

## Coventry Cathedrals

This year's nationwide BBC live broadcast of Easter Sunday service came from Coventry Cathedral. Of course, unless you preset your video recorder before hand, you would not have seen it because naturally you were attending Neil's service at the Holly Cross!!!! There are two things which I associate with Coventry-namely the 12th century Cathedral destroyed by the German Luftwaffe on the night of the 14th of November 1940 and the home of the car industry. It happened I was visiting friends in Lutterworth, approximately 20 miles North East of Coventry over the holiday period. As it was the first time to the area, I requested a visit to the city. Kindly they agreed and set me down 100 yards from the Cathedral in close proximity to Coventry University. The area has undergone extensive regeneration in the 67 years since that traumatic air raid which killed over 550 souls of Coventry.

The first thing that struck me was the contrast in architectural styles between the old ruined Cathedral and the new, built in 1962. The perimeter walls were left as a symbol of the dark past and the new wall as a sign of fresh hope and glory of triumph over evil, very much like the story of Easter itself. Shortly after the bombing raid that reaped so much devastation on the city, three nails were taken from the ruins and formed into a cross. Today the "Cross of Nails" has developed into a powerful symbol of peace and reconciliation, a theme repeated throughout the two Cathedrals. In addition, an altar was built from the rubble and the cross assembled with the words inscribed behind it on the wall "Father Forgive" carved in 1948.



A sketch of the Reconciliation Statue

To me as a first time visitor, the most poignant object in the old Cathedral was the Statue of Christ by Alain John. Making a clay model when he was only 17 years of age, a cast was produced and following his death whilst in the R.A.F., it was given to the Cathedral in 1946 in memorial to those who lost their lives during the war. Another statue in the old Cathedral is one depicting the reconciliation between two humans. Donated in 1995 to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of World War 2, an identical cast was presented on behalf of the people of Coventry to the Peace Garden in Hiroshima, Japan.

I found the visit to the adjoining 'new' Cathedral, built in 1962, an eye opening experience to the modern expression of Christian worship in glass and steel, with a huge tapestry of "Christ in Glory" dominating the entire building. However, it was in the old Cathedral that I felt greater spiritual peace and inspiration. I did manage to visit the nearby Transport Museum and viewing some of the cars which I had formerly driven, filled me with nostalgia!

If ever you should get to Coventry, the two Cathedrals of the city are a must visit. You too will be greatly uplifted by the presence of great beauty, tranquility, hope and reconciliation-the Easter message.

**John Clarke**