



He spent many years trying to break down the wall between “us” and “them”. And one particular place where he succeeded was a mental hospital, if that’s what I’m allowed to call it, near Bristol; and around this hospital there was almost the Berlin wall - concrete with barbed wire and cameras.

The public, ‘us’, are frightened of what ‘they’ inside there might do. He succeeded in getting rid of that and having it replaced by a wooden fence, and when he told me this story, he said, “Don’t forget what the philosopher, Nietzsche said, and I sometimes feel this is true, that the world is like a mental asylum in which the in-mates are running it, and you think, “Hang on”, looking around at what’s happening in our beloved world, “Yes”.

Anyway, he succeeded in replacing this with a wooden fence up which plants and things grew. More friendly anyway. He was walking past it one morning, early in the summer, at about half past six and from the other side of the fence he saw something that, if you’ve ever dealt with patients who have mental problems, is quite frightening.

There were 20 or 30 men counting, and they were just standing there it seemed, saying “thirteen, thirteen, thirteen .....”. He was a little uneasy and he came across a little place where there was a hole in the wall so he put his eye to it to see what was happening. And he was poked in the eye and they all went “Fourteen, fourteen, fourteen .....”.

## Redeemed

My theme today is twofold: The real theme based on the Grand President’s motto for the year is obviously to stand up, hold ourselves erect and realise, as St Paul himself said, “No height, no depth, no principality, nothing will get between us and God”. We are a redeemed people.

Yes, we are sinners but we are redeemed and we have a message of hope, faith and love to give other people and it is our duty so to do. Not, as the Grand President said, with placards, no, but by being ourselves, by stretching our hand of friendship out, by taking on the chin the things of which we are accused, and accepting them and trying to pick ourselves up again and again and again. And we have to do it seven times seventy times; probably daily.

All of us are sinners and we have no right to point a finger at anyone; to be judging in any way, and that includes those people who are attacking us. They have their agenda, their beliefs.

We have to respect it but counteract it by turning the other cheek and giving

more love, again and again, as the Grand President said. The other theme that I have is to ensure that we as people ‘engage’. We mustn’t give up.

The biggest growth industry in the western world is ‘security’. All these places protecting themselves. In America, they’re growing walls around them. Even in my beloved Suffolk there is an estate that has now engaged four Ghurkhas to protect it from other people.

Go to Hampstead and Highgate – walls are going up with barbed wire, CCTV cameras..... We’ve got them everywhere.

*“Easy speeches  
that comfort  
cruel men”  
GK Chesterton*

We’re frightened. And when we’re frightened we withdraw like a tortoise into its shell. We get down and curl up like a hedgehog. We must not do that!

We have, however, to be careful. We mustn’t kowtow to popularity, but we must kowtow to Christ himself.

It was Chesterton who wrote in one of his hymns, he talked about ‘easy speeches’ that comfort ‘cruel men’. And that’s what’s happening.

We are kowtowing to power, to money, to all sorts of things that really are against the Christian spirit. And we mustn’t do what Pilot did – wash his hands, forget, let it pass, nothing to do with me.

## Global Economy

We are all responsible to all, for all. We are living in a world that has anxieties; very understandable. We think of the global economy and what’s happening in Greece. Is it going to affect the rest of Europe, if not the world?

We think of climate change, however it is being caused. What’s going to happen; these floods, the ice melting? We think of resources. The next great war will be over water, they say. We think of terrorism; all these cameras going up to protect us; beginning to get trials without juries.

We’re worried about poverty and the population explosion. Look at what’s happening to the oil from BP in the Gulf of wherever it is. It’s going to destroy eco-systems and that is terrifying.

What about our bankers? The anger against bankers, against politicians,

against paedophile priests and the Church, even the Monarchy! The enormous, ridiculous bureaucracy we have; not allowing a priest to touch a child just in case .... The horrendous things that are happening in health and safety. It goes on and on and on ....

I read somewhere that it is the writers, the artists, the wise and the holy people who refuse to reduce anything to a formula. They would be bad party members because they are prepared to stand up and be counted, like Christ. He got crucified. Many other Christians have been crucified and are being crucified for standing up for what they believe to be right. We do, and I know you know this story and I apologise to Wimbledon and Norwich Circles – they have heard it - but it is a story that really is important.

We’re getting to the point where we want all people to conform. To push them into those pigeon holes. Make sure they stay there. It’s happening in education in a very big way.

## Downside

Years ago when I was in Ealing, staying at the monastery there because I was attending a course and was an old boy of Downside, that wonderful, great school of which I was a wonderful, great headmaster, (laughter) and they are great people (and I don’t refer to Ampleforth!).

I was taken out to dinner by an old boy of Downside and, as he was paying, (I chose the restaurant – one of those restaurants where the menu doesn’t have the price of the meal on it, so it was good; so I had lobster), the poor man went white but never mind! He was a banker and he made up for it later. (I could have said a politician but I didn’t!)

Anyway we went out and sadly God has a sense of humour and I poured half of the lobster sauce over my habit and I thought how do I get this cleaned because I didn’t really trust Father “X”, who will remain nameless, in Ealing monastery because he would have gone to the Abbot from whom I had not got permission to go out and said: (adopts a child’s voice) “Father Anthony has spilled sauce over his habit .....”

Foolishly I took my habit to be cleaned at what was then a Sketchley’s and I had a half hour conversation with a lovely girl as to whether it should be cleaned as a military uniform or as a ball gown because there was no pigeon hole for a monk’s habit.

I took the “ball gown” because it was cheaper and regretted it when the Daily Mail found a copy of it ... but never mind.... that was the beginning of the collapse of the Catholic Church! But seriously we must not allow this to happen.