

Homily (notes) from Canon Philip Dyson  
**29th October 2023 - 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Readings (Year A): 1st: Exodus 22:20-26. 2nd: 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10. **Gospel:** Matthew 22:34-40.

We are fortunate in our parish that we have 4 temples in which to come and pray, temples which are bright and clean and warm(ish). A temple is a sign of God and the mission of the people of God.

According to The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), such a building and its requisites for divine worship should be 'truly worthy and beautiful and be signs and symbols of heavenly realities.'

Bishop Robert Barron reminds us that the oldest term used to describe a Christian church is *porta Coeli* – the gate of heaven. Our churches represent the heavenly Jerusalem, with the altar of the Lamb at the midst of the throne.

Pope Francis speaks of our churches as spaces not of utility, but places open for an encounter. In repeating the words of his predecessor Pope Benedict, the Holy Father describes this encounter as the very heart of the gospel: the encounter with the risen Lord Jesus.

Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical or a lofty ideal, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon, and a decisive direction.

Pope Benedict had, prior to his election, already elucidated this thought in an essay on church architecture. He recalled that a Catholic church is built not only for the gathering of the people, but for recollection, focussed upon the Lord present in the Eucharist.

Catholic churches have never been merely meeting halls or assembly rooms. Rather they exist to give visible witness to supernatural faith and love, and thereby to invite all humanity to know and encounter Jesus Christ Himself.

The Catholic Church is alive, because praying people encounter there the mystery of the Lord, his death, his resurrection, and a **space for us**, beyond the communal worship of God, to stay awhile, to pray, to be silent before the Lord whose Eucharistic presence always remains.

A church within which the light is burning before the Tabernacle is always alive, is always more than a building made of stones.

'There in thine ear all trustfully, we tell our tale of misery.'

That is one reason, I try to keep that line in the Newsletter each week ~ **Before Mass: talk to God: During Mass: Listen to God: After Mass: talk to each other.** then each other.

Be sensitive to those around you, who want some peace, some quiet, some space to pray.

I know before Mass we may need to say something to someone; perhaps bring them up to date about something important, or checking people with a ministry are there and ready.

Long conversations should be for after Mass.

Listening to God, the Liturgy of the Word, is a vital part of any sacrament, but especially the Mass. Today's readings tell us about God and one another.

Jesus, challenged by the Pharisees, captured the heart of the Ten Commandments by telling us Love God and our neighbour as ourselves.

What a different world scene it would be if that were the case for everyone!

Another reason why our churches should be kept in good order and made beautiful, is that they may speak to future generations who may know nothing or very little of the beauty of our Catholic Faith, our worship and the glory of God.

Four years ago, when Bishop Mark was in the parish to bless the new All Souls chapel he told a story of his boyhood, when he and his other brothers would go to Ireland with their mother and on visiting an old aunt of hers would speak to her only in Irish, speaking no doubt of problems and worries.

The old aunt said something like; when the priest fills the chalice with wine, think of that as all your problems, all your worries, concerns etc. going into it, and then when the priest elevates the chalice, all are offered up to God, and as we all know, thus transformed.

A beautiful image for all of us to keep and reflect on.

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