

*Pastoral letter of Encouragement*

*I have come to believe that commitment means different things to different people. I lean towards the **Amway definition: "Commitment means being willing to do whatever it takes to succeed"**.*

Madoc and Nicki had been married for eleven years when their deepest wish came true: they had a child. It was not a child of their own, it was adopted from an orphanage. They felt they were the happiest family in the world. Unfortunately, their happiness lasted only nine months - the child's biological father suddenly showed up. It turned out that the man, a soldier, was not killed in battle as the orphanage had assumed. He was still alive and wanted his child back, though, since his wife's death two years before, he had never concerned himself about it.

It was the beginning of the biggest crisis in Madoc and Nicki's life. "Why did the Lord allow this to happen?" they asked. "We prayed for a child for so long and now this. Why?" They asked many questions, but they received no answer.

One day Madoc and Nicki knelt in prayer again for their child, "Lord, you know where she is now. You are with her. You love her and You will look after her much better than we ever could. Bless her, dear Lord, and do not forget us either. We need You more than ever now. Amen."

Madoc looked at his wife. He didn't say anything but softly sang, "We have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back." There was a brief silence, then Nicki also joined in the song - uncertainly at first, but then with growing conviction. They missed their child. They suffered a great loss, yet victory had returned.

Victory through acceptance - peace through submission and commitment. Again, and again. Not just for Madoc and Nicki, but also for you.

The suffering on the cross to which we attach ourselves cannot be avoided in the painful circumstances of our lives. These are not of our choosing. The suffering on the cross must be embraced in faith and lived through in order to catch a glimpse of what lies beyond. Although our celebration of Easter this year might have been muted compared to the past years, the truth it celebrates will never diminish - "Life and death contended; Combat strangely ended". Our belief is that life will triumph over death. That light will conquer darkness. The words of an eminent Christian homiletics professor are of profound significance at this time: "Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are Easter People and Alleluia is a song.

Like Madoc and Nicki, let us trust and hold on to our faith. No turning back.

Ours is to trust and hold on to His promises, He said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you, I am with you till the end of age" If we believe God exists, and that He is able to make the impossible possible, let trust His timing to change situations in our lives and that of the Wey Valley circuit.

***The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18)***

With every blessing this summer season. God bless Her Royal Majesty Queen Elizabeth and all her family, the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth.

Thank you.

Yours devotedly,

George