

HOMILY – 2ND SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 14 JANUARY 2018

I don't know what thoughts come into your mind when you come to Mass, here on a Sunday morning. Maybe you are a good listener, hanging onto every word from Holy Scripture. Maybe you are a dreamer, that you think about something at Mass that is going on in your life and wrestle with it, in the company of God. Perhaps there is something going on at home and you are worried about it, so you bring it to Mass and ask God to help find a solution. Maybe we are tired and come here to rest a while.

In a way, the Sunday Mass is our spiritual launderette. We come here with the 'baggage' of the past week of our lives and place it before the sanctuary of the Lord. Just as a washing machine has three or four cycles, soak, wash, rinse and spin, so do we go through the cycles here of penance and reconciliation, hearing the Word of God, consecrating the gifts and sharing in Holy Communion. Like dirty laundry, we become soiled and tired by life in all its complexities and God invites us to draw close to his sanctuary to be cleansed, nourished and restored, by his divine love, so we can go out refreshed and cleansed.

We may come to Mass tired, irritable even, having fallen out with the children on the way. Then God invites us to share in this sacred experience and be open to His Grace. Just like Samuel in the Temple, to hear God calling me, calling me to change our lives for the better, to serve Him whenever He needs us and to protect ourselves from all that is ungodly and unspiritual in the world.

One day, getting the bus into Edinburgh, I saw a sign outside a 'Keep Fit Club'. It read, 'A new body in 28 days'. We promise a new improved body in 28 days – wow!! What a thought. Just think, that within 28 days, I could look like Brad Pitt or Super Mo Farah. St Paul teaches the people of Corinth, a place of super Greek athletes, to care for their bodies. To transcend the vain obsession with our outward appearance, body building and beauty therapy. What is more important is our inner selves. You can look great outwardly but inside, in your soul, you are spiritually a wreck, perhaps as a result of leading an immoral life, going to the gym but throwing your faith life in the gutter. The eventual conclusion of sexual perversion and fornication is to disintegrate the soul. The breakdown of life. Like the woman at the well, who had been married five times and was now in a sixth relationship. She was thirsting for spiritual help and Christ came to help her. He is God, so He knows all about us!!

So, if you are still with me at Mass today, if I have not lost you, though it may be important for you today to dream dreams about your life. The important issue on a Sunday is that we are before the sanctuary of the Lord, it is the Sabbath Day. It is the day to rest in the presence of the Lord. To pray, to be still for a while, to allow the beautiful ritual of the Holy Mass to let us encounter the Living God, made manifest in the Holy Scriptures and above all, in Holy Communion. As St Ignatius of Antioch wrote, "A man who excludes himself from the Sanctuary is depriving himself of the Bread of God".

Let me finish with one more thought. When John the Baptist turned round and saw Jesus passing by, he said one thing only and it was enough, "Look, there is the Lamb of God". John, the great prophet, knew he was in the presence of God. So, to see the Lamb of God, is to see the one who sacrifices his whole Body, Mind and Divinity for our sake. Why? Because He loves us and does not want to be lost in a world of sin and Godlessness, of emptiness and depravity. To remove, as Ezekiel says, a heart of stone and give us instead a heart of flesh.

So, the Mass, the Sanctuary of the Lord, is or place to be saved, restored, resurrected, made right with God once more. That we may leave this Holy place a changed person and declare boldly, like St Andrew, "We have found the Messiah"!! If the Mass has not changed us at all, have we really been to Mass?

God Bless you all.