

I saw a billboard last week. The caption has stayed in my mind although I do not know what it was advertising! The caption read "*traces of optimism*". It had been a week of homicides and deaths reported in the media, continuing failure to stop the oil pollution of the Gulf of Mexico, a leaking roof, serious illness and the death of a colleague... amongst other things. Most of us can, from time to time, make a list of the not so good matters in our world and our personal lives; matters that can threaten to spiral us into despair. The tantalising phrase *traces of optimism* has kept popping into my mind since I came across it and with it has come the impulse to breathe in very deeply – down into my stomach - and out again slowly. I am aware that the breathing is something that I practice in my daily meditation and which makes space in the incessant chatter cluttering my mind, stilling me for a while. The phrase *traces of optimism*, along with the breathing, have brought me a sense of peace this week. I have found myself letting my mind wonder about the *traces of optimism* that can be identified: there is a different idea that might cap the leaking oil well; we may host a hive of bees at St C; the encouragement from a friend to talk. I was filled with wonder at a clear sharp night sky with hundreds of stars and the wispy gauze of the millions of stars whose light we can barely see, and the knowing we are a part of all of that. Much of the optimism my mind surfaced over the week however has been based in very practical things: antibiotics that seem at last to be having an effect, completed repairs and maintenance, a movie. I offer you the phrase *traces of optimism* and the invitation to breathe deeply two or three times a day. Let's see how the energy that we call the love of God surfaces a sense of confidence and optimism in the spaces when the going gets tough.