

Homily notes:

27th September - 26th Sunday in OT Year A 2020

How often do we say we will do something, and then neglect or forget to do it? Sometimes we just can't say no, so agree without really meaning to do it. Other times we might agree with the best of intentions, but then events take over, something happens, gets in the way, takes over or things change and we don't do as promised. My mum used to say, 'nothing keeps better than work. It will always be there.'

The message in the parable is 'actions speak louder than words' although both words and actions would have pleased the father more. To be a follower of Jesus we are called to be missionary and to work in his fields, his vineyard. He has no time for that privatised spirituality of 'mind your own business, say your prayers and save your soul.' Don't get your hands dirty, don't let your comfortable schedule be upset.

The Christian mission can be described with simplicity: the best way to be a friend of Jesus is to bring a friend to Jesus.

On God's farm today the harvest is huge. Vast numbers of lives which haven't been touched by the news of Jesus Christ are wandering down roads of no meaning; they are bored, angry, and aggressive: they are jaded and sick from sensuality. They are living without hope.

What they want is a hand reaching out to pick them up. Many today may not now have heard of Jesus. And what sometimes happened in the past is that the little experience of religion they received was so negative that it seemed to immunise them from the real thing.

The power of the Holy Spirit and the fire of the heart have not reached them. They are left without hope, energy or self-belief.

Modern western society likes to try and remove religion and faith from affairs of state and day-to-day living. St John Henry Newman taught that there can be no separation between what we believe and the way we live our lives.

The parables of Jesus were meant to disturb; not merely to cast light but to burn. How can any teaching penetrate the barriers erected by self-righteousness, smugness and complacency? The simple parable offers a story that cannot be denied: people are made to do their own thinking. “Which of the two did the father’s will?” they know the answer.

The Coronavirus pandemic can make people think and rethink about life and its direction, and the necessary need for change. Some will blame God for the virus, and feel angry with God, so turn away from him.

St Teresa of Avila, thrown from her horse into a muddy puddle one day, prayed aloud and in frustration ‘O Lord, if this is how you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few!

Her reaction captures a mystery of faith; living our faith when things don’t go our way, when we face trial, tribulation, ups and downs and the inevitable frustrations and difficulties as social restrictions, self-isolation and social distancing tighten again. How do we cope? How do we put our faith into practice? Where do we find strength?

We call upon the grace of our baptism through which we were immersed into the death and resurrection of Jesus: who humbled himself, as our 2nd great reading reminds us, a reading we hear in the Good Friday Liturgy, and we rise with him to new life, calling on Jesus for his strength, grace, wisdom and blessing.

St James reminds us to be ‘doer’s of the word, not merely listeners.’ Only one son **DID** anything. Pray the Father to send US into the harvest, as we say and do our **Yes to God**.