WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT ALFIE?*

So where is the bunker and what exactly is a rumbling?

Let's start with the rumbling. The rumbling might be likened to a prompt of the Holy Spirit. So whilst it doesn't always come in formal prayer it tends to come when we are disposed or open to the Spirit, by which I mean the third person of the Trinity, God's breath or power swirling around in our world. So whilst it often comes during contemplation, not so much during devotional prayer, at least not in my experience, it can also come whilst driving, listening to music and cooking. I hear from some fellow pilgrims that they will often sense a rumbling whilst dancing, painting, knitting and gardening. You won't be surprised when I say the rumbling, prompt or nudge can come as a result of significant conversation, rarely in gossip though, and believe it or not sometimes even at the movies! The rumblings are not within my control or ownership nor in my experience do they sit comfortably within the clerical caste, though the Spirit can of course work within us clergy. If you open up your heart and soul, or maybe more importantly ask the Lord to open up your heart and soul you too will experience the rumblings. They are deep and always elbow us along the pilgrim path. You'll hear them in your kitchen, the office and the garden. You'll hear them as a Mum, as a husband, as a friend. The rumbling comes from the Holy Spirit and she chooses to dance as she pleases. If you are uncertain as to whether or not it is a rumbling it's easy enough to check. An authentic rumbling of the Spirit will never shut you down, shut you up or shut you in. It always gives life. It promotes movement not stagnation. It's modus operandi is love not fear.

And where is this blessed bunker? You will find, or more often than not, you will not find the bunker. When you do find it it's in there in the Celtic twilight zone. It's in the Shadowlands. It's grey but not in a gloomy or unhappy sense. You'd often glimpse it just as the day dies, as light fades and darkness falls, at dusk. Yet you will also see it at the first crack of dawn.

I have positioned myself in a bunker that has been dug in, or dug out, just beyond the entrance and exit of the Church, as in the institution. I want to holler to those that would pass by on the other side to come in and savour the sacred and the joy of His love and I want to block the path of those who would leave the Church in disappointment and disillusionment and beg them not to go but stay another while.

It is from this bunker that, on one hand, I want to proclaim the welcome, the acceptance, the love of Christ, and consequently of us as a faith community, of every single human person. On the other hand the work of the bunker is to try to staunch the haemorrhaging from the Church. Essential to the bunker is our acknowledgment that we have bored people silly, failed to steep ourselves in the Spirit before we preach, become slovenly about the sacred and justified or relativised the sins of the Church.

In this acknowledgment and central to the rumblings from the bunker, I am saying, please don't go, or if you have already gone, please come back!

Fraternally, JoeMcD 28.07.25

* written by Burt Bacharach and Hal David for the 1966 film 'Alfie'.