

## A few words from the Vicarage ...



We live in troubled times - perhaps more so than most of us are aware or might admit to be the case. The situation in many parts of the world is frightening, yet we may still feel quite remote from them ... at least that was the case until the Islamist extremists attacked the offices of a French magazine. That vicious attack in Paris against these cartoonists and their colleagues seemed to hit a raw nerve for so many people across the world in a way that the current and ongoing atrocities in Syria, Nigeria and Ukraine have singularly failed to do.

I wonder why that should be! Why this particular event should cause so many people to decide to speak out with the new found slogan of ***Je suis Charlie*** escapes me. The issues of freedom of speech and freedom of the press have been cited as sufficient cause yet, whilst the actions of the extremists were totally abhorrent, surely there needs to be a line drawn (*no pun intended!*) when it comes to causing offence to others.

Hidden beneath the veil (*again, no pun intended!*) of such freedoms, the cartoonists and erstwhile satirists have constantly given offence to a wide ranging number of high profile people and to people's faiths and beliefs. Whether done in the name of humour or political comment, they have often been totally insensitive to anyone's feelings - other than their own.

This is no excuse for anyone to gun them down; and much of the aftermath, mainly from fellow cartoonists, has shown how the pen can be mightier than the sword (sic. gun) - one classic example of this being, '*... but he drew first!*'

From what has been said of this particular magazine's first issue after the atrocity, it would appear that the decision was taken to give even greater offence as a response to the murder of their colleagues. Whilst

their anger is understood, this has been widely criticised and many have been further offended as a consequence.

The production of such hurtful material, designed deliberately to create unrest, goes against all Christian values and severely impacts upon any sympathy or support they had. By this issue, they lost their, albeit precarious, position on the moral high-ground.

Instead of repeating that new found slogan displayed so extensively, perhaps I could offer an alternative - an altogether more appropriate version - which is ***Je suis un chrétien*** - *I am a Christian* - as this clearly states who we are and what are our beliefs - none of which supports the killing of anyone in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, simply because their beliefs differ from ours.

It is my earnest prayer that God will work in the hearts and minds of all who feel persecuted and of all who are the root cause of those feelings - that we may see peace and peace of mind for all.

God bless you,  
your Vicar,

Fr D.