

Every year we join in *Children in Need* – during that program we see children with handicaps of all kinds, living remarkable lives with tremendous courage – they aren't just existing they are very much alive and enjoying life. They have spirit.

Some people when we talk about spirit switch off, with comments like *get real*. Would you say those young people were not real? If you pause for a moment you will see how spirit is literally everywhere; **spirit is the genius in life – it is spirit that makes you live and not just exist** – it is spirit that makes you go out and practice, it is spirit that prompts you to get your head down for study... Without spirit you would have no one to admire. There is no spirit in a coffin; no spirit on the moon – since there is no leaf or laughter there... spirit is where there is effort and struggle to make life better.

We don't like being caged-in; we don't like being restricted... look at Ukraine, Syria... good people simply wanting freedom. At first we see freedom as getting rid of rules of family, from restrictions in school. Sadly, if that is all freedom means then many who simply want to escape end up lonely, seeking every distraction to take away the pain...

When I worked with Redbridge Samaritans the average age for suicides was 21. The loneliness of the student bed-sit – no money... Real freedom belongs inside you. It is freedom from fears and hang-ups. We all have them and we end up seeing such things as caused by religion, church, prayer... as dry and boring. We can't lift ourselves out of this - but we can be lifted out!

You received this Spirit when you were baptized – when somebody else made promises for you. Now it is your turn to stand up and be counted. Take a moment to have a look at those 7 gifts... it's now for you first to say yes – and then to try to mean what you say. How does your family know you mean what you say, when you say you love them? Not simply because you have said it – but because they experience you living it – words mean nothing until: *the word was made flesh*.

Here is the secret of Confirmation: it asks and answers a question how can so many totally different individuals, become a family, a school, a parish? By deliberately highlighting differences, celebrating them, being surprised by, and enjoying... A way of life badly needed world-wide today – trapped as we are in needing to find someone to blame, needing to point the finger, pushing others out by excluding, bullying and ridiculing. This new way is not automatic, but you can do it with help – we can do it – your presence here says you want to do it – let's do it together.