

HOMILY – 18TH SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 5 AUGUST 2018

“Believe in Me”

I was speaking to a dear friend last Wednesday, who has just had a major operation for ovarian cancer. She is so brave, she draws strength from her faith and belief in the surgeons and anaesthetist who performed the operation. Strong belief brings confidence in life that all will be well.

On the same day, the parish car went through a MOT and major engine repairs. Stephen Hanlon, who performed the work, instills strong belief and confidence in his work, that all will be well, while thinking of his mum, who died recently, that all will be well for her in Heaven.

Every day we entrust our lives into the hands of others, doctors, surgeons, pilots, priests, engineers, bus drivers, pharmacists, the basic principle is the same, believing in the one who is sent to us. Jesus is sent for all of us.

In today's Gospel, He is asked by the enquiring people, who seek to be well in their lives, “What must we do if we are to do the works that God wants?” In other words, “how do I keep myself right with God?”

Jesus is very direct and to the point, ‘Believe’. ‘Believe in the one he has sent’. Believing means actively trusting in someone or something beyond ourselves. It is a situation of relationship that can bring about a bond/covenant of love. So, therefore, Holy Communion, to become fully, the appreciation of Jesus's presence means believing truly that Jesus is really present, body, blood, soul and divinity, in the Sacred Host and Chalice.

It is an act of faith. When we really believe in God, the relationship between us and God becomes very real, very respectful and trusting and live in faith and hope that all will be well. So, all the time Jesus is inviting us to have the faith to really believe in His sacred presence. In the words of St John Paul II, ‘In believing, we entrust ourselves to the knowledge acquired by the Saints and Martyrs of the Church’. Believing includes knowing, seeing, receiving and coming to accept, abide and remain, always with Jesus.

St Thomas Aquinas, one of the great believers of the 13th Century, wrote, “We know that this spiritual bread is from Heaven when it changes us, if it gives life to our souls, it changes our whole attitude to evil, to death and suffering and helps us see beyond death to the Kingdom of Heaven”. Helping us to see beyond the importance of earthly food, to that “Bread of Life”, the heavenly food that feeds our soul.

There was a tragic story of a priest being called to Janet's home in the parish. The priest arrived and sat down with the wife, enquiring what had happened. Janet explained, “I was cooking tea and sent John out to the garden to cut a cabbage, to have with the mince and potatoes, he was gone a while then I looked out of the back window and saw him lying dead in the garden”. The priest then asked what happened. Janet, in a state of shock, after calling the ambulance, then proceeded to open a tin of peas, to finish cooking the meal.” It's what we do. The point is that we spend much of our lives, like the crowd in the Gospel, gathering, preparing and eating food, in order to survive, even going to the chippy. Jesus calls on us to go beyond the food that cannot last, to the food of eternal life, Himself, the Bread of Eternal Life. Jesus offers us His body and blood, as spiritual food in Holy Communion, the Bread of Heaven, as it says in Church teaching, ‘At the Last Supper, on the night when He was betrayed, Our

Saviour instituted the eucharistic sacrifice of His body and blood. This he did in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross, throughout the ages, until He should come again, so to entrust to the people of God, the Church, a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charitable love. And what did we offer Christ in return on the Cross? Only vinegar to drink. What are you and I offering Jesus in return?

So, to go back to Janet and John. When John died suddenly, while Janet cooked the meal, let's hope and pray that they too made provision for eternal life, by sharing regularly in Holy Communion. It is a beautiful act, if possible, to receive Holy Communion before we die. 'Viaticum' – food for the journey.

As Jesus warns us, many times, you never know the day or the hour when you will be called from this world. So, the best provision you can make is to always receive the Bread of Eternal Life, continue to love and serve the Lord. The Body and Blood of Jesus, so that indeed, even in sudden and tragic death, all will be well.

"You have the food of Eternal Life".

God Bless