

## A NEW ORDER

Jesus was in the synagogue and there was a crowd around him, watching him and waiting to see what he would do. Some were looking for a reason to turn against him. They did not trust him for some of the things he said and did made them feel uncomfortable, as if they were the sinners, not the riff raff he associated with, They thought he wanted to bring in a new order, to throw out the old order, the law of Moses, by which they and their fathers had lived by for generations and to introduce his own ideas. Why he had recently talked about new skins for new wine and how you could not mend a tear in an old cloth with a new piece of cloth. They were suspicious of him. He was an anarchist and dangerous. They wanted a way to get rid of him. Their resentment towards him was tangible and created an atmosphere, a tension and Jesus could feel it.

Most of those in the crowd were good ordinary people who had come to listen to what Jesus was saying for they realised he spoke with authority and the miracles he performed, the miraculous cures he had brought about, confirmed that he was special and had Gods approval. Jesus was not changing the law but correcting the way people interpreted it.

People of my generation lived by very rigid laws. The church was rigid. It imposed insensitive and harmful restrictions, such as fasting from midnight before receiving Holy Communion. We were told the only way we could gain eternal life was through the catholic church, for it was the one true church. With Vatican two there came a great change. The church relaxed some of its strict rules and became more tolerant and understanding. The laity was asked for its opinion and the hierarchy began to listen. There was an excitement throughout the church, a feeling of hope and expectation. People began to attend mass, not because there was an obligation to do so, but because they wanted to come to praise and worship God. We became more tolerant towards other denominations and ecumenical, trying to work together and to celebrate our differences. I think, perhaps for some, this became difficult. In trying to respect and understand the traditions and beliefs of other denominations, they began to question their own. For instance, I have heard a good catholic say that it was futile to pray to Our Lady and the saints, how it may in fact be idolatry. My understanding is that idolatry is the worship of false gods. Mary, who gave birth to the mother of God, is not a god herself, nor are the saints but because of their great commitment to him, they have attained a place close to God in his Kingdom. We do not worship them but plead with them to intercede for us.

I think it is good for all who truly believe in God to come together, not necessarily to convert all to one set of rules but to celebrate our differences and to work alongside each other to try to solve the many problems of our shared community. In this present crisis, now is the time to come together, spiritually, as one and pray together for the will and the means to solve, not only this problem, but all the problems of the world. We are all in this together, we should all, Christian, Muslim, Jew, indeed all who worship God, pray to him together. Perhaps, then, we will learn to live in peace and together feed the hungry, heal the sick, help the poor and comfort the dying. May God help us to bring about a new world filled with love and compassion.

Reflection by Tony Topping