

Feeling Better

East Window, January 2003

It feels so good to be back at work after a prolonged illness. I was absent for three months and I am writing this short piece during my first week back with you all. I don't really want to go through it again, but I must admit that it proved to be a fascinating experience, and taught me a great deal. Illness will be different for each person of course, but may I share some thoughts that occurred during my experience?

First, I am rather distressed to find that the Diocese has been doing just fine without me! We live in a 'driven' culture, which tricks us into thinking that we are indispensable. But the truth is that God has created us to savour every moment of this gift of life, not to rush it away in a frenzy, as if life were just a rehearsal. On the other hand, although not indispensable, I was happy to know that there were just a few things that needed my attention. So, not driven, but called to play our part. It's all a matter of balance.

I have to admit that at one point my illness reminded me rather sharply of my vulnerability and mortality – that I would one day have to die. But I found that thought making me thankful for what had been rather than bemoaning that it might end. I did nothing to deserve being alive in the first place – it's all God's gift.

I was lucky enough to be cared for by remarkable people – doctors, nurses, hospital cooks and cleaners. The wonders of medicine are a great blessing, but what an even greater gift is the smile and care of those who spend a little time to care. And that, we can all do.

At one stage my treatment seemed to be going all wrong – the doctor's word for it was, 'bizarre'! Which reminded me that often in life our wisdom and our knowledge are wanting. Our brains are very clever but in the final analysis, they are limited. There is much that is beyond our grasp and will always be – but that means that there can be mystery, and I wouldn't want to miss out on mystery for all the world – in fact I suspect it's the best bit!

Illness certainly reminds us of what really matters in this world. When I really felt low, the sophistications of modern life paled into insignificance compared with the little indications of love and prayer – and that means that I want to thank you all for your love and prayers – they meant more to me than I can say. Prayer is a life-saver!

St Luke's Hospital for the Clergy cares especially for clergy and their families and whilst the doctors and surgeons give their services free, it still costs money to run. They are so good. Please remember to send a donation if you can.

✂ *Laurie Bradwell*