

HOMILY – 3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER – 30 APRIL 2017

When Bruno died, I thought I had no-one left, no-one – the lady I visited some years ago was devastated. Her husband had died at 60, her mother had died, then her dog Bruno died, to crown it all, her daughter, a broody woman cut off all communication.

The experience of death can bring a deep sense of isolation, loneliness, no one to turn to. It is a very human response. It's like Greyfriars Bobby, the wee Cairn Terrier in Edinburgh, who sat on his master's grave for years after he died, thinking there is no one who can replace my master.

But we are not dogs or albatrosses or people without the Spirit of the Living God. The Gospel of today, in fact, all of the Scriptures today are a clear statement that God has not abandoned us. In fact, it is the very opposite. The Gospel reading from Luke, is Jesus teaching us all a fundamental lesson, "read again the message of God, recognize now that it is true. God will never desert his faithful, as your eyes were opened at the breaking of bread". A key text for all of us today is V1 & V10 in the Psalm – "And so my heart rejoices, my soul is glad, even my body shall rest in safety. For you will not leave my soul among the dead, nor let your beloved know decay". We are in 'Communio' with Christ Jesus. "I am with you always, until the end of time".

The way of life of a true Christian person is such that they never are abandoned by God. This is declared by Jesus and ratified by Simon Peter. Let us explore this further.....

Last week, I briefly visited the island of Arran and saw abandoned cottages and gardens and fishing boats, the best efforts of any man/woman, when they die, if not taken on by their successors, turn to rack and ruin. But this will never happen with Christ and Holy Mother Church. It always has, is and will be. It will exist until the end of time because it is empowered by the Holy Spirit. It has the living presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Even if only one Mass is celebrated in the world on that day – the Covenant remains.

The Sacramental lie of the Church, crowned by Holy Communion will remain with us until the end of time. It is the sacred sign of the eternal covenant that God has made with the world. If the Church was purely of human construction, it would have died out soon after it started. But the Church is only born by the intervention of Jesus Christ, showing us that God has not abandoned us, by giving us His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. (Luke – "This is my body which is given for you"). Through Christ, there is an eternal covenant with God's people.

So when we take Jesus in Holy Communion, it is an experience of 'Thanksgiving' that appreciation that God has not abandoned us. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI, "In this Sacrament, we enjoy the hospitality of God, who gives himself to us in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen". In other words, it is God's will that we, the faithful, should never be abandoned. And, very importantly, the Catholic Church must always be a Eucharistic Church, where Holy Communion is the source and summit of our faith, the Bread of life. Jesus said "The bread That I shall give is myself for the life of the world".

But I am concerned that Holy Mother Church in Scotland is missing out on the Emmaus Experience. Next Sunday is Good Shepherd Sunday, when we pray for vocations to the Priesthood and Religious Life. We need ore priests to celebrate the Mass, to consecrate the bread and wine. To bring Christ into our midst in this uniquely Sacramental way. Please do not abandon your responsibility as the Baptised People of God, to provide vocations. And may we as existing priests not abandon our responsibility to

celebrate the Mass whenever we can, with fidelity, goodness and dignity and take Holy Communion to the sick, the dying, the repentant sinner.

I remember years ago, visiting an old Irishman, on a farm cottage. He was lame, hadn't been to Mass for weeks, when he saw me coming into the room with the Blessed Sacrament, he burst into tears, sobbing, he cried out, "I knew Jesus would come, I know he loves me, thank you Jesus for coming to me".

To finish, that is our mission as the Catholic Church, to feed the lost, the abandoned, the spiritually bankrupt, with Holy Communion, so that they may recognize the living Christ, at the breaking of bread.

Alleluia!! Praise God Always.

Amen