



Homeless Sunday - A reflection

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Do we recognise this scene? If we live in a city or town, we probably do because it's a scene that is familiar to anyone who lives in our cities and perhaps elsewhere as well. The figure on the park bench, or more likely under the bridge or arches, is part of the urban scene.

Do we recognise this person? Probably not, not personally. Usually he – or sometimes she – is huddled up in a blanket or other covering so we can't see their face. But perhaps we don't recognise them because we don't look, perhaps because we avert our eyes, anxious not to make eye contact, perhaps because we don't want to face all those questions: 'we're told we shouldn't give money because they might spend it on drugs or alcohol'; they're foreigners and shouldn't they go back; they get benefit don't they?'

Do we recognise ourselves? How easy is the slide from loss of job, rent arrears, family break up, eviction, no address so no benefit; how easy is the slide into alcohol addiction and how difficult the escape from it. How easy does the transition from life's stress and trauma slide into mental illness.

Do we recognise Jesus? Look at his feet, wounded from the nails of disdain, ignorance and cruelty. "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head". As in so many aspects of our lives, Jesus experienced his sleeping head on a hard surface. He knew what it was to empathise with the man living naked amongst the tombs. He was full of Isaiah: "Is not this the fast that I choose. is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?"

What does it mean to recognise? One definition is "to identify as someone previously seen or known". When we pass that huddled figure why not glance at his feet and recognise him as someone we have previously known – Jesus. Our response flows from that recognition.

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