

## HOMILY – 24<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 16 SEPTEMBER 2018

In the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, one of the great theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Christian religion stands and falls by its faith in divine revelation in history, a revelation that is real, tangible, visible, to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear, helping us to measure the here and now, according to our faith, whether that be our political, social or domestic lives. Whether that be being Scottish, falling in love, being married or coming to terms with a breakdown in my health. Christ, the Son of God, is the key to open the door to a better way of living and dying. Who is Jesus for you today? What do you know about Him? What is His significance? According to Holy Scripture, His coming was prophesied, born in relative poverty, acknowledged by the Three Magi, live for 30 years in relative obscurity, with Joseph and Mary. Then, for a period of about 3 years, He launched His Galilean Ministry of Baptism and repentance, calling together the Twelve Apostles, performing many public miracles, teaching about Heaven and Hell and the coming of the Kingdom. His life is retold in four different Gospels, well that is, most of His last 3 years, fulfilled by great entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, arrested, tried, handed over to be crucified, being buried and then, most importantly, rising on the third day. This remarkable event was witnessed by Apostles, disciples etc, until He ascended to the Father.

The life of this figure, Jesus Christ, changed the shape of humanity, on earth, forever. The truth is, the life of Christ, has much more to it than face value. What do we see? A man with long hair and a beard. What is unique about Jesus is that He is both God and Man. No one else ever has, nor will ever, contain the human and divine. Many find it hard to understand His true identity, hence, Simon Peter was rebuked, "Get behind me Satan". Jesus, as Pope Benedict reminds us, does not come from the realm of the dead, which He has definitively left behind, on the contrary, He comes from the realm of pure life, from God, He comes as the one who is truly alive. He is the source of life. The key is for us, in all of the Jesus Event, is to follow His example. To believe in God Almighty. That the solution to turning away from sin and death is to turn firmly towards Christ Jesus. This is Faith. To believe in the one God has sent, to really believe with all our mind and heart.

For God has come in the person of Jesus, to knock on our door and to propose to us very specific commitments, if we call ourselves Christians. He says, "If you want to be a follower of mine, you must deny yourself and take up your cross and follow me". In other words, to live for the other person, as St James says, in the Second Reading, 'Faith is of little value if not accompanied by works of generosity and self-sacrifice. The cross, for many in this world, is a heavy one. How much am I aware of other peoples' crosses? In essence, that is the definition of a 'Saint', someone who devotes their lives to caring for others and putting themselves last, to relieve the cross of others.

Sadly, there are people in the Church who profess their faith in Jesus but deep down, in their minds, could be far from His teaching. That the only person they really believe in is themselves and what society can do for me. The key to authentic Christianity is firstly, to really listen well to the Gospel, secondly, to be a person of deep personal prayer and thirdly, to see each day as an opportunity to share your love, unselfishly, with others.

In the words of Pope Francis, "The Call to Holiness", If I encounter a person sleeping outdoors, on a cold night, I can view him or her as an annoyance, a obstacle, in my path, or I can respond with faith and charitable love and see, in this person, a human being, with a dignity identical to my own, a living person, infinitely loved by the Father, an image of God. This is what it means to be a Christian. Can holiness somehow be understood, apart from this lively recognition of the dignity of each human being?

I wish you all well in carrying your own cross, whatever that cross may be.

God Bless