

Homily – 26th Sunday of the year – 26th September 2021

Vulnerability

Something strikes me about today's readings at Mass is God exposing the inherent vulnerability of humanity; and that a strong faith in God is always a wise step in overcoming that vulnerability.

From the moment we are conceived in the womb, we are vulnerable to the extremities of the mother who carries me. The new born child; cradles in the arms of their mother or father is totally dependant upon them. – It is so beautiful to see a baby sleeping without a care in the world in a shawl!

In the first reading from Numbers, Moses laments those who, in their insecurity and vulnerability don't accept in a new prophet in their midst. Remember, Jesus was not accepted in his own town. True faith, on the other hand encourages us to be bold, to be open, that the grace of God works and is active in unexpected places. The Psalmist gives thanks that the teaching of the Lord gives wisdom, purpose and truth to our existence, contrary to that, if we ignore God's teaching, his Logos/Torah; then we live a more insecure and uncertain existence – Faith brings shape + purpose to life!

Stability is not helped in a Capitalist and materialistic society where the emphasis is on providing employment for the minimal amount of wage with no job security and care for the welfare of your workers + families. People draw great strength and confidence from good employers, benevolent bosses who truly care for their workers. Giving confidence in their working lives and reaping the desire to give of your best.

St James laments the greed of the selfish rich who cheat on their workers, grew blind to their suffering and turned their backs on their plight. The ultimate conclusion for the selfish rich is being imprisoned in their own vulnerability – as they approach death; their rotting and corroding wealth cannot bring them any lasting security – only fear and damnation before God – Matthew 25: "I was hungry and you did not feed me".

Jesus affirms the way out of greed and vulnerability is generosity of spirit. The Church of Christ, at its best is a Church that gives confidence, strength and hope to vulnerable people. This echoes the call of Jesus, in Luke's Gospel, "Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest". Whether it is a person very sick in bed, or a family without shelter or food; or someone riddled with guilt or shame, or the lovely and dispirited just seeking someone to talk to; or the sharing seeing tea and bread.

To allow the strength of charitable and platonic love to prevail we must cut away all our vices and bad attitudes that prevent God's work taking place. We all need regular pruning or cutting back of 'dead wood' in our lives; you could call it conversion.... This includes politics, religion, business and the bureaucracies generated by our own insecurities.

Our lives have been blighted by breaches of trust, this includes the institutional church, society, Politician's, business, culture and sport.

God invites us, in our own generation, in hopefully a post-crisis world to have the willingness to build bridges of spiritual trust; to show that we have a genuine care and concern for one another.

Conscious of the fact that our stewardship of the world in our own life, shapes the path of our redemption – To welcome the unexpected prophet in our midst!

Help me dear Lord for my time of life to count as a cause for good, to relieve the insecurity and vulnerability of others and make each other happy and fulfilled. I'll finish with the prophetic word of the Holy Father, Pope Francis.

The disruption of Covid has turned the tables, inviting us to stop, alter our routines and to ask: what if the economic, the social, and the ecological challenges we face are really different faces of the same crisis? What if they have a common solution? Could it be that replacing the objective of growth with that of new ways of relating will allow for a different kind of economy, one that meets the needs of all within the means of our planet?

The discernment step allows us to ask: what is the Spirit telling us? What is the grace on offer here, if we can only embrace it; and what are the obstacles and temptations? What humanizes, what dehumanizes? Where is the good news hidden within the sombre news, and where is the bad spirit dressed as an angel of light? These are questions for those who humbly search and listen, who are willing not just to grasp at answers but to reflect and pray.

God Bless you ALL,

Fr Jeremy C Bath