**Community**

On Mother’s Day our church went into Plymouth City Centre and handed out bunches of daffodils to everyone. The idea was to demonstrate in a small but effective way to people that God loves them. It was a token of his love to be sure, but as hundreds of these pretty yellow flowers found their way into people’s hands a remarkable picture unfolded. From a central concentration of yellow, where we piled up the bunches and labelled them, flowed out in all directions streams of colour as all over town people walked away holding their daffs and, for the most part smiling, because they had been touched by love.

What a visual demonstration of the church in action. Well not just the church, because Christians don’t have a monopoly on good works, but it is a fact that wherever you go in the world, where there is suffering you will find ‘Little Christs’ (as the nickname Christian meant when used in the first century) doing their best to take the love of Jesus to the places where it’s really needed.

These are the unsung footsoldiers of Christianity that don’t often make the headlines, who understand that it isn’t what goes on in the buildings on a Sunday morning that really matters. Rather it is what goes on for the other six days as the gathered saints on Sunday become scattered servants on Monday.

It explains why I’m Chaplain of Argyle. If I hung around with Christians all day everyday I would become weird. It’s happened to some of my friends and it isn’t pretty. I need to get out and about: in the words of Paulo Nutini if you're out and about then you're in with a chance. So I’m here to serve the community, to be a blessing, and I get a blessing in return. I meet Jesus in other people, sometimes the most surprising people in the most surprising circumstances.

In an interesting symmetry the Argyle community in general, and the Argyle Community Trust in particular, has its unsung heroes bringing blessing all over the city and beyond. The positive impact of the club as a wide and far-reaching community of people is not always given the credit it is due.

And so when a home game comes around the scattered servants of the green army gather from all corners of the South West, a broad collection of people from all walks of life and all backgrounds and beliefs. United together in their support of Plymouth Argyle. It reminds me of the bit in chapter 2 of the AA Big Book that says ‘We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. We are like the passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain’s table.’

I normally quote this when talking about church and how, when we worship alongside each other before God, we stand as equals: with the prejudices, hierarchies, classes and judgements of the world left at the door. But sometimes Home Park can feel a bit like this as well, shoulder to shoulder united by our support, mutual in our joy or despair. Where differences aren’t quite so obvious and background not so important. At a social function the question is always, ‘What do you do?’ but at a football match it is more like ‘What do you think of the team selection?’ or ‘Will we make the play offs?’ Or maybe I’m being a bit over romantic and soft in the head. In a world where local community is diminishing and loneliness is epidemic, places like churches and football clubs tend to stand out even more as beacons of hope and forces for good.

*‘My mother used to say that there are no strangers, only friends you haven't met yet. She's now in a maximum security twilight home in Australia.’* Dame Edna Everage