

10<sup>th</sup> April 2021

## Giving

**"I am in the giving vein today."**

*Shakespeare, Richard III*

In conversation with a friend recently, we were musing on the drop in income for our National Church because of this year of lockdown. To counter that, we shared two instances from our personal knowledge of churches in which charitable giving had risen because of the way the church engaged with its community during the Covid-19 pandemic. "Yes," my friend remarked, "it's an example of the Church giving out and not giving in!" I liked that! And, indeed, I suggested that the phrase might appear in a "Thought for the Day" sometime soon. So here it is ...

### *Giving out and not giving in.*

When any enterprise, the Church included, faces a period of crisis, there is a natural tendency to look inwards, to safeguard what's known and considered precious and necessary for survival. Two things may suffer as a result. The first is expansion: if the building blocks of development aren't kept in place, no enterprise will be ready for the next stage of growth when the crisis is over. And the second is listening to those beyond the organisation's boundaries: if there's no awareness of what's out there, then the enterprise will concentrate exclusively on itself, and lines of dialogue and engagement may be severed forever.

When I worked with the Church of the Saviour in Washington DC in the late 1980s, the founder, Gordon Cosby, said repeatedly: "The task of the Church is to give itself away." This gives the lie to self-preservation, facing inwards and thus turning our backs on those most in need. This is "giving in", giving our energies to internal issues while neglecting what's beyond our walls – and "giving in" to what the Church should be about.

"The task of the Church is to give itself away", to focus on "giving out", dispensing with safety, carefulness and security, and fully serving the world in which it is set. Can we find ways to continue to create a Church that is in Shakespeare's "giving vein today" – crisis or not?

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, turn me outwards when I want to turn inwards.  
Turn me to service when I want to turn to self. Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon Also available at <https://swallowsnestnet.wordpress.com>*