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Living in the crowds, not the clouds

So the Jubilee bunting is being taken down (if it didn't get blown away), the Olympic bunting is up ready for the torch parade, and we are in a bit of a lull between the great, noisy, crowd-pulling events of our British summer. In the eye of the storm, a quiet period, time to take stock.

Spirituality is often associated with quietness – monastic life, going on retreat, silent prayer, or the tranquillity of a Hampshire churchyard. In the Bible, you can read that God rested on the seventh day of creation, that Jesus withdrew to a quiet place to pray, and – in a wonderful verse in the book of Revelation, in the midst of the noise and turmoil, there was “silence in heaven for about half an hour”.

So quietness is built into the vision of life that God shares with us? Yes, but... what is notable about those examples from the Bible is that the quiet periods are very special. Six busy days, one quiet day. Jesus lived among the people, surrounded by crowds and clamour. And – only half an hour of silence in heaven! A life of faith is so much more than striving for stillness. Most of it is to be lived in noisy, hectic activity: that is what we were made for just as much as the “quiet life” that we may yearn for and which occasionally comes to us as a bonus and a blessing. We are called to live in the crowds, not in the clouds!