



Guild Festival 2012

*A brief homily delivered by
Rt Revd Nicholas Reade, Bishop of Blackburn*



Because of Father Paul's outstanding talk there wasn't going to be an address - but a Eucharist without some proclamation, however small, isn't very satisfactory. So I just want to say two things

- First - **RESPECT the SICK**
- Second - **Let yourselves be loved by God.**

I've only been to Lourdes once, and what really impressed me there more than anything else was that the sick and the handicapped are the most important people present. They are given all the important places. Everyone makes room for them to pass. And this is done because we know that the Lord has a special love for the sick.

If that is so for Our Lord, then it must be so of ourselves also.

The sick, of course have a place in God's plan, even though we do not see or understand that plan, but what we do see so often is the patience, courage, cheerfulness and also frequently the deep spirituality of those who suffer, and we find that they give more to us than we can give to them. It is as if they are more open to the Spirit than those of us with perhaps lesser ailments, and so they can give more.

So our prayer today is that we too must be open to this Absolute Love, and especially through our prayer time. And that will happen if we realise that prayer has far more to do with what God wants to do in us than with our trying to reach Him or to do lots of things for Him. The important thing to remember is that prayer is not mainly about how we feel, but that we are there for God, and that it is His work in us much more than what we do for Him.

For many years I had a card up in my study which said 'God wants us to let Him love us.' And the person who gave me that card used to say, 'Stop trying to love God and start letting God love you'. The call you see is for us to be open to Him, and that way we become like plants that draw on deep water, rather than relying on the weather.

The sick, speak and preach to us because the Lord is at work in them in a special way.

Respect them.

And I venture to say that the more we are tuned into the Lord ourselves, the more we will share with a broken world His healing love.



Brief Homily for the Guild of S. Raphael Festival Eucharist in Liverpool Cathedral on Saturday 27th October 2012