

HOMILY – 22ND SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 2ND SEPTEMBER 2018

On Friday morning, Tommy, the Passkeeper, came into the parish house, with a dying bird, a young pigeon, mortally wounded by a bird of prey, a hawk or kestrel. The bird was dying, there wasn't a lot we could do. That's nature, the hunter and the hunted. Animals and birds hunt and kill other species to survive. The moral code is based on that principle.

Humanity, you and I, have hopefully, by the Grace of God, a higher moral code. As the pinnacle of all created beings, we are gifted with a conscience and intellect, an ability to reason, in order to live a civilised life. That our prime desire is not to kill and wound other life forms but to find ways to live in harmony with creation. The climax of revealed truth is the incarnation of the Son of God, showing us how to live the way of love.

Unlike a bird or a fish, we have the capacity to give our lives for good, just as we have the potential to resort to all sorts of evil and sordid activities. Yes, we have free will but to protect ourselves and each other, it is important that we live by a code of laws and commandments that do not risk us falling into an evil life.

The Ten Commandments are these basic moral rules that seek to bring honour, integrity and living spiritual fulfilment to a vulnerable and divided people, as in the case of the Israelites, in the desert, fleeing slavery to start a new life in Galilee. When Moses was handed these basic laws by God, they were to be lived out in spirit and truth. We, hopefully, know those Commandments today. Loving God above all else, keeping the Holy Day holy, respecting our parents, not killing others, not committing adultery, not stealing, not telling lies or being envious of others. If we freely choose to ignore these Commandments, then, there is every risk that we can impose misery and suffering on others as well as on ourselves. As St James says in the second reading, "Accept and submit to the word which has been planted in you and can save your souls". This is not merely a code for survival but a recipe for salvation. Society is more dangerous when we forget God's Law.

However, Jesus, the Son of God, and also a Jew, recognizes very wisely, that too many laws and commandments in the Jewish religion, have been added as 'Manmade Laws', not to help people but to suppress and control them. Based on a desire for power and control rather than love and respect. To such an extent that the religious leaders, the Pharisees, were making it very difficult for ordinary Jews to be at peace with themselves, in case they had broken a minor law about washing their arms up to the elbow.

In truth, as Jesus reminds us, all humanity is conceived, formed and giving birth to as a beautiful gift from God. Just as a pomegranate fruit, an orange, a new born chick are all things of great beauty, formed by God. The foods of the earth are a great gift from God and never to be taken for granted. But if it is not the fruits of the earth, washed or unwashed, that make us unclean, it is the corrupt thoughts and actions from inside us, that make us unclean.

The same history of common peoples, that produced Beethoven, Burns, Mother Theresa, Shakespeare, St Francis of Assisi, William Wilberforce, Florence Nightingale, St Theresa of Lisieux, is the same history of common peoples that produced many villains, murderers, traitors and violent people.

It is from within each person that great things can be achieved and won, just as there is a potential to carry out appalling acts of cruelty and suffering. So, Jesus, the model of loving perfection, encourages us

to model our lives on Him alone. That, as the word made flesh, He is entirely for the common good and rescuing of lives from darkness and despair, to hope and salvation. This is made clear by receiving Him into our bodies as Holy Communion. That by receiving Jesus into our own bodies, we nourish ourselves with spiritual food and possess an enlightened, inspired and determined desire to live our lives as God intends, above all based on the two key commandments, to Love God with all our heart and soul and to Love our neighbour as ourselves.

When Christ is truly as the centre of our lives, spiritually, morally, sacramentally and in prayer and action, then we help ourselves to be more loving and caring people.

Choose Christ, choose life.

Reject Christ, make the world a dangerous place.

God Bless you all.