

One of the unmistakable things that you realize upon entering any of the great cathedrals of England is that there are a lot of dead people in the world. From Westminster to Yorkminster, from Salisbury to Canterbury, and from Wells to Winchester, you encounter amazing architecture, sculpture, and paintings. You also recognize the unambiguous mortality that is our lot. Crypts, funerary statues, grave markers in the floor, and memorial plaques all remind one that amidst the beauty and wonder of the best that humans can create is the fleeting experience that we all will have.

Stay with me a moment. This is not meant to be a morose reflection. Rather, the image of the cathedrals is the backdrop for two wonderful experiences while touring there recently. Amidst the history and all the remembrances of those who have gone before, the noise and energy of young people actively engaged in arts and crafts could be heard and felt. While the heroes and heroines of the past looked down upon the sacred space of the cathedrals, children ran to and fro acting out parts for a production that would be performed at the end of the day. And while those who had contributed their portion centuries before were silenced, the voices of young people filled the cathedrals with the praise of worship and singing as well as the acclamation of being together and enjoying life with others.

This, you see, was moving up time in the schools associated with two of the cathedrals that we visited. The brilliant idea of whomever was to bring all the schools together at the end of the year to celebrate the moving on of the various classes. Thus, young girls in peppermint striped school uniforms, plaid skirts, and polo shirts played alongside boys in blazers, shorts, and polos as well. There was something wonderful about the excitement and activity of these young people played out amidst the austerity, history, and sacred space of the cathedral. Far from hushing everyone to remain silent and show proper respect. The youth were invited to engage fully with the activities that were also meant to help them develop more fully into who they are to be.

Which is a wonderful reminder to us that this is how we also hope to engage in worship. Of course, there is the rhythm and formality that is a part of our liturgy. However, it is not meant to be somber and joyless. Rather, the hope is that the energy and creativity, the hopes and dreams that we share about living more fully into the lives we have been given are allowed to find expression. The cathedrals that we visited clearly had made a conscious choice about allowing more latitude for expression and discovery rather than controlling people and demanding obeisance to a particular way of being in a sacred space.

The other piece that was so wonderful was the interplay of youth amidst the memory of those who had passed on. In a way, it was almost like playing in a graveyard. Yet, it was not sacrilegious nor macabre. It was the very best of the understanding of an old expression of the

Church: the saints militant and the saints triumphant. Those alive engaged with those who have gone before and those who have gone before involved in the activities of those who are still alive. I don't know that the youth consciously made these connections. Though, I don't know that they needed to. It was a part of their life, part of their normal rhythm, how the world is. Thus, it is very likely that it will shape them even more deeply than if they were to learn about it. No longer was it simply in their minds. It now lived in their bones.