

A few words from the vicarage ...



For many people, the events of early August have been quite devastating – I refer, of course, to the riots which took place on the streets of a number of our major cities, including our capital city of London.

They were closer to home as well – in Manchester and Liverpool. Not only were the scenes shown on our televisions most shameful – they were abhorrent!

Added to that was the subsequent news that some of those involved were intelligent, articulate and well educated members of society – people whom you would never suspect would get themselves mixed up in such violent and destructive action.

What does this say about the society in which we find ourselves in this decade? It speaks volumes of the brokenness which has been percolating beneath the surface for some time. No longer can we ignore this downward spiral when this is the reaction of such people. Much has been said recently about the ‘Big Society’ – something I support – but before we can create that society, we now find that we need to mend the ‘broken society’ first.

How can we do that? I know that there are no easy answers but firstly, we need to identify what is wrong; the diagnosis is needed before a cure can be prescribed. What is wrong goes to the very heart of our daily lives – it reaches into the lack of respect pervading society today, lack of respect in all aspects of life – respect for people, for authority and for property. Too many people who want to feel valued are not prepared to earn the right to gain that value – they ‘demand’ and they ‘expect’; yet fail to ‘do’ anything for themselves.

Unless or until there is a return to a proper sense of decency and respect – the building blocks upon which societies depend – we may never be rid of this hooligan culture. Politicians speak in platitudes and contradict each other – and all we can do is hope that somewhere from the mix of what they say, will come a solution.

The church already has the solution ... but we are failing to get our message across adequately. As I see it, the solution is a return to

Christian values and principles – which may sound easy but is painstakingly difficult to implement.

If only our leaders, both spiritual and secular could get onto the same wavelength, then many of our troubles would be eased. Sadly, that just isn't going to happen!

Too many are simply out for themselves – which is the same attitude of the rioters in the end. This self interest – which the Bishop of Manchester recently referred to as the '*me first*' society – is most certainly a cancerous cell within our communities, destroying them slowly but ever so surely.

It is also a throw away society, one in which we grab the newest models and cast off the old, perfectly serviceable ones – this is what is happening with both materials and, sadly, with people. Everything has to be new, young, fresh and intact. '*Make do and mend*' has become an archaic attitude long gone and unlikely ever to return.

Few are satisfied with 'enough', always wanting 'more' and so they strive to achieve their goal, often at the expense of others. Sharing and equality are values with which they have little or no association – which is sad.

It is sad because these are basic values inherent within humanity and are essential for the survival of a fair and decent society. Perhaps, if we are able to speak out loudly enough, some will listen and there may be hope for us and for future generations.

I do hope so.

Fr D.