

Building community, nurturing belonging

Liturgy Notes for Sunday 16 February 2020



Introduction to the Mass

Today as we celebrate this 6th Sunday in Ordinary time we also begin discerning, as a Parish and as an Archdiocese, the last of our proposals for action that we believe the Holy Spirit is calling us to look at under the Theme of 'Building community, nurturing belonging'.

Homily Notes / Ideas

As prayed our opening prayer today we asked, 'grant that we may be so fashioned by [God's] Grace as to become a dwelling pleasing to [God].'

What does this mean?

What does it mean to be a dwelling pleasing to [God]?

It would seem to mean living out truly the image of God that you have been created in. Using all the gifts that God has given you, to love God and your neighbour more. Using all the giftedness, that you are, for the building up of God's Kingdom on earth, the Church, the body of Christ.

This leads us perfectly into what Jesus is calling us to in our Gospel today. Jesus challenges us to live lives of integrity and authenticity. To go beyond



just the surface level of just looking good in the eyes of others when he says, 'if your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.'

Most of the problems in the world have roots in insecurity, fear of others and unaccepted vulnerability.

Yet Jesus tells us not to be afraid because as Saint Hildegard of Bingen said "‘With my mouth,’ God says, ‘I kiss my own chosen creation. I uniquely, lovingly, embrace every image I have made out of the earth’s clay. With a fiery spirit I transform it into a body to serve all the world.’”

If we truly believe this fundamental truth how can we be insecure?

How can we not welcome all into our community? Knowing we belong to God how can we not nurture that feeling, that truth in all of God’s creation?

We need to as Pope Francis says, “Go and show love to everyone, because your life is a precious mission: it is not a burden to be borne, but a gift to offer.”

Our lives and our faith is a gift to be offered to the world. A gift that unites, that welcomes that draws together, that is the meaning of the word Religion; re-ligio, to reconnect.

We see in the scriptures the story of God continually re-building relationship with God’s people in the many covenants that God made with them, reaching their culmination in Jesus, the Word made Flesh, who anointed the world and all of creation.

As part of these covenants God gives God’s people the Law, but what was the purpose of the Law?

The Law was there to lead us to God and to bring us together as one people to give us an identity.

So, when Jesus says he came ‘not to abolish [the Law or the Prophets] but to complete them’. Jesus is saying it is in him that they are brought together and we see this developed in Saint Paul when he teaches about the Body of Christ, for in the body of Christ we are all united in Christ, with Christ and through Christ.

The question then is how do we reach out to those who feel excluded from the Body of Christ, those who are on the margins, the weak, the vulnerable?

How do we ensure our communities, our Parishes are inclusive of all God’s Children, not just the ones who look, or act like me?



Is our faith and our charity and our love of neighbour only on our terms? Because that is what Jesus criticises the Scribes and Pharisees of, they would do what the law demanded, but no more.

Does our faith practice extend beyond the building we worship in?

Does our faith practice extend beyond those who I know I agree with?

Does our faith practice extend beyond where I feel comfortable?

Because while we need to ask the question of ‘how do we hand on our faith?’ The first question needs to be ‘what is the faith that we want to hand on?’ Is it a set of rules and regulations or is it a relationship with Jesus, a relationship with God?

For if it is a loving relationship then we can with Saint Clare of Assisi say, “We become what we love and who we love shapes what we become.” This is a call to a life of integrity and love. This is the call Catherine of Siena succinctly put when she said: “Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire.”

If our faith is something we live out then others will catch it, our faith will set the world on fire for the love of God and all of God’s creation.

If faith is about relationship, relationship with God and relationships with our brothers and sisters, with our neighbours, then it is essential that we consider how we support the home, school, parish partnership? And how do parishes work together so that they don’t become islands but are communities feeding into and drawing from the wider Catholic Community within our Archdiocese.

Bidding Prayer

for weeks discerning ‘How we pray together’ (16 February – 15 March)

Let us pray for all in our Archdiocese of Liverpool

<Pause>

That in building the community of God in this place we en-flesh Christ who welcomed the stranger and outcast in nurturing true belonging in all of God’s people.

Lord in your mercy...

