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7 September 2016: Tim Concannon, St Laurence Catholic Church

Tradition

I had an extraordinary day last Saturday. My village church was the venue for a memorial service for a much loved parishioner, a dedicated fan of the village and the church, which is, as many of our historic churches are, a gem of medieval architecture, lovingly maintained by its loyal members.



The cousin of the deceased was a senior figure in the Methodist movement and gave a very amusing and interesting eulogy, in full vestments.

Later that day, the church, which is, of course Anglican, hosted a Roman Catholic Mass in full canonicles, with bells, but without smells, the Vicar herself pulling the rope and the Priest eschewing the incense. Thus in one day, this quiet Anglican church hosted 'Ranting Methodies,' 'Schismatic' Anglicans and 'Idolaterous Papists' in quick succession.

In the eight hundred year history of that dignified building all three of those activities would have been illegal at one time or another, and in two cases the presiders would have been liable for the supreme penalty, either by being burned at the stake for Heresy or else hung, drawn and quartered for Treason.

I was reminded how far we have come during those years, and how far from the message of Jesus Christ we strayed. These days we are, quite literally, singing from the same hymn sheet.

Sadly, today in other parts of the world, people are still prepared to carry out obscenities in the name of Religion: - it seems that some people still consider that they, and only they know the mind of God. Faced with the memories of three diverse, but related encounters with the Divine in an ancient building, redolent with atmosphere I was left with a single thought. The arrogance of Mankind, when presuming to impose the imagined dictates of God passes all understanding.