

## **500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation**

You may recall that several events have been taking place already this year celebrating the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation.

*Here in Merseyside our CTMR Presidents have each agreed to write their own 500 word statement on one of the 5 Rs which will be released one at a time over the next few months. The first one, REJOICING, has been circulated widely and was very much appropriate to the celebrations. Please see all allocations below in release order.*

*Rejoicing: The Rev'd Phil Jump, Regional Minister, North West Baptist Association*

*Remembering: The Most Rev'd Malcolm McMahon, Archbishop of Liverpool*

*Reforming: The Rev'd Jacky Embrey, Moderator of the Mersey Synod of the United Reformed Church*

*Repenting: The Rev'd Dr Sheryl Anderson, Chair of the Liverpool Methodist District*

*Reconciling: Major Drew McCombe, North-Western Divisional Commander, Salvation Army*

### **The Second in the Series**

### **'Remembering' - The Most Revd Malcolm McMahon, Archbishop of Liverpool**

#### **Remembering the Reformation**

Remembering the reformation in England does not bring much joy. It was and still remains a tragedy in the history of the Christian Church. Divisions in the body of Christ still persist and are nothing less than a scandal to the world. Many forces at play which resulted in great brutality on all sides. Remembering our martyrs who died for their beliefs can be edifying as it shows how fidelity to one's beliefs and the primacy of conscience are greater than one's own life. On the other hand, the seemingly inhuman way that Christians behaved towards each other is to be remembered with shame. At the reformation the body of Christ was pulled apart, just as our martyrs, both protestant and catholic, were pulled apart on the rack. Their arms and legs were truly dis-membered. Looking to the future, our task as we hold them in our minds and hearts is to re-member the Body of Christ; to put it back together again. That is an enormous task but not impossible, after all we can be sure that Jesus' prayer that we may all be one will be fulfilled one day.

In Christianity remembering has a special function. By recalling the words of Jesus at the Last Supper the heavenly banquet that awaits us is anticipated. Christians call this act the holy Eucharist, because by giving thanks to God for his great deeds throughout history, and thus remembering those deeds, the resurrected Christ is present to us. When we remember we roll up the carpet of time at both ends, and God is present to us now.

So for us remembrance is not nostalgia where we hanker after something that happened a long time ago, nor is it a triumphant act because at the heart of our remembrance is the death of a man who died a criminal's death on the cross.

When we follow Jesus' command to do this in remembrance of him, using his words we say, 'This is my body given up for you, and this is my blood poured out for many.' Jesus was anticipating his death and in dying on the cross he showed us that love is greater than death. Remembrance for Christians has present and future dimensions which are for us a promise of future glory.

Five hundred years after the reformation our hatred for each other has turned into love and we actively seek ways in which we can become one. I believe the Eucharist, which was the focus of so much disagreement at the time of the reformation and afterwards will be the driving force to becoming one church again. It is in the Eucharist that many grains become one bread; and so there will be a time when we will be able to remember together not the nastiness of human beings' actions towards one another but the wonderful deeds of our loving God who sent his Son for the forgiveness of sins.

+Malcolm McMahon  
Archbishop of Liverpool