

## HOMILY – 7<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF EASTER – 13 MAY 2018

Theme: “Be In The World But Not Of The World”

So, there we have it, there were two candidates to take over from Judas Iscariot, as one of the Twelve Apostles. Joseph, known as Barsabbas and Matthias. They prayed about it, drew lots, in other words, voted in secret and Matthias was the one chosen.

I wondered what happened to the unsuccessful nominee? I hope it didn't embitter him as a Christian. It is easy isn't it, without a strong faith, to feel hurt. Even with a strong faith, we are affected by rejection or being passed over. Did you know that Karl Marx applied to study Theology, in University, as a young student, in Germany. He was turned down, so he studied Philosophy instead. Then went on to develop the Marxist ideology without God in the equation. The rest is history.

But, let's get back to the question of faith and rejection. Jesus makes a prayerful request to the Father, “Keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they be one like us”. In other words, Jesus implores the Father to help Him not to lose the faithful following of his disciples. To have a strong faith in God means we are not easily deterred by the disappointments of this life, to have courage to endure!

When we come to Holy Mass, we come here above all else, for Christ's sake. To unite ourselves with him in word and sacrament and secondly to be united with the People of God, not to be entertained.

I met a woman in the street recently, who hasn't been at Mass for months. I said I had missed not seeing her. Her reasons were that she thought people were bad mouthing her and thinking ill of her. To me that is even more reason to come close to Christ in Holy Communion and draw strength from Him. She needs God even more in her isolation. Or again, you meet people who won't come to Mass because they have fallen out with someone who does come. Think about what you are doing when you cut yourself off from the Mass, you are cutting yourself off from your spiritual lifeline. In effect, making the problem of alienation even worse. Denying yourself the Bread of Life.

St Catherine of Siena, once wrote, a famous Medieval Mystic, ‘That when I have a strong faith, my one concern is the care of my soul, the desires for the body have no bearing’.

I am convinced that when you have a strong faith, you have little or no concern for your body image. When did you last see a Pope, who dyed his hair or went for a makeover.

Jesus pleads with us not to become too worldly. It corrodes our spirit. Material things, materialism in general is often damaging to our faith. Childhood innocence is lost when children are given too much. Parents of First Communion children who have lapsed, often go for the most extravagant dresses because they care more for the body than the soul, they try to spend their way into Heaven.

When we really care for the soul, the priority is bringing faith and love together. That all our energies are concentrated on holding onto the loving bond of the believer and making sure that your child has acquired that faith in Christ, more than anything else.

If you have God on your side, ie within you, it is amazing what you can tolerate in terms of the ‘slings and arrows’ of life. True faith, as St Paul reminds us in Romans 8, is to let nothing separate us from the love of God, no trial, no torture, no rejection. In other words, we are not easily put off by the hardness

of life. I really take my hat off, to many of you, who have come through all sorts of trials in your family, in the local community, in the parishes, the failings of wider Church and not allowed it to 'throw the towel in'.

It is so easy to be a quitter, at all levels, I thinking some couples, perhaps not all, don't persevere with difficulties in their marriage. People are sometimes not prepared to endure hard work in employment, even as priests, in some cases, I believe, throw the towel in too easily. Stability is harder to come by because so many people don't stick to what they promised to do. Without faith, we lose sight of the beauty of routine and the mundane. Everything has to be exciting or it is boring and not worth doing.

Jesus, in his humbleness and love, helps us not to be worldly but instead to be spiritual. To do the simple things well and that every encounter with another person, is a moment of grace.

I hope, by the way, if I do, by the Grace of God, to get to Heaven, that I may meet Joseph, son of Barsabbas, the unsuccessful nominee for being an Apostle and see how he got on. I bet it did not spoil his faith in Christ.

Amen