

“What a great thing it would be to have some cross country skis to get about on.” So they were ordered over the internet from a shop in Sussex (safe bet, getting them from Sussex). And the rector waited. And the rector waited... A couple of Sundays later it rained in the afternoon and the snow disappeared. The next morning the skis arrived at the rectory - they'd been held up by the snow. You just cannot tell what might happen tomorrow, let alone next week, but at least there was a sense of fulfillment that I'd done something about it - even if it had cost me quite a bit! (There's always the next time.)

In a couple of weeks' time we start that period of self-discipline and preparation called Lent. There is an expectation of the great joy of Easter at the end of it. However, for the people of Haiti, Easter is going to be, at the best, a bitter-sweet time. Many of them who survived will wonder what this journey we make is all about. Doubtless some will hold on to the one thing - the only thing - that is left to them: the promise that the faithful will share in Jesus' resurrection.

We will have responded to their plight in whatever way we have seen fit. But their sad demise actually gives *us* something this Lent: a reminder that what we have, right now, this moment of your reading - shelter, clean water, food, infrastructure - should never be taken for granted. Therein may be our longer-lasting response.

But it's not just the actuality of what happened out there, it's all the potential that was never realised; the difference every individual *could* have made to the world. Indeed, it's now an imponderable whether or not any of them were achieving or had achieved that which God intends for all his children: fulness of life.

Which reminds me of the snow again - or rather, the chat I had with Jim and his friends, who I found throwing snowballs at things over at the playing fields. Teenagers are actually interesting people to talk to - or rather, listen to. The adventure of discovery in which their minds are swimming; the unfettered opinions that describe an aspect of our community we don't see because of our social myopia. What is it, actually, with which they can be involved in their community here? I don't know the answer - yet. What I do know is that their potential isn't being nurtured by us. It needs to be.

The whole point of Lent, Holy Week and Easter, is that we remind ourselves of the struggle life can bring, but also of the greater joy, through trust in God's promises, that makes it all worth it. That is the journey Jesus calls us to make, risks and all - and the fulfillment of our lives, short or long, is what God wants for us all; so much so, in fact, that he gave his only Son, that we might... well, I think you know.

If we think all the lost life in Haiti (about which we could do nothing) is a tragedy, we can at least do our best to make sure there isn't that insidious leaching of life (about which we can do something) right here in our midst.

And if, while making this effort for our youngsters, the sea comes in and swallows us up next week? Well, at least we will have been on the road to the kingdom of God anyway. And that might cost us quite a bit, too. It did for Jesus.

