

## **BOLTON FM – It's the Thought that Counts – 7 August 2013**

### ***Nelson Mandela***

Two days ago, in the It's the Thought that Counts slot, I was reflecting on the “probable suicide” of Marilyn Monroe, whose dead body was found at her home on 5 August 1962 – a tragic end to a life that should have been full of promise.

I was amazed to discover that it was on that very same day (5 August 1962) that Nelson Mandela was arrested before, later that year, facing trial and being sentenced to life imprisonment. As we know, he was to serve 27 years of that sentence and then, four years after his release, become the first black President of South Africa.

I was struck by the contrast between these two historic events linked by that single date. On the one hand, the cutting short of the life of a young woman who, on the surface of things, should have had everything to live for. On the other hand, the life sentence which ordinarily would have curtailed any ambition or political activity but which did not dampen the spirit of the man. People cope differently with the trials and tribulations of life. Some are overwhelmed by them, whilst others triumph through adversity.

Nelson Mandela's story falls into that latter category. There are, of course, controversial aspects to it – not least the militant activities that led to his arrest. But there is also international recognition of the legacy he leaves through his anti-apartheid work, seeking to overcome racism, poverty and injustice. When his term as President was over, he devoted himself to charitable work through the Nelson Mandela Foundation, again addressing poverty and the HIV/Aids situation. In Nelson Mandela we have an example of someone using their own experience of life's difficulties to make the world a better place for others.

This is Father Michael Cooke, from Bromley Cross, the Catholic Dean of Bolton.