



THE ARCHBISHOP  
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*The Archbishop has written in today's [Sunday Telegraph](#) following the death of Sir David Amess. The article follows in full...*

It was said of Sir David Amess that though he had opponents, he didn't have enemies.

As we come to terms with the horror of his murder on Friday, this is a distinction worth pondering.

I think of David Amess as a friend. Leigh-on-Sea is my home town, and for ten, glorious years as Bishop of Chelmsford, part of the diocese I served. We often met: in parliament, but usually in his constituency, Southend West.

He was, as we have heard over the weekend, a dedicated, zestful, persevering constituency MP. He loved Southend, as I do. He rooted for it. He exemplified that vital, but overlooked, root of our democracy that Members of Parliament may get elected on a party ticket, but, once elected, serve everyone.

Tragically, that availability to those he served has led to his death and that this happened in a Church makes it all the more horrific. However, although it is right and inevitable that we review the security around MPs, David himself would not, I'm sure, want that essential connection between those who are elected and those they serve to be broken. In our democracy, place matters. MPs serve our nation by serving a locality and therefore particular people. It is the same in the Church. We must not lose this. When I was with him, it was obvious and evident that he loved his constituency, knew the people, and served their needs regardless of political affiliation. His was a real vocation.

He and I did not see eye to eye on some political issues. But this didn't matter. Or rather, the fact that it doesn't matter matters hugely for the flourishing of our democracy. Disagreement wasn't a cause of enmity or division. Disagreement didn't mean separation. Yet it is precisely this that we see around us in so much of the trench warfare of current public and political discourse, the vitriolic and ever amplifying echo-chambers of social media now invading other areas of life.

How do we counter this?

David Amess was a kind man.

The word kind is related to the word kin. When we are kind to someone, it doesn't mean we necessarily agree with them, or even like them, but that we recognise a kinship, a common humanity and treat them accordingly; or as we sometimes say, 'treat them in kind.'

David's robust kindness came from his Christian faith. He was a devout Christian, a Roman Catholic. But the idea that we human beings belong to one another and have a responsibility to each other is not self evident. Observation of our behaviour and attitudes shows us the opposite.

Our worst desires can be seen everywhere, leading us to separation, fuelled by selfishness, and bearing fruit in hatefulness and the possession of each other.

The picture of humanity that God gives us in Jesus Christ offers something else. In this regard, perhaps the most radical words Jesus ever spoke are the ones most of us know and many of us say every day: 'Our Father'. In saying these words we don't just acknowledge we belong to God, we acknowledge our belonging to each other as kith and kin.

Such a way of inhabiting life enables us to be kind to each other, especially when we disagree. It can even lead us to love our enemies.

Sometimes the newspapers call people like me naive or idealistic. And I dread to think what is said on social media. On the whole, I've stopped looking at it. It is too unkind. But when it comes to naiveté and idealism, I plead guilty. I want the world to be a kinder place and I find the template for kindness in the life and teaching of Jesus.

David Amess, the friend with whom I sometimes disagreed, had the same values and the same vision. It shaped his life and it is what made him such a loved and effective constituency MP and an exemplar of what our democracy can be.

He was always very kind to me. He supported the Church. He cared. He liked to build coalitions of goodwill so that people could work together. Kindness and kinship it turns out, gets things done.

My heart goes out to his wife and family and the constituents of Southend West. I am praying for them. I will endeavour to remember David in what can feel at times an increasingly more vulgar, less tolerant, nasty and vituperative world by trying to be kind, by loving my neighbour, by cultivating opponents with persistent kindness and by refusing to respond when people ask me to take sides on anything other than the common good of all God's people.

David Amess didn't wear his faith on his sleeve. He wore it in his heart. That's the best place for it. It means it runs through your very being.

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