

# Rugby star is spared jail over attack in Dublin

By Tom Tuite

A SAMOAN rugby star has been spared a jail term over a drink-fuelled attack on a man in Dublin.

Alesana Tuilagi pleaded guilty at Dublin District Court yesterday to assault causing harm to a man whom he punched in the face on Harcourt Street in on April 4, 2011.

The blow, described by a defence lawyer as a 'pent-up lapse of judgment', happened after the former Leicester winger got drunk with team-mates and Leinster players.

He had been in the Leicester side which had lost a Heineken Cup quarter-final to Leinster earlier that day.

The 33-year-old winger, now playing with the Newcastle Fal-



Drunk: Alesana Tuilagi

cons, made his third court appearance yesterday having been originally charged in August.

Detective Garda Tony Howard told Judge Halpin that during an

altercation, Tuilagi, 'punched the injured party, and he received minor injuries'.

He agreed with defence solicitor Peter Connolly that the man had made a full recovery and that there was just one punch.

Det Inspector Howard agreed that Tuilagi, who has no previous criminal convictions, had been co-operative and came back to Ireland voluntarily to face the court. He also agreed that Tuilagi made a 'good impression' and that 'he is a gentleman'.

Judge Anthony Halpin noted the victim made a recovery and 'was more than generously compensated', and he accepted that the attack was uncharacteristic.

He struck out the case, sparing Tuilagi a criminal record and a possible jail term.

## Dr Mark Dooley



### MORAL MATTERS

# In a world that cannot wait, Advent leads back to reality

**A**DVENT: a season of waiting, hoping and longing. It anticipates the light that will soon pierce the darkness. It heralds the coming of a fresh dawn when all things will be renewed. Into the night will break the first glimmer of a new glow, one that will guide us into spring.

In the midst of all the yuletide mayhem, when Christmas lights dangle from every lamppost, it is hard for us to capture the true spirit of this gorgeous season.

We live in a world where people run from darkness and where every desire must be fulfilled in an instant. It is a world of immediate gratification, high speed and fast living.

If Advent is no longer widely observed, it is because people cannot slow down. They have forgotten what it means to wait, to savour the prospect of something that cannot be instantly possessed. This is to lose the excitement of expectation.

St Teresa of Avila expressed it beautifully when she wrote that 'patient endurance attains to all things'. It is when we practise patience that we shall live in true faith and hope. It is when we look to the horizon in joyful expectation that our dreams shall be fulfilled.

Advent is all about delayed gratification. It invites us to make ready the feast, to deck the halls and prepare the fires. However, it also asks that we wait until the guest arrives before commencing the celebration.

It is wonderful to withdraw from the glitz to savour this season and its timeless treasures. It is truly magical to shut out the world and to experience hope at its most profound. We can do so simply by living these days as nature decrees.

In these, the darkest days of the year, our hope can be found in light. To sit alone in the shadows and watch as the winter sun descends is to witness a miracle. It is also a call to banish the darkness with a flame.

Candles are a symbol of hope and longing. Such is the reason why they are found on every altar and why they light the seminal stages of life's way. To defy the darkness with a small flame is to anticipate a new season of light.

If children adore those little rituals, it is because they love to hope. Despite living in a culture of immediacy, they are fascinated by the symbolism of this season. Nothing electrifies our boys more than a new candle being lit, for they know that it signifies the dawn of something glori-

ous. Hope begets wonder and wonder begets joy. Advent is a season of awe, a time to surrender the old and welcome the new. It is a period in which we lament loss and give blessings for all our gains.

It is a time to look towards the light of a new year but not before we offer thanks for that which is about to end. There is nothing somber about Advent, yet it provides a moment to take stock. No matter what our trials, we have survived and this is the basis of our hope.

The deep mid-winter is but a prelude to the first shoots of spring. New life will soon enter our world, heralded by a powerful light that shines from the East. The shortest day is now in sight and so is the new sun.

We should never rush these days. Patiently, we should see each one as providing an opportunity to prepare for that holy night. This means learning how to wait, how to rediscover hope in what lies beyond the horizon.

What an extraordinary thing for children to learn in an era when all their cravings are instantly gratified. How magical it is for them to discover the excitement of watching and waiting. It is to realise that from hope springs joy eternal.

Advent: a season of watching and waiting. It is a time for the flame of faith to reignite all our dreams and to remind us that the best things in life really are worth waiting for. It is an invitation to slow down, to take heed of life's passage and to consecrate these precious days in a spirit of expectation.

**A**T first light, our boys rush to the kitchen to perform their seasonal ritual. They take turns opening the little windows on their Advent calendar. It is a small moment of excitement that provides meaning in the midst of the mayhem.

It teaches them that miraculous things cannot be ordered online, that true festive magic cannot be conjured with the click of a mouse. These are things of the human heart that require patience if they are to flourish. They require that we take time in the stillness, time away from the flickering lights and booming beat.

In that stillness, with only a small flame to light our way, we find that Advent is much more than a prologue to Christmas. In a world that cannot wait, it is our road back to reality. It is a sacred season in which we find that, in ceasing to hope, we cease to live as we should.

We cease to see that, if things are not worth the wait, then perhaps they are not worth having.

—mark.dooley@daily@mail.ie—

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