

Time for More Anoraks

When it comes to steam locomotives, I am an anorak. According to one dictionary definition, that means that I am 'a socially inept person with a hobby considered by most people to be boring'. Well, whatever the definition, although I gave up steam locomotives sixty years ago, yet a bit of the anorak remains. There only has to be a TV drama about World War Two, with the lovers saying farewell on a railway station, for me to bore my wife with a remark like: 'That's a Standard Class locomotive, and they weren't built until the 1950s'.

But anoraks can have their uses in these days when there is so much sloppiness about; and Christianity gets a fair share of it. For example: 'Jesus Christ was from a simple working-class family'; no he wasn't: (Luke 1:5, 36). 'The early Christians had nothing to do with formal religion'; yes they did (Luke 24:52-53. Acts 3:1). 'Jesus said the most important thing was to love your neighbour'; no he didn't (Mark 12:28-30). 'Mary Magdalene was a prostitute'; no she wasn't (Mark 16:9). Not to mention that money is not the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10), and St Patrick wasn't Irish (he was British). Mind you, none of these misconceptions quite beats a quiz contestant on the BBC who thought that it was Barabbas who was crucified.

If we Christians are irritated by such dilutions and distortions of our Faith, we can't blame anyone but ourselves. We can't expect our secular society to do the job for us. Complaints like: 'They don't teach the Bible in schools these days', have a simple answer: 'Why should they'? If the parents don't go to church, read their Bible, and above all, openly confess their Faith; why should their children be bothered?

I write this just after Margaret Thatcher's funeral. The procession and church service were impressive ceremonies, with many high-profile attenders who wouldn't be at church the following Sunday. We heard much in the commentary about economics, the Falklands and coal-mining. Meanwhile, the central Christian funeral theme that Christ rose from the dead to abolish death and restore creation to how it was meant to be; was almost diluted out of existence.

Marginalising the Christian Faith in schools and turning church services into Establishment social occasions; are not good friends in these testing times for Christianity (James 2:1-4).

Father Michael Harry
www.orthodoxlouth.co.uk
www.orthodoxgrimsby.co.uk