

*It was a wonderful tree
Full of children
So they cut it down*

This is Jesus: immensely attractive to children, to his people, to all created in God's image. I have in mind two further images: one of a child yesterday, gazing in wonder at the wonderfully intricate tree-house constructed in a fenced-off play area in Harrold Country Park and desperate to get in there and start climbing; and another of a tree, many years ago, festooned with children of all ages in an area of rough ground in Portsmouth which the council duly cut down. And I'm thinking of God's love as contained, now, in a very carefully constructed structure we call Church and of its wild relative, the world, where God's love can also be found, but both of which no longer, perhaps, feel safe; and the problem isn't 'the Church' or 'the World' but us, in our very limited understanding of the immensity of God's love – a love which we are invited to explore and in which we can feel safe wherever we are. Fortunately, it's very difficult to kill a tree and we may think that, by cutting one down or constructing another, we have made the world a safer place but this is as absurd as attempting to stem God's love for us. The invitation to climb remains and what a tree it is we are called to delight in – *one like us in all things but sin* – on a cross which endures for ever.

Br John Mayhead
Monastery of Christ Our Saviour