

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY – TUESDAY, 11<sup>TH</sup> MAY, 2021  
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### **“A CARESS OF GOD”**

Good morning.

Covid-19 has cast a long shadow over humankind. We're looking forward to the end of many restrictions in this country, but people in India and elsewhere continue to suffer. It's hard to take in death, bereavement and trauma in such vast numbers, but sometimes a story emerges from the darkness which is luminous with hope. That's how I felt when I read about 27 year old Welsh woman Marriam Ahmad and her baby Khadija, who was delivered by Caesarean section at 29 weeks when Marriam was in an induced coma on a ventilator with Covid. She had been told to say goodbye to her loved ones for she may not wake up, but to the amazement of the doctors she awoke the day after her baby was born. They are now at home and at three and a half months Khadija is thriving.

Such stories remind us that every Covid statistic is a unique human being with a story to tell. So much of our public discourse is about facts and figures, but it's the lives, not the numbers, which give us a sense of reality and meaning about the world. This is true of many news items which capture our imaginations by inviting us into the dramas beyond the headlines.

One such story was that of the young Minke whale stranded in the Thames these last few days. Some scientists suggest that the environmental crisis might contribute to the growing number of whales and other sea creatures which end up being beached or trapped in inland waterways. It's when these become close encounters, narratives to which we can relate, that such events connect with us in a fundamental way. To say this is not to discount the importance of science and statistics, but these need to be interpreted in language that arouses our compassion and moves us to act out of a personal response to what we're being told.

In Pope Francis's encyclical on the environment, *Laudato Si'*, he writes that 'The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. ... everything is, as it were, a caress of God.' Environmentalist Mary Colwell observes, 'Love, affection, God, caress – four words I have never heard in any environmental meeting. Please, please, environmental world, can you only use words that are used in poems, because actually, love of the earth is all about love – it's all about our emotional response to what's around us, to what we're part of.' (Colwell 2018)

Its stories, not statistics, which humanise the news and enable us to discover our place of belonging and relating within the mystery of life.