

David Greenwood reflects



Yet again, football referees are in the sports headlines and for all the wrong reasons.

Those who follow sport know how much the referee or umpire can affect the course of a game,

usually for ill. A bad decision can so skew the outcome that the official becomes the story rather than the performance of the players. There are referees in football whose names are almost synonymous with controversy and who seem to go out of their way to court publicity. They appear to crave attention and demand that everyone knows they are centre stage and in charge.

Others go about their business unobtrusively, knowing that their job is to deliver a game in which the players can shine, onlookers are entertained and the best team wins. It is often said that the best referee is one whom no one notices, who runs a smoothly enjoyable game, whose words and gestures are calm and undemonstrative, and who at the end walks off the pitch and quietly goes home, anonymous, unremarked, a servant and not a master.

Who does the better job? Surely, the quiet ones whom no one notices.

Jesus understood this very well. He was, of course, capable of the grand gesture; but He preferred to work quietly, not courting publicity, winning hearts and minds through example and words of encouragement. Although His followers called him Lord and Master, he emphasised that "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

There were times when His followers wanted Him to exert His power. When the people in a village of Samaria were not responsive to the message of Jesus, James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven on them. But that was not Jesus' way, nor is it His father's. We often may wish God would intervene, would knock heads together, punish the wicked, reward the virtuous, but He just does not do that. He is not in the rushing mighty wind nor is He in the earthquake. He is the still, small voice, the calm insistent prompting that comes to us if we would only be quiet and listen.

Every minute of every day, God works quietly to deliver Life to the World. He exerts control, at once so gentle we hardly notice but also so firm that we live secure and supported. He is our Good Shepherd, our Servant King, our Minister.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matthew 11: 28-30