Public see the word Police first and believe they are officers, they are NOT. They are just that . . . Support Personnel.

For many years the public thought there was an increase in police numbers on the beat, what they did not know was that the authorities misled the public.

Special Constables were issued with Helmets. Many regular officers thought they were working alongside colleagues like themselves who had undergone training at a Home Office training centre.

Wearing that helmet for regular officers was one of pride knowing that officers had met that high standard. Yet as stated it was far from the truth.

I believe with honesty, a feeling is arising amongst the public of anger against both government and police, which heads one way as previously to civil disobedience! I really hope not!

I could continue stating much more where the Police Service has gone wrong, but I have served my time, and so have many family members who are still serving and I have no need now to continue thinking about the Police Service.

I genuinely hope that officers joining the service today remember it is not a job but instead it is by its very nature a vocation to serve the public, to protect them at all times. If this is so then they will serve to protect you.

Long may this long held tradition continue.

+David OSJ (Wales)

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Faith Initiative:

Fr. Ed Elsey, OSJ

A remarkable move to develop faith initiatives, with an equally remarkable and imaginative architectural design has been built on Abu Dhabi's Saadiyat Cultural District on Saadiyat Island.

Incorporating a church, a mosque and a synagogue, it also adds a 'forum' to enable learning and exploration, and nurturing of mutual faith understanding.

The 'House' welcomes people from all walks of life to exchange knowledge and practice faith and consider closer co-operation of faith initiatives and wider understanding of the sources of all three faiths and the history and development of them in personal life and devotion.

The three 'houses of worship': St. Francis Church, Imam Al-Tayeb Mosque and Moses Ben Maimon Synagogue offer an opportunity to listen, learn and participate in religious services, discover holy scripture and tenet, and by doing so to experience sacred rituals, liturgies and styles of worship, adoration and devotion. All are invited to connect and explore what is vital and important to other faith people in our developing and complex society.

A secular visitor pavilion is at the centre of the complex, with physical connection to all three 'worship spaces'.

A website describes this fourth space as "not affiliated with any specific religion — will serve as a centre for all people of goodwill to come together as one. The community will also offer educational and event-based programming.

The form is translated from the three faiths, carefully using the lens to define what is similar as opposed to what is different, and using the power of these revelations to make the form. The design appears as powerful plutonic forms with a clear geometry, three cubes sitting on a plinth – though not aligned, they each have different orientations.

The story then starts to become apparent through the power of the silhouette, unified with commonality and the articulation of the three forms. These structures represent a safe space, each volume illustrated with colonnades, screens and vaults to represent the sacred nature”.

And of course there is a beautiful garden for quiet contemplation - and for me would provide reflection on the awful historical division we have engendered and practised over a history of misunderstanding and prejudice, hopefully in a more modern society, beginning to break down and merge.

Fundamentalist Christians, or many of them, will not be happy with any compromise - one path only through Christ Jesus to the promise of Heaven hereafter and restriction to those who follow a strait path of allegiance.

However, for me, or am I just getting old and senile, this is a remarkable development from our Arab friends and neighbours and a chance to re-think all the training and discipline of faith from my childhood, to broaden my own thinking, look again at the way God, in all forms, has led His people towards Him; a refreshing initiative which is worthy of our prayer and goodwill as this centre reaches out to people who are searching for 'a closer walk' with Him.

Fr. Ed Elsey, June 2023