

## **HOMILY – 25<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 23 SEPTEMBER 2018**

It took me ten minutes to get down Greendykes Road last Saturday morning. A year ago, in Moscow, arriving for the T.L.I.G. Conference on World Peace, it took an hour to get through Passport Control. But, why should I be arrogant enough to believe that my needs are any greater than anyone else?

Interestingly, as the Conference, I was sharing a room with a Capuchin Friar, based now in Australia. One morning, looking rather upset, by the way, our room was on the 24<sup>th</sup> floor, he declared with frustration, “if you keep snoring like that, I will kill you!!” Bear in mind, it was a Conference on World Peace, amongst all the religions. I was slightly bewildered but humble enough to take criticism.

Falling out and arguing is something none of us wish to do. It happens in today’s Gospel, the disciples were arguing who was the greatest. Can you believe it? Being so near to Jesus and still arguing. Arguing about who is the greatest. Having a big ego or being full of the sense of our own importance. I’m just about old enough to remember when there was First Class, Second Class and even Third-Class passengers on the trains. To this day, we refer to First Class and Second- Class stamps. At University, you can be awarded a First Class or Second- Class Degree.

Jesus had no degree from university, He owned no property or land. In fact, when He sent His Disciples out to proclaim the good news, He advised them to carry no purse, no haversack. Teaching them to take the lowest seat at the Wedding Feast Banquet and have no one call them Father, Teacher or Rabbi. This is no false modesty on Jesus’s part nor a form of inverted snobbery. What Jesus is really concerned about is this. That if we lose a sense of modesty or humility, then we are no longer open to the Will of God. A proud or arrogant person is not willing to listen to anyone teaching them how to change their lives for the better. And to truly put themselves at the service of others.

The deadly sins of pride, envy, jealousy, hatred, resentment and arrogance, feed off the mindset that thinks of itself, somebody rather than a servant of God. When Nicodemus, a leading Jew, came in the dark to see Jesus, He was interested in what Jesus had to say. But he could only be open to what Jesus asked him to do, if he was willing to die to self in order to live for God. In other words, ‘to be born again’. To be converted to the way of the Lord. To see life in a new light. The culture of individualism and materialism encourages us to believe that we are important, unique and precious but it is all really a sham, an illusion. It is built on philosophy of self-enrichment, where a person is measured according to their ability to spend money in exchange for goods and services. The moment we have no money left, our importance disappears.

I notice that nowadays, going into Edinburgh, there is, at times, a lack of modesty, humility and politeness, manifested in a lack of awareness towards others. Maximillian Kolbe, O.S.F. wrote in his diaries, in 1940, ‘Modern times are dominated by Satan and will be more so in the future’. Everybody wants to be somebody but, in the process, we are nobody’s. Jesus, to counter all this, encourages us to have the outlook of a child, untainted by jealousy, pride and arrogance, to see life instead, as a marvelous discovery, that we are so small and God is so awesome, powerful and sacred.

So that and this is most interesting, the closer we come to God, the more we realise how beautiful life is when we die, to self and live for Christ and we are nothing without our faith. So, don’t think in terms of who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Think in terms of Jesus’s words to us, “All I have is yours and you have is mine”.

The authority of Christ is all the greater because He was born into poverty in this world but revealed to be a King, whose Kingdom never ends, in his lowliness, showing through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are truly valued by God.