

HOMILY – 14TH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR

Committing sin is tiring..... it drains us. Just look at the Prodigal Son, after he spent all his father's inheritance, he was reduced to feeding the pigs and would willingly have eaten their food to survive.

The thing is, when we sin, we shut down the spiritual input of God. It is like turning off a tap, a lifeline. We then only have our own resources and perhaps the disordered resources of others to rely on. Everything is then centred on self and self-reliance. Disillusionment and dissatisfaction easily creep in, like a bad smell creeping into my room. As St Paul reminds us, the unspiritual lives ultimate destiny is doom and decline whereas a spirit filled life in covenant with Christ is, by its very supernatural, life giving.

The insidious influence of the secular world is that it compounds fatigue onto fatigue. If people keep telling you that they are stressed, they are shattered, exhausted etc and the media focuses predominately on tragedy and despair, rather than all the fabulous things that are going on in life, then inevitable, it takes its toll on our psyche.

The Holy Bible, the Word of God, has many fabulous things to tell us, just as it has stories and events of war, death, deceit, immorality etc. But and it is a big bit, the ultimate conclusion of God's revelation is very good. For those who have faith, it is beyond words.

But remember the Book of Genesis, the story of Creation, when God saw that all He had made, He found it very good. Created matter from the smaller cell to the creation of humanity had an integration, a integrity to it. Everything had its place, room for all.

Mankind, as steward of creation, is called to be a responsible steward of all that is created. However, sadly, this does not always happen. The temptation of greed makes us take more than we deserve from the earth, we choose not to live so honourably and simply, asking too much and giving very little in return.

This creates poverty and the social evil of corruption and enslavement, generates fatigue and the exhaustion of labour.

If we say we have faith in Christ then we should never exact too much of our neighbour. Remember the parable of the workers in the vineyard. Did they not agree one denarius a day? In the western world, we are in a vicious spiral of greater expectation, greater debt, greater demands on those in work. Very few people can now walk to work and have a secure job, from 9 to 5, Monday to Friday, with plenty of time to be with the family and go to Mass on a Sunday, with the children.

Jesus, in the Gospel today, invites us to replace the yoke of enslavement with the lighter yoke of embracing the world through faith in Him. In other words, finding a spirit-centred approach to responsibilities set upon our shoulders and using the spiritual gifts God has blessed us with, to resolve life's problems and challenges. The key threshold commandment being love of God and Neighbour.

The recent Grenfell Tower tragedy in London revealed a huge insight into complex attitude to disaster in our secular, post Christian society today, elements of great valour, but also elements of deep anger and social disintegration.

It is worth noting that much of the world have no concept of holidays and days off. This includes Catholic priests from India. But what they do have is a deep sense of what it means to be living in the presence of God at all times, integrating the spiritual and the secular life into a faith filled wholeness. Where every encounter is a moment of grace and every action is done in response of God. Not a chore! By listening to Christ, life takes on an enlightened significance.

Amen