View from The Rectory

Usually at this time of year I talk about fresh starts; after all, it is the start of a new academic year for all children, youth, teachers and those who work in education. This year, however, I thought I would focus on good endings. You can't have a fresh start unless you have also had an ending somewhere else.

What a summer of sport we have had! Rugby, cricket, tennis, the Commonwealth Games and, of course, the football World Cup to name but a few. We have seen so many examples of sportsmanship and, sadly, we have seen some examples of how not to behave, how not to end on a sour note!

Expected behaviour: there are rules, many of which have not been explicitly written down, but as the term says, they are expected. Implicit in the ways we negotiate winning and losing, supporting and cheering on. This Summer we had on our screens, right before our eyes during the World Cup, examples of how not to behave. The unwritten codes of conduct were broken, both in how we react when someone is sent off and in how we react when we lose. Argentina, and a certain President, did not show us their best side!

In our Bibles there are many stories in the Old Testament of people behaving badly and coming to sticky ends, as well as many of people being exemplary. How easy it is to focus on the bad rather than the good! God is the master of both a great start in Genesis when he created the world, and also of a fantastic ending in the person of Jesus who had both a memorable start and a chilling death on the cross. This would be the cliff-hanger which finishes a season on television in the old days…what happened next…but of course we know. It wasn't the end of the story, for he fought all the powers of evil and death, was resurrected and continued to preach and teach until his followers were ready for his Ascension into heaven. Even that wasn't the end for he sent the Holy Spirit to be with us along with the promise that he would help us until the end of times. So, we belong to a story where the ending hasn't even happened yet. The story of God and of his care for us his people is still being written!

Jesus came to dwell among us as a benchmark. A reset. The end of one era and the beginning of another. Jesus is the one person who was able to embody how God wishes us to be in our daily lives and in all aspects of them. How to be with others- open, engaging, honest and compassionate, yet firm. How to be with social injustice- passionately advocating change. How to be with the sick and those in need of nurture - endlessly patient, caring, having a listening ear. Always asking what they want, not imposing his own thoughts on the person, even in terms of healing etc. Jesus came to be our template. Others may hold up sports stars or pop stars as their icons but Christians are called to look to Jesus and to follow in his footsteps. To become the best versions of themselves they can through prayer, attention to Scripture and modelling themselves on God's own Son, who was there at the beginning of Creation, came to us to be our role model and continues with us through our lives from our beginning to our end.

Revd Phili Good