

5th February 2023

Infectious

"I wake up every day full of hope, positive that every day is going to be better than yesterday. And I'm looking to infect people with my positivity. I think I can start an epidemic."

*Will Smith, as quoted in 'My Work Ethic Will Make Me a Legend',
in a newspaper article by Siobhan Synnot*

When I was a parish minister and chaplain to a Primary School, I once shared Jesus' "Parable of the Sower" in a dramatic format at a morning assembly. Faced with a hall full of 7- to 11-year-olds, I divided the children into four equal sections, and each group acted out what happened to the seed when it fell on the ground. The first quadrant had to stay very still, make themselves as small as possible and pretend they weren't there, like the seed on the pathway that was taken away by the birds. The second group had to act as if they were struggling to breathe, their gasps and grunts mirroring the seed choked by the thorns. The third, mimicking the seed that had no roots and was scorched by the sun, had to stand up and then wither by falling on the ground. (They had lots of fun with that!) And the final group, the seed in the good soil that grew and grew, had to jump up, dance and shout, and make as much noise as possible.

Each part was rehearsed in turn. Then, as I walked among the children, scattering my imaginary grain, they all acted together. It was a riot of noise and excitement. I'm sure the teachers were thinking, "How are we going to cope for the rest of the day when the kids are high as kites at ten past nine?" But then a strange thing happened. For while I'd made the four groups *equal*, there were far more people dancing and cheering at the end than just the quarter I'd allocated to that part. Clearly, it was *much* more fun jumping and shouting than it was being quiet, or choked, or scorched. The cheerful enthusiasm of the children had infected the rest.

The actor, Will Smith, has it right when he talks about infecting people with his positivity. In a climate of doubt and uncertainty, challenge and stress, might this be a lesson we can learn too? After all, if the good seed can be the symbol of the positive outcomes you and I seek, might that not infect what's around us and make *this* day "better than yesterday", as Will Smith expects, for you, me and everyone else?

A prayer for today

Keep me positive, Lord. And when I don't dance and shout, let me sing in my heart. Amen