

## Monthly reflection, May 2013

### **New life**

During Easter and Pentecost we often think of beginnings. As signs of spring finally start to arrive we think of the new life promised by the resurrection of Jesus, and the birth of the church following the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Children's Society knows that the beginning of life is very important. A child's early years are a crucially important stage of development, and can have a major impact on their future. This is especially true for the most disadvantaged children as their development can quickly fall behind other children's, even in their earliest years.

Our network of children's centres across the country work with under-fives and their families to give all the help they need with education, childcare and health. We support the whole family, reaching out to parents and carers and giving assistance with everything from finding work to dealing with domestic abuse. We work with families from all backgrounds, including new migrant families, young parents and travelling families.

Early intervention can change lives for the better. The brain scans of three-year-olds who have been neglected look noticeably different- without love, affection and play their brains will not develop to the normal size. Children's centres give families the chance to play with their children in a safe and stimulating environment.

In our Christian lives we too need the right environment to flourish. Too often new year's resolutions and Lenten disciplines become chores, or are simply forgotten. We are given the chance of new life in Jesus, but following Christ means more than just adding a few items to your to-do list. In John 10, Jesus promises that he comes so we may have life, and have it abundantly. The transformative power of God applies to the whole of our lives.

Family and friends, work and leisure, church and society all influence our faith, and should be influenced by our faith in return. Just as child development depends on more than meeting physical needs, our needs go beyond attending church and reading the occasional Bible passage. In order to be transformed we need growth in all areas of our lives.

This sounds difficult, but it's freeing as well. Growth can come through many routes: prayer and worship, a new friendship, absorbing work or time spent with loved ones are just a few examples. Like the new shoots of spring, growth can appear in surprising places, as the story of Jesus invites us over and over again to new beginnings and new life.

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