

Looting - why not if you are a moral relativist?

They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls; they climb up into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief. (Joel 2.9)

On my way to and from central London this evening it was apparent that we have now become an international freak show. (See London riots: world reacts to city's 'hungry mutiny') It was a bit of a shock to exit North Greenwich Station to the announcement that buses would not go through Woolwich "due to (sic) civil unrest." I was also disturbed (but not in the least surprised) to hear that Croydon, my Alma Mater was also featured thanks to a massive fire at Reeves Corner.



Photo: Dan Kitwood

David Cameron, Boris Johnson and others are rushing back to London since the country has become a bit of a basket case and Something Needs to be Done." The best immediate remedy would be to pray for torrential rain: anyone in the Police will tell you that it is the single most effective preventative measure against any form of street crime. Failing that, what is left of our Poor Bloody Infantry will be on standby, I suppose.

Pundits are free with various observations. The top tweet at the #londonriots tag is from @mslulurose who observes:

The Youth of the Middle East rise up for basic freedoms. The Youth of London rise up for a HD ready 42" Plasma TV

That seems to be a consensus view and not many people are now trying to blame the rioting on "the cuts." The opportunity for robbery is providing rich fare for humour which we are quite good at in situations like this, (in lieu of doing any serious about it.) One of my favourites was from the 1985 Brixton riots when I was a young curate up the road in Camberwell. People wandering along Coldharbour Lane with televisions and video recorders passed a large graffito which read "Looting takes the waiting out of wanting" - a witty allusion to a contemporary Barclaycard advert. I eagerly look forward to Matt's cartoon tomorrow on the Telegraph website.

There are reports of good Muslim men going onto the streets to defend their neighbours' property. And in this instance, why not admit that these are Muslim men, not just "Turkish people"? Their faith has provided them with something of that social cohesion that we are all supposed to be fostering in a religious and ethical vacuum. Ultimately this fiasco in our capital city is down to relentless moral relativism and the elimination of any notion of truth. If "my view" is all that matters in every subject at school, then by the time you reach Year 11 there is no pressing reason why you should not burn cars, throw stones at police and cycle round to loot shops if that is what meets your needs during the summer holidays.

Whether through rain, water cannon, lack of physical fitness, or boredom, the rioting will stop sooner or later. Unless we recover some basic Christian values in our society it will happen again and probably more seriously during some summer soon.

Fr Tim Finigan