

## In God alone my soul is at rest

I recently spent an afternoon at Ashton Sixth Form College taking part in their Multi-Faith week. I had been asked by the Chaplain to talk about what being a Christian means to me and what difference it makes to my life. I spoke about how being a Christian helped me keep life in balance and that God helps me to feel at peace and grounded. As I talked, I remembered a quote from St Augustine of Hippo who said 'Our hearts are restless, until we find our rest in thee'. This, I explained to the students, was the difference for me – without faith I had felt restless and unsettled and then on discovering God, I felt as though I had found rest and was more settled.



However, I realised that there are times when I feel restless. Sometimes it's because there's too much to do and so I flit from one thing to another not really knowing where to focus. Sometimes when I'm trying to relax, I get bored and instead of just sitting still I end up trying to do lots of different things at once!

I recently read an article written by the author of a book 'Busy Lives & Restless Souls'. As part of the promotion of the book, Becky Eldridge has asked numerous groups "How do you notice restlessness manifesting in your own life?" The responses she got included: checking our phones constantly, always searching for more or the next thing to satisfy, over-working, online shopping, social media scrolling, surfing through TV channels, changing relationships, addiction, over-committing, shifting jobs over and over again, trying to find the best "fix" for a planner or organization system. The author suggested some ways in which she personally experienced restlessness: seeking fulfilment from material things, pursuing satisfaction and fulfilment from another person instead of God, letting her life's foundation be something or someone other than God, seeking personal status.

I think that we are all likely to recognise some of these symptoms of restlessness at some time or other. So how can we deal with this? The Bible gives us clear direction on where we can find our rest. In Psalm 62, we find these words "In God alone is my soul at rest."

I like this description of how these words can be understood better: "As one of my armchair theologian friends likes to remind me, "We are donuts!" What she means is each of us have a huge God-size hole within us by the very nature of our creation. The hole can only be filled by God despite our tendency to attempt to calm the restlessness within us by money, things, relationships, status, or accomplishments. Only God can fill us."

This sentiment is captured not only in scripture, but in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. "The desire for God is written in the human heart because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for."

So whenever we are feeling restless, perhaps the first thing we need to do is to focus on God, to pray for God's help to settle us and to help us realise that we have no need to search for anything other than him.

This Advent there will be several opportunities in our United Benefice which offer space to rest with God. There is an Advent Taizé service at St Andrew's on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December at 6.00pm and three afternoon sessions on Thursdays from 1.30 – 3.00pm at St Martin's where we will reflect on God through some of the

icons in church. Do come along, even if these are things you wouldn't normally come to – you might enjoy some stillness and rest during this season of waiting for the coming of Christ.