



Reflections

Be kind to one another

WE had a successful parish fair last Saturday that was opened by Mike Davies, the Mayor of West Devon, alongside his wife Justine.

It was a busy and joyous event full of people and with lots of noise.

While all my parishioners were busy buying, selling and looking after the visitors, I did my usual duty of just being there — acknowledging, appreciating and encouraging everyone's involvement in the fair.

At the end of the day I found

I was terribly tired and even thought I may not be able to conduct the evening Mass.

Reflecting back on the day I discovered that actively being with people is harder work than any of the research or academic endeavours with which I happily engage.

Actively being with someone involves listening with care. It can be a draining exercise, especially if it involves multiple emotional engagements and responses.

When so many people are sharing their thoughts and

concerns, this can lead to huge fluctuation of emotions. Actively being at the fair I heard: 'How marvellous and wonderful it is that my daughter just had a lovely baby girl after some desperate years'; 'I am still grief-stricken and devastated because my friend who is only 40 years old died last week'; 'I am terribly scared and nervous as I am going to hospital tomorrow for a scan'; 'I am so happy and relieved that I have been given clearance by my consultant of a dreadful sickness that has dogged me

for a decade'; 'I am looking forward to going on holiday next week'; 'we are so pleased that our son is graduating in January'.

Such scenarios lead to emotions of happiness and sadness in various degrees and generate appropriate emotional responses. It's tiring yet rewarding. It's challenging yet overwhelming.

We all need somebody for actively being and listening with care. These are the simple ingredients of our daily life, bringing joy alongside the usual challenges and troubles. They

help us guard against psychological distress and potential meltdown into mental health problems. Jesus went a step further by also loving and doing.

It is hard to live like Jesus but I think we all can try to follow some of his preaching as we see in the words of St Paul: 'Be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)'.

**Father Darline Joseph
Marianathan
St Boniface Okehampton
Holy Family Chagford**