



CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

ENGLAND AND WALES

Social Teaching Conference - "A Common Endeavour"

Archbishop Kelly's address

LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY, 1 FEBRUARY 2011

After the utterly undeserved visit of the three spirits, Ebenezer Scrooge, born again, declares: "I will live in the Past, the Present and the Future!" and such a people are we: Christ has died: Christ is risen: Christ will come again.

And it is good to welcome you to a city and region which offers the opportunity to see, judge and act about the past, the present and the future.

See on the side of the Mersey the biggest tobacco warehouse in the world; see the buildings at the Pier Head: see the massive houses around Sefton Park and ask: why such a warehouse; where such wealth: see the signs and judge the values of a hideous triangle: slaves from Africa to the Americas, raw materials to Liverpool, finished products back to Africa. Raw material: tobacco: hence British American Tobacco; sugar: hence Tate & Lyle; cotton: hence Courtaulds, Horrocks; wood: hence Waring and Gillow. And ask with Archbishop Charles Palmer Buckle from Ghana, can we understand the depth of the recent financial turmoil without pondering on what foundations such wealth was based.

And wonder: is it wise to speak about returning to the way things once were as if they were normal times. Perhaps they were abnormal, absurd indeed and could not stand.

See, judge and then act: about a past when 80% of world trade came through this port; when one million people lived on the strip between Lime Street and the River and now the whole city is some 450,000; ponder issues of infrastructure: parks, indeed churches and schools.

Go and see death registers at St Anthony's, Scotland Road: 25 funerals each day as Ireland's starving, sickly poor came and found priests who literally died serving them – 10 in a single year. And ask what made those thousands come?

See still spaces where bombs once rained down, and perhaps standing up to a different racism than the slave trade tens of thousands gave their lives, especially in the Merchant Navy between 1939 and 1945. But see the new gaps because the population may well still be in decline.

But see also the developments that speak of co-operation between the private sector, the city council, the Universities, the Churches and Faiths and such agencies as the North West Development Agency, not least near the Metropolitan Cathedral; see buildings and works of art. See this place: the Present.

Perhaps above all see two works of art: in St John's Gardens, the statue of Fr James Nugent who immersed himself in the complex needs of the poor: issues of hunger, housing, sewage, schooling, borstals, alcoholism and prostitution. At his death a memorial was erected by public subscription. He saw, judged and acted.

And in Hope St see Stephen Broadbent's monument, again funded by public subscription to Archbishop Worlock and Bishop David Sheppard, in recognition of their commitment to the well-being in body, mind and

spirit of all in this city's more recent dark days. See their book portrayed: Better Together. But the statue has a third space where Stephen says each one of us must choose to stand to continue their service to all. That is why the Liverpool participants today come from across the Churches and Agencies: for the future will be better together.

A quotation from Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, as true today as it was in 1843.

"There was once a boy and a girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish... Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked and glared out menacing... This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware of them both and all of their degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see that written is Doom, unless the writing be erased," cried the Spirit, stretching out his hand towards the City. "Slander those who tell it ye. Admit it for your facetious purposes, and make it worse. And bide the end!"

But we meet in a place named Hope; Hope is not optimism: optimism means restoration of the past; hope is about resurrection; hope is about Holy Saturday and waiting "for who knows what tomorrows might be born out of God's own fresh possibilities."