

Trinity Sunday

The teacher was talking to her junior class about God and how hard it was to know about God. 'Where is God' the teacher asked. 'I know where God is' called out one little boy, he's in our bathroom. 'In the bathroom' the teacher replied. 'Yes every morning my Dad stomps up the stairs, raps on the bathroom door and yells, 'My God are you still in there'.

Yes God is in the bathroom because he's everywhere. Our happiness as human beings lies in acknowledging His existence and living by His commandments.

The OT tells us that at the foot of Mount Sinai the Israelites fashioned a golden calf, called it God and then worshipped it. This happened as Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments from the true God at the top of the mountain. Now, the first of these commandments is: 'I am the Lord your God, you shall not have strange gods before me'. So, in obedience to the Lord, the golden calf was smashed to smithereens.

Are there any Golden calves in our society which we need to smash? Life and death issues come to mind. I was in Auschwitz in 2018 where it was decided by the infamous camp doctor who could live or die. I'm told it's not unheard-of these days for a doctor to ask an expectant mother if she wants to keep her baby. Is this not 'playing God'? And the euthanasia lobby talk about the right to die for poorly elderly people. But we know that the 'right to die can easily translate, over time, into the 'duty to die'. Another example of playing God.

Often people put the blame on God or religion for all wars and regional conflicts in our world. However, the breaking of God's First commandment is what causes wars, not God. Even natural disasters are often triggered by humans. Soil erosion, for instance, caused by deforestation often results in fatal landslides. Floods can be deadly. The first commandment requires us to be stewards of God's creation not exploiters.

But we can also invent a caricature of God and be swayed by it. One such caricature is what one spiritual writer calls the 'cuddly bear God'. This is a sugar-coated God who is falling over Himself to smooth out all the ruffles of our lives. This parody of God keeps us shielded from every pain. And yet, how many people have found God only in the pain or turned from false Gods only in the midst of a struggle? The present

pandemic is not 'an act of God' but despite the painful negative aspects of the disease, lots of positive aspects are coming through as well. Jesus asks us to take up our crosses every day and follow him and not use religion as an escape hatch from life's problems. So I think the 'cuddly bear God' is for room 101.

The Book of Genesis says that God made man and woman in 'his own image and likeness'. But have we ever tried to refashion God into our own image and likeness? For instance on the day Ireland voted overwhelmingly 'yes' in the last year's abortion referendum a government spokesman said: "The vote shows we're now a country that is more compassionate, more caring and more respectful" but he should have added 'more merciless towards the unborn' as well. That's fashioning God into our own distorted image, conveniently forgetting the fact that God's fifth commandment has been well and truly scorned. Our duty is to love God and we do this by keeping his commandments whilst at the same time recognising our creaturely dependence on Him.