

## **HOMILY – 8<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY OF THE YEAR – 26 FEBRUARY 2017**

There is something really, really beautiful about walking through a field of wild flowers as the birds are singing – it calms the mind and helps us forget all our worries.

Are you a worrier? Jesus tells us today, ‘not to worry about your life’. But, you might reply, ‘that’s easier said than done’. WE worry about so many things don’t we? Our jobs, if we are lucky to have one we like, our children, our finances, our friendships, our exams, our illnesses, our tax return and ultimately, growing old and dying, and everything in between. My dear mum is a terrible worrier and it is said if she didn’t have anything to worry about, then that would worry her too!

Jesus, in the Gospel today, is teaching us how to overcome our fears, putting faith and life in its proper place and setting our eyes firmly on the Kingdom of God. The desire of Jesus is that we be faithful to God and trust in his providence, however great or small.

The first words spoken to Mary by the Angel Gabriel, were, at the Annunciation ‘Do Not Be Afraid’. It sets the tone for the incarnation of the Son of God. That the revelation of Jesus Christ is there to reassure us about all things, spiritual and temporal. And that we, by following him, renounce evil. After all, it is often the acts of evil that generate fear ie corruption, murder, violence, revenge, greed, lust, stealing etc.

Therefore, our mission as Catholic Christians, in the footsteps of Christ, is to eradicate fear and tension in West Lothian, Scotland and beyond. Echoing the words of Christ, ‘He sent me to bring good news to the poor, to set the downtrodden free’. Perhaps a question we must all ask ourselves is, at the start of Lent soon, ‘Am I causing fear and tension to others by the manner of my living? Do I subconsciously cause others to be worried? Am I rowing in front of my children? Am I neglecting my parents? Am I holding grudges against my neighbour? Am I threatening something with legal action or revenge? Sometimes we just don’t think about the effect we have on those we are called to love.

I remember a lady in Jedburgh who lived for years in fear of the husband. If she overspent on the shopping, even by £1 or £2, he would rant and shout at her and even physically assault her. All for nothing. So un-Christ like, so unnecessary.

The Church is called to be in contract, a witness to the joy of the resurrection, to be liberated from fear. The Holy Spirit gives us wisdom, understanding and courage. The Sacraments feed us and the altar is the sanctuary of our Blessed Lord, in the tabernacle.

There is one more important point that I wish to mention in the Gospel. A very important point. Jesus talks about the birds in the sky and lilies in the field, how beautiful they are and then says this, ‘Are you not worth much more than they are’ – then he goes on to say ‘that when the flowers in the field wither, they are thrown on the furnace – Will he not much more look after you’.

There are many Catholics, faithful to the Mass, who have the mindset that good people should not get ill or suffer unduly or terrible tragedies. We often say ‘They didn’t deserve it’. But remember, the sun rises and sets on good and bad people alike. Yes, the call of the Gospel is to console the sick and the suffering, the frail and the broken-hearted. That is the measure of our Christian ethics, our civilisation.

But, the ultimate objective and this is very important, is the Transfiguration of the whole person in the Kingdom of God. We all do to some extent, wither and die, like the lilies in the field and the birds in the sky but God values our inherent worth, our unique lives, our souls. And for that we are

all totally dependent on God for our salvation. We are all very, very special to God. Otherwise we take a Pelagian/semi Pelagian approach, that we are autonomous human beings and it is all down to us. That is heresy. We are all totally dependent on God, not just for our physical wellbeing but most importantly, for our spiritual wellbeing. That is why, when Jesus healed the paralysed man, he declared, the greater miracle is the forgiveness of his sins not the healing of his paralysis.

So with that in mind, that by faith, we are in God's hands, he loves us and never wants to lose us. He shows that his son, Jesus, suffers terrible physical pain on the cross but none of that suffering is deserved and it is transfigured by his glorious resurrection. We keep that in mind, at all times, try and not to worry, just do your best to be faithful, loving and true.

I will finish with the words of St Paul, a fearless teacher and Apostle who wrote to St Timothy these words:

"If we have died with Him, then we shall live with Him,  
If we hold firm, then we shall reign with Him,  
If we disown Him, then He will disown us,  
We may be unfaithful, but He is always faithful".

God Bless you all, have a very special Lent. Be open to a change of heart.

Amen