

RECTOR'S PINT

Once again, with the world as it is, and the huge issues we face I hope you will forgive me if I write about something else.

Has anyone been watching 'Freeze the Fear with Wim Hof' on BBC1? I thought that it would be yet another celebrity sideshow, but it has proved to be surprisingly engaging, as a group of people (the celebrities) take on challenges set by an extraordinary man, Wim Hof, who for years has proclaimed the benefits of the cold and has gone to extreme measures to prove it. One of the challenges is to take cold showers, and I am having a go! I do start under warm water and then turn it colder, so it is not an instant shock.

The experience itself is never easy, but it really does 'kick start' the day. Wim Hof also makes the claim that cold water activates the cardiovascular system and improves its function, and many others have supported the claims that cold showers are good for you.

The key to embracing the cold is focussing on the breath. One of Wim Hof's exercises is all about breath and body control, which I am also trying out. Space here does not allow me to explain exactly what to do. What the exercise does though, is to take the mind to an extraordinarily calm place, and I have found that I have then been able to stay there, whilst focussing on the breath, something I started to learn to do with a course on mindfulness that I attended a few years ago.

I believe that these are spiritually 'neutral' exercises, but they can help to nurture the spiritual life. In June we will be celebrating Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus. In Hebrew the word is the same for both 'Spirit' and 'Breath', the wonderful sounding word 'Ruach.' There is a long tradition of Christian prayer which begins with cultivating stillness by focussing on the breath. The key emphasis in the Christian tradition though, is not about being 'emptied' but 'filled.' The creation story in the Bible tells of God's spirit 'hovering over the face of the deep' and then God breathing on Adam, filling him with life. I can testify that the discipline of the breath is a real aid to focussing on prayer. I wish I had discovered this years ago, it is a real gift.

O living Christ, rescue us from foolish passion and still the storms of our self-will: and as you are the anchor to this life, so bring us to the haven you have prepared for us; for your mercy's sake. (From CofE daily prayer).

An extra brief word.....

In June we will be celebrating the platinum jubilee of a remarkable woman who has served us well for so many years. She is human, and has made mistakes, but I am convinced that she has understood the worth and value of the Christ-like virtue of wisdom with gentleness, and behind the scenes, has sought to use it and influence for the good. I really hope some of that might rub off on our present political leaders at this time of crisis. We need it now more than ever. We all wish her well. God Save the Queen.

Simon