

WHAT DOES LOVE REQUIRE OF ME?

For the last four weeks, indeed for all this year in one way or another, we have been living through an exceptionally divisive time. Not just the election, but because of Hunting, Foot & Mouth and people needing asylum, to take only three examples, we are being put into boxes by the media: one Party or another, Town people or Country, British or Foreign, or even asylum seeker. Even if we don't want a label, others will choose one for us. Emphasising divisions in society is a very dangerous thing to do and it is happening without us being able to do very much about it. In Devon we were just beginning to get over the hostility generated by the hunting question when the disaster of Foot & Mouth, complete with its division between farmers and the tourism industry, put us back, not only to where we were, but even behind square one. We need to rediscover our fellowship and recognise that we all need one another.

During the war my brother, who must have been about 5 at the time, asked our neighbour over the garden fence, "Mrs Cann, who made me?" No doubt having done some rapid thinking about the birds and bees she replied "I suppose God did, Peter." His next question was: "Then who made Goering?" "Well, I suppose God did too." "No," he replied "God couldn't of, God's English." Those words from a five-year-old echo the inner beliefs in many of us. And that is why it is so dangerous for us to put one another into boxes, to see others as essentially different because of their political views or skin colour or birthplace or employment. One of the great religious concepts, shared by many denominations and Faiths, is a belief in the essential unity of the family of mankind. Inside a family you can be cross with one another, but all the time you know that you are part of something bigger than both of you. Few things can be more hurtful than to be rejected by your own family - or more painful than to find yourself driven to take such a decision.

So how can we find a way to avoid the wound we are inflicting on one another and on ourselves every day? In my heart I know that God is not on the side of any one political party or group, nor do I believe that Divinity is found only in one religion, least of all do I believe that any one nation is uniquely favoured. Perhaps a good starting point might be to begin each day with this simple prayer, to ask ourselves, and the Spirit that is in all of us: "What is it that Love requires of me today?" - and to listen to the answer.