



Small Victories for Hope

For the last week or two, around here we've been seeing snowdrops pushing their delicate stems and tiny, pretty blossoms up through the snow or mud, for no better reason than to give us delight in the middle of winter, when there are no other flowers around and even the holly berries have withered. These small flowers, whom no one tends (well, maybe the angels do), to me seem like reminders that hope is not just a Christian virtue but a Christian calling.

It's easier to remain hopeful when you see signs of hope and one of those this week, for those of us in the West beginning to despair about the chipping away at basic civil rights like freedom of speech and freedom of protest was the recent ruling of a federal judge in Minnesota that ICE agents are not justified in arresting peaceful protesters or spraying them with pepper spray.

The issue here has nothing to do with whether or not you think there should be some crackdown on illegal immigration. It is purely concerned with whether you believe that peaceful protest should be protected by law. Filming the activities of ICE agents is not impeding them, nor is standing on the side of the road blowing a whistle, yet protestors have been shoved, thrown to the ground, handcuffed and forced into police vehicles for just such activities. Score one for civil rights!

On another front, a tribunal ruled that eight nurses in Darlington, in the UK, who had complained about a male to female transitioner using a women's changing room and

behaving inappropriately when in it, had been harassed by their employer and suffered discrimination because they had complained.

Like the Minnesota ruling, this is a bit glass-half-full-glass-half-empty-ish: the good news is that basic rights were upheld. The bad news is that these matters ever got as far as tribunals and courts in the first place. However the snowdrops make me inclined to see these glasses as half full.