

**BBC RADIO ULSTER  
THOUGHT FOR THE DAY  
8th March 2010**

It's been a long cold winter in these parts.

Never before have I heard so many people assess the prevailing metrological conditions with the phrase: 'It's Baltic out there the day, so it is!'

But did you know there's a serious problem of clogging in the Baltics these days?

Now just in case you're confused, clogging in the Baltics is not a traditional Northern European dance involving wooden shoes.

There is, in fact a serious problem of algae clogging the Baltic Sea.

According to a report in the National Geographic at the weekend an explosion of microscopic algae has inundated the sensitive waters of the Baltic Sea, sucking up oxygen and choking aquatic life.

In simple terms, the Baltic Sea is suffocating. Scientists are calling parts of the sea, dead zones because there's now insufficient oxygen to sustain marine life.

Now this is a metaphor I simply cannot resist!

Let's have a little think about this.

What is it that you know, that clogs the goodness out of life?

I'm sure a number of things come to mind, but here are some of the negative attitudes that I believe can turn healthy people and families and communities into dead zones.

Well, there's cynicism, of course. Being a cynic can make you feel clever and superior, like a mighty shark sniffing at the lower life forms among the plankton. But cynicism tends to suck the life out of all that is genuine and sincere around you. It is truly suffocating.

And of course, let's not forget sectarianism. Like millions of plankton competing over one small territory and eventually leaving no oxygen for any life form, sectarianism continues to cut off the air supply to creating more healthy and prosperous communities here. And of course history has proven that sectarianism is almost certainly guaranteed to create dead zones.

So when you think of the Baltic Sea suffocating under an explosion of algae, don't forget about the attitudes that can suck the life and energy out of the world around you.

Why not try to practice generosity instead to bring health and life to the dead zones around us.

Jesus of Nazareth said 'The way you give to others is the way God will give to you.'

It's worth a try, even on a morning like this when it might still be a bit Baltic out there!

**Tony Macaulay**

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