

Moment to shine

'Moment to shine' is one of the mottos for the London 2012 Olympic Games. The opening ceremony did more than live up to this – it shone brightly. In fact it set the world alight. From the start when the Red Arrows pierced the dusk, to the dazzling finale, there was an incredible sense of energy, pride, positivity and possibility.

In my own home, as we sat down to watch it together, we were spellbound by the story that was told. Through the music, dance, art and sport every aspect of the history of our country and indeed of life itself was touched upon and celebrated. Joy, pain, sadness, love, communication, greed, generosity, loss, wealth, harmony, conflict and transformation. It had it all. From the often frenetic yet organised chaos something very special emerged that resounded and stirred deep within me.

For me, this night wasn't just a showcase for us to honour the strength and courage of the greatest sports men and women of the world. There was a message of the 'loud and clear' variety deep in the centre of it. An exciting message of hope, that the present moment, here and now is a moment to shine for each and every one of us. Yes, for both you and me. As I looked at the faces of my young girls I felt strongly that it is within our own home and families that we are all called to shine. And to shine brightly at that.

These times are difficult ones for our young people to find a balance in so many aspects of their lives. We all need a balance of busyness and calm; of noise and silence; of action and relaxation. Young people are under so much pressure to do the right thing, portray the right image, get the right qualifications, and possess the right stuff that all too often their personal lives can lack any real connection with a sense of their own spirituality. Any sense of God's deep and profound love for them.

As parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents, we are called to remind the young people in our lives of this. We are all called to shine brightly with the flame of the divine within us and to give them the courage and self-belief to do the same. This can be a daunting task indeed. But as the ones who have experienced a little more of life and of love than our youngsters – it is our vocation to do so.

St. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians tells us how we can remain steady in this task:

'Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious – the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you have learned from me, what you heard and saw and realised. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies.'

Phil 4 vv 4-9 (Message Bible)

These are wise and wonderful words that could, perhaps, be used as a blueprint for the way in which we engage in the task of loving and dealing with the young people in our lives. If we need any help in how to do this, we need only look to Jesus and 'put into practice' how he dealt with people. He had an authority that radiated from him. Not an authority that was transmitted with fear, but a gentle authority from within.

An authority that spoke through his compassion, his touch, his service and his endless love.

St Teresa of Avila tells us that, we too are the hands and the feet of Christ to each other.

The very touch of God.

So, just as Sir Steve Redgrave, an experienced Olympian, passed on the Olympic flame to seven young athletes of the future, we too are called to pass on the flame of Christ's love and compassion to the young people in our families. This work may be tender and vulnerable but it is absolutely vital. We won't always get it right but when we

try to do this with real love and generosity of spirit then we will be passing on to them the essence of how to live life to the full. Of how every moment is their moment to shine. It may not always be easy for them or for us but each time we try we will move together more deeply into the mystery that is God.

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