

Monday 27 February 2023

First responders

Readings: Leviticus 19:1-2. 11-18; Matthew 25:31-46

“I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink.”
(Matthew 25:35)

First responders to a major incident know that their top priority is not those who are begging for help and support, but the silent victims who are possibly too badly hurt to express their urgent need.

A similar thing happens in famine-stricken areas of the world. At first, people demand food and drink. Gradually, they lose even the strength to stand. They sit or lie in silence, waiting to see if they are noticed and helped before it is too late. The silence of real hunger is unnerving and speaks volumes about needs which might exceed the available supplies. The utter helplessness of the starving and thirsty people can generate feelings of uselessness in their would-be helpers, who recognise their limitations before the desperation that is so hard to heal. Many first responders have thought, “There’s only me and I can do so little. I’m only a drop in the ocean.” Yet an ocean only exists because of countless tiny drops of water.

Often, it’s the people who don’t make a fuss whose difficulties are the deepest and most painful. They are the overlooked and ignored “little ones” whose whisper is silenced by the money, influence and status of those who refuse to hear their cries for help. Today’s Gospel is that of the first responders: people who see the need and try to help, even if their best efforts seem inadequate. Jesus asks us to become first responders, who see what is wanted and offer our services.

Prayer

Loving Lord, teach me to be a first responder. Let me be alert to the silent cries of the people in my life who are in the greatest need, and let me respond in love. Amen.