

## HOMILY – 6<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 11 FEBRUARY 2018

In today's Gospel from Mark, Jesus shows He is aware of everything. He heals a leper, aware that, in eyes of the Judaic Law, He makes himself appear unclean. He is aware that mass knowledge of the miracle will make Him into a 'celebrity'. No longer able to wander freely in Galilee. But the healed leper is overjoyed, he can't hold his tongue, he chooses not to be aware of the consequences. He possesses a lack of awareness.

How about you, are you aware of the consequences of your words and actions? I got a letter in the post this week telling me I have been caught on camera, parking in an illegal place, while visiting a Cathedral in Flanders. 35 Euro fine. I wasn't even aware that anything was wrong!! Lack of awareness is common to us all. If the Pharisees and the Romans were truly aware that Jesus was the Son of God, would they have crucified him? If Judas Iscariot had been aware of becoming suicidal, would he have betrayed Jesus?

How many tragedies and accidents are caused by lack of awareness. The Titanic, Great Fire of London, The Ibrox Disaster, The Aberfan Disaster, Mad Cow Disease, E-Coli – the list goes on.

Through faith, Jesus invites us to become more aware, by listening to Him. That faith in God, brought alive by prayer and Holy Scripture, brings a deeper consciousness of the effects of our actions. The very words of the Our Father say, 'Thy Will be done', 'Lead us not into temptation', deliver us from evil'. As Jesus says, "God does not see the world as man sees it". God is motivated by love and truth, mankind is motivated sometimes by greed, power, sexual desire, self-centredness. Our motives are often disordered, so the consequences are disordered. Your version of the truth, mashed by subjectivity, is difficult from my own.

As we approach the forty days of Lent, let us be aware of what God is inviting us to do with our lives. Let us stop and pray and think for a while. Sometimes God is inviting us to see simple solutions to major life issues. So 'do not be afraid' to stop the irrationality of ignorance and sin.

So, the question I want to ask you all today is, "How aware are you of what the Church offers you in Lent?" Did you know we have Mass every day, between our two parishes? Even at 7am? Did you know we have prayer before the Blessed Sacrament five times a week? Do you know that a visit to Confession could radically change your life? Are you aware of the Stations of the Cross? When did you last follow the Stations?

Did you know that fasting sharpens the mind, purifies the body, generates grace and brings about self-control? Never mind the smug bit of losing weight.

Are you aware that 70% of nominal Catholics don't stick to a Lenten sacrifice? Mahatma Gandhi said once, "Christianity is a wonderful faith, it is a pity many of the baptized don't practice it".

I must say I am very impressed by many Muslims who discipline themselves to fast for Ramadan, not eating between sunrise and sunset. Last year, in solidarity with the Christians, many devout Muslims, in London's East End, also fasted in Lent, to be in solidarity with us.

As we enter Lent 2018, let us seek to be more aware of God's presence in my life. To be more aware of the consequences of our words and actions. To be also more aware of what my Catholic faith offers me in terms of tradition, praxis, devotion and moral consciousness.

Two thousand years of faithful adherence and learning, from the mistakes of the past, have generated a religious practice that is good for our salvation.

Use it, experience it, celebrate it!! Don't say I didn't warn you!! Have a fruitful Lent.

Amen