

Psalm 137 – the sequel

“Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

A reflection by Alexe Finlay

Yesterday was Easter Day. The Rector via You Tube. Bishop John via the St Mary’s podcast. Family, friends and fellowship via Zoom.

However, self isolation meant that a telephone call from a Tees Bay Pilot who is also a key player in seafarers’ welfare, was answered immediately. A small vessel, a coaster, had arrived in Tees Dock. The crew was sharing a single tube of toothpaste. The ship’s agent could not attend. There is no shore leave. The commodity required was too small a request for a ship’s chandler.

Enter the local station of the Mission to Seafarers. Despite self isolation and social distancing, mobile telephones and emails went into immediate overdrive. The pilot went to the seafarers’ club, obviously closed to seafarers, collected pre packed boxes of basic toiletries, including the all important toothpaste, and returned to the vessel.

Part 1 accomplished, the short term solution and the quick fix. Part 2 is the bigger picture - that this situation is going to arise again as the pandemic continues, seafarers’ passages are longer, no crew changes will occur, there will be no opportunity to shop, and no currency exchange. A bit of lateral thinking was required in short order.

So two other members of the welfare team, both members of the Tees’ river community, sprang into action, obtaining multi packs of toothpaste, shower gel, shampoo and soap which the pilots will now distribute, free of charge, as and when need arises.

The price of missing church? A tube of toothpaste. Priceless.

Quis separabit.