

HOMILY – MASS OF ANNOINTING THE SICK – LOURDES – JULY 2018

Gospel – Mark 2:1-12.

Ps 3 – In You O Lord, I have taken refuge.

V9 – Be Merciful to me O Lord, for I am in distress

“Do Whatever He Tells You”

My dear Dad is a doctor. He reminded me that our natural inclination is to survive, to prolong our own life. This past week, the UK has marked the 70th Anniversary of the NHS, a State-funded, free on demand, Health Service, that is perhaps, the envy of the world. The same Health Service that participated in carrying out Abortions, the same Health Service that has saved and prolonged the lives of millions of others. The Hippocratic Oath, that professes the aims and objections of doctors, to protect, prolong and save lives, is conflicted and clashing, with a secular humanist society, that seeks to ‘play God’. In this confused moral and immoral maze of contradictions, Jesus shows us the only true way, to care for life and to seek, at the same time, the path to eternal life.

Mary, our Blessed Mother, exhorts those in the presence of her beloved Son, Jesus, to ‘do whatever He tells you’. This Marian proclamation includes, fundamentally, our care for the sick and the vulnerable. A definition of a true Christian, is one who dies to self, in order to live for Christ. To be compassionate is to, with sacrifice, be attentive to those who need our help. Right from the start of Jesus’s ministry, He reveals to the world, the call to help the sick. As when he unrolled the Scroll of the Prophet, Isaiah, at the Capernaum Synagogue, pronouncing, (Luke 4:18), The Spirit of the Lord has sent me, among other things, to bring sight to the blind. So, the incarnation of the Son of God, is fundamentally a healing revelation to the world, culminating in the healing covenant of the Cross and Passion. The wounded Heart of Christ, coming to heal our wounds, our spiritual blindness.

Jesus teaches us to set our eyes firmly on the Kingdom of God, on eternal life, therefore not reducing human life to mere determination for mortal survival. This is summed up, powerfully, by the teaching, “If you want to save your life, you will lose it but all those who are prepared to lose their lives, for my sake, and for the sake of others, will save it”.

The sacramental reality of Christ’s teaching is revealed beautifully in Lourdes. The People of God, the Church of the World, visits this Marian Shrine, initiated by the apparitions to St Bernadette, to live out the teaching of Christ, to do whatever He tells us.

When we come to the Sacred Celebration of the Mass, we witness Christ giving Himself completely in the Holy Eucharist, to give us the fullness of life, so that we may share that fullness of life with those who need help and healing, seeing beyond the struggle to survive.

Right from the start of Mark’s Gospel, Jesus is called upon to heal many, a sign that He is God, but then, in Mark 2, He shows that spiritual healing is just as important, if not more important, than physical healing. Remember, He heals the paralytic’s sins before He heals his paralysis. Why is this so significant? Because it is the healing of our spiritual wounds, our sins, that will prepare us for eternal life. Having faith in Jesus means, by the very state of being in faith, we acquire a healing power from God, through the Holy Spirit. To be a true Christian is to exercise that moral responsibility of caring for the sick and reconcile the world from social and individual sins.

To be an ordained priest means to administer the Sacraments of the Church, in Jesus's name, one of these seven Sacraments being, The Anointing of the Sick. That the seriously ill be sanctified, even healed and above all else, prepared well for God's judgement and hopefully for eternal life. The Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy states that 'those of the faithful whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age, can receive this Sacrament'.

So, together in Lourdes, as People of God, as Ordained Ministers of the Church, we have a collective 'Mission of Healing'. Spiritual, mental and physical healing are in constant demand, being fellow pilgrims presents each of us, every day, to bring healing to the world, in Jesus's name, to glorify Christ in our healing work, to transcend, the instinct of mere self-survival and delight in together working for the glory of God and the coming of His Kingdom, Eternal Life.

God Bless You All.