



St Luke's in the City

150 years - 2009

Celebrating at the Crossroads

10th Sunday after Pentecost

20 July 2008

Community and Growth

A community is only a community when the majority of its members is making the transition from 'the community for myself' to 'myself for the community', when each person's heart is opening to all the others, without any exception. This is the movement from egoism to love, from death to resurrection; it is the Easter, the Passover of the Lord. It is also the passing from a land of slavery to a promised land, the land of interior freedom.

A community isn't just a place where people live under the same roof; that is a lodging house or an hotel. Nor is a community a work-team. Even less is it a nest of vipers! It is a place where everyone – or, let's be realistic, the majority! – is emerging from the shadows of egocentricity to the light of a real love. 'Do nothing from selfishness of conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his (or her) own interests, but also to the interests of others' (Philippians 2:3-4)

Love is neither sentimental nor a passing emotion. It is an attraction to others which gradually becomes commitment, the recognition of a covenant, of a mutual belonging. It is listening to others, being concerned for them and feeling empathy with them. It means answering their call and their deepest needs. It means feeling and suffering with them – weeping when they weep, rejoicing when they rejoice. Loving people means being happy when they are there, sad when they are not. It is living in each other, taking refuge in each other. 'Love is a power for unity,' says Denys the Areopagite. And if love means moving towards each other, it also and above all means moving together in the same direction, hoping and wishing for the same things. Love means sharing the same vision and the same ideal. So it means wanting others to fulfill themselves, according to God's plan and in service to other people. It means wanting them to be faithful to their own calling, free to love in all the dimensions of their being.

There we have the two poles of community; a sense of belonging to each other and a desire that each of us goes further in our own gift to God and to others, a desire that there is more light in us, and a deeper truth and peace.

(Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth*)