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The
McAuley
Catholic High School
and Sixth Form
DONCASTER



April 190
bypass

M. i90 **bypass**

In our Lenten Liturgy, that took place on the last day of last term and which was published in the last newsletter, the following was said by Jesus as he awaited his fate in the garden of Gethsemane.

And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, **“My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.”**

Even Jesus was asking to be spared the fate and the death that was awaiting him. Quite naturally, He wanted to avoid it. To bypass it.

The word, **Bypass** can also mean to...

avoid or circumvent (an obstacle or problem).

The bypass often avoids the inevitable. To avoid uncomfortable truths, which even though circumvented, still exist and remain unchanged by the avoidance.

We have always watched the **Grand National**. Like very many millions of ordinary people, it's the only horse race that we watch. Our ritual involves (me) cutting the names of the runners and riders from a Saturday paper, them being selected at random and then being spread out in front of us as we settle down for the race. The prize? An Easter egg.

Saturday was different. The race was delayed by animal rights protesters, some of whom made their way onto the course. The commentators didn't cover themselves with glory either, referring to the "people of Liverpool" want the race to go ahead, that the protesters "were selfish" and that "they wouldn't even know what to do with a horse...would they just put it in their garden?" We watched images of heavy handed behaviour from the police and 'local people'. The criticism of the action of some protesters avoided any reference to the issue that they were attempting to highlight.

We sat and watched the delayed race start but were already a bit distracted. It got worse. The inevitable sight of jockeys being tossed into the air as they hit the first jump. The chaos of legs and heads as the horses fell. The sad sight of riderless horses racing on instinct ahead of the bunch, then getting in the way, colliding through barriers.

The commentators avoided any reference to the stricken animals or even the jockeys as their numbers fell away. On the second circuit a man with a flag signalled the jockeys to bypass a fence.

It was only when the camera briefly showed the raised "privacy" screens that we knew something terrible had happened. Commentators simply referred to this being a "precaution". I'm not making any other comment about this event other than the fact that the difficult discussion about animal welfare was bypassed.

In school, I am frequently presented with difficult decisions and difficult conversations. Some things you have to deal with 'head-on'.

Most recently, this is illustrated by the issue of strike action by some colleagues. As someone who has to manage the finances, it was clear that the pay rise (announced when we had broken up in July) would have to come from our existing budget. It cost the school around half a million pounds. It was an unfunded pay rise. Since then, in order to balance the books, difficult decisions have been made and difficult conversations have been had. A large hole has been made in our reserve funds. Funds earmarked to improve facilities. Further strike action is planned. We will, once again, explain our approach to ensure that students still get the opportunities that they deserve. But I will be damned if I do and damned if I don't.

Last term, I had two quite challenging encounters. The first, from a parent who complained about how we had dealt with an issue regarding his child. It wasn't a comfortable series of conversations and acknowledging that we had got some things wrong, I apologised. But we also acted in a way that we thought appropriate; the parent thought otherwise. However, the important principle is not to ignore the issue.

A second example, is where we have been challenged by a parent about a Local Authority issued fixed penalty notice about taking her children on holidays in term time (unauthorised absence). This time we are certain that we got things right. The parent disagrees. These are not always easy conversations to have but we have to have them.

It is definitely tempting to take the path of least resistance, after all no-one likes or looks for conflict, but to bypass issues, to put off the inevitable, is not the ethical approach to leadership that we try to practice.

Taking Christ as our model, without Our Lord facing up to the inevitable, there wouldn't have been the crucifixion and there wouldn't have been Resurrection and new life in Him.

Happy Easter
John Rooney