

Slowly but Surely

Earlier this week, Kevin Sinfield, a retired rugby league player, ran 101 miles, in 24 hours, to raise money for the Motoneuron charity that will build a new centre for care and research into this disease. In his planning he knew he would have to go through tough times – a dark place – during this venture. He was happy to do this, to try and better understand the great difficulties his best friend Rob Borrowes goes through, as Rob suffers from this hugely debilitating illness. But he also knew the outcome of his efforts would be worth-while. And they have been; £1.5m., and counting.

To see passed the struggle and pain, towards a truly great goal or outcome, tends to become more difficult the further into the task we go. Fatigue, both physical and mental can begin to take its toll.

At the beginning of the Church's year, Advent, we are given two general themes for this season. The first two weeks we look towards the second coming of Jesus; the second two weeks we look towards the first coming of Jesus – his birth. And the order may seem the wrong way around, but it is deliberate.

Our journey to God is difficult. The words of Jesus in the gospel today reminds us to stay calm, stay awake, stay focused – do not be distracted by the 'razmataz' of life – even the 'razmataz' of Christmas!!

The autumnal feeling of darker days and nights; coldness that demands we sit in front of a warm fire; all can lead us to a withdrawal into ourselves. We must not become 'bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and waves' – the weather – the circumstances around us.

Like Kevin Sinfield there will be times when we feel in a dark place, we may be tempted to snuggle up and feel sorry for ourselves; well don't. Seek out people who will walk with you, seek out people whom you can walk with on their journey; accompaniment works well - no matter how long it takes.

We are about to see the birth of our salvation, the beginning of a path of life that will lead to an amazing future. Stay focused on that and..... just keep going.

Advent (From the Latin – 'Adventus'), means 'coming – arriving'. We are to prepare for the second coming in our own lives, and the lives of others. If we do not consider this, then the first coming, the birth of Jesus, is meaningless; it simply becomes – razmataz.

The Good News of the Gospel is the salvation of all, though the way to salvation is often long and difficult.

But today Jesus encourages us to keep going and he will offer his hand to walk with us, to accompany us – we can get there - slowly but surely – and the reward is that we see and meet 'the Son of Man'. A Christmas to beat all Christmases that no money can buy.

Peace and blessings always.

Tom