

Blue Healers

Serious illness brings spiritual challenges as well as medical ones. We were in Ward 83 at Auckland City Hospital recently as Diane underwent complex neurosurgery, and she had to wrestle with the fact that so many people were praying for her, at a time when in her words, she was 'Having a rest from Church'. She felt unworthy of that prayer, even though it was obvious to those around her that the intercessions were working – and quickly.

Like many of us, she was having a 'St Thomas moment', asking for physical and tangible evidence of God's reality, while at the same time feeling anxious about that position – a position of doubt akin to cynicism.

So we looked around us for evidence. One thing she clearly discerned was the sense of vocation and devotion among the nursing staff ; they travelled daily from Mt Roskill, Point Chevalier, Waitakere City and even further away to work at her bedside. We asked ourselves; were the 'Blue Healers' as we nicknamed them, evidence of some overarching force for good, regardless of their diversity of colour, ethnicity and accent? Our debate continues to this day, it having been interrupted by requests for yet more blood tests, and by the sheer fatigue that accompanies the aftermath of surgery.

St Thomas' experience at John Chapter 20 reassures us that doubt does not count against us; on the contrary Jesus (and by extension God Himself) rewards Thomas with special time, and with a confirmed place as one of the disciples. Debate – even the laying down of conditions upon belief ('unless I see the wounds for myself') – are not barriers to God's care for us especially as it is expressed in prayer for us by others. Prayer should be unconditional and based solely upon the needs of those being prayed for.

So please pray for the crews in Ward 83 post-operative HDU, and for Mr Andrew Law and his theatre team, regardless of their faith or lack of it. By their works alone we judge them.

Richard Swarbrick