

A little lovin', a little givin', to build a dream for the world we live in (Homily for Easter 5C 2019)

Tonight (last night) Israel hosts (hosted) this year's Eurovision Song Contest. This annual festival of cheesy lyrics, outrageous costumes, visual pyrotechnics and notoriously biased voting; draws the biggest international viewing audience for any non-sporting event.

One thing it has in common with sport is that it is a competition but one in which the rivalries between nations are conducted in a celebratory, tolerant and joyous atmosphere in which only things bruised, and wounded are inflated egos and exaggerated hopes.

It is also tongue in cheek: as recognised by the doyen of commentators, the late Terry Wogan who observed in 2008: "I don't make the mistake of thinking it's a major musical event. I love the Eurovision Song Contest and it will continue long after I'm gone. Just please don't ask me to take it seriously."

And indeed very few people would regard the contest as a showcase for the best music. Most of the acts, with some obvious exceptions sink into obscurity with the dimming of the stage lights. But to expect otherwise is to miss the point, to quote Sir Terry again: "It's supposed to be bad. And the worse it is, the more fun it is" (1997)

And here lies its genius, it is an annual extravaganza that provides joy and laughter for the millions of the world's citizens who tune in. It is a festival of fun in a world of sadness, woe and suffering. It doesn't pretend to solve the world's troubles, but in its own small

way it shows how we can yearn together for a better, more harmonious world in which smiles, and laughter are shared globally.

The waving of flags, the tears of hope, songs idealising world peace and universal love may be short-lived, but they reveal a commonality of human aspiration, a recognition of our shared humanity with the momentary transcending of national and ethnic differences and rivalries.

It all falls well short of the vision of a new heaven and a new earth in our second reading; but it can give us pause for thought, and cause for hope; for it is much easier to imagine the God revealed in Jesus mingling with this audience and swaying along to these new songs than it is to think of him echoing the tired, miserly and soul destroying slogans of the hate mongers spreading fear and prejudice at populist political rallies.

For Christ is the one who issued the new commandment to love one another so that others might recognise us as his disciples. It is when we follow this commandment; when we move decisively beyond the world of platitudes and choose to act on our long harboured hope that we receive glimpses of the new Jerusalem in which people of every land are welcomed as citizens and we acknowledge one another as God's people and so consign violence, death and tears of sorrow to the past.