

Homily for 24th Sunday of Ordinary Time 2018

We probably have all done it at times. We are hurting because of something; sickness, pain, depression or whatever, and somehow we make those around us to feel as we do. We unconsciously take out our pain on them, especially those who are close to us. Full of self pity we drag others down with us. That is not to say that we should not share our pain. That is important to do but not at the expense of others. Taking up our cross and following Jesus implies that we do not just selfishly impose our own suffering on others to make us feel better.

Taking up the cross does imply that suffering of one kind or another is part of life. It is unavoidable. Much of our world seems to say to us that suffering is something that should not happen at all. But sickness and disappointments, injustice, and death, do come our way even with our best efforts to avoid them. However, we do need to learn to accept without bitterness these crosses of life.

As we strive to live in this way we learn to accept those small daily deaths a long time before our physical death. We have to let go many things and people as we grow and we do mourn for them. In this way we do let some parts of ourselves die. At the same time we can celebrate the daily rebirths that the Spirit gives.

Because of this incompleteness in us we realise that we do need to wait in that “blessed hope” for the resurrection and the coming of our Saviour, as we pray at Mass. Is it not true that much of life is about waiting? How many hours have we spent waiting for planes, trains, weekends, our next meal, all the time carrying inside us our frustration. We are always waiting for something or someone to fulfil a need in us. Following Jesus also means waiting in hope for his coming again.

We might be praying for something and we never see the answer to our prayer. That is another kind of waiting. God’s answers, God’s gifts to us, are not always what we expect or think we need. God knows what we need which can be beyond what we want or think we need. This too is part of the cross we bear. If we are awaiting the resurrection we must be prepared for a surprise. God’s ways are not our ways. We do like to imagine God fitting into our way of thinking. God is greater than we can think or imagine. I cannot control God or expect God to be like me.

Jesus had changed Simon’s name to Peter. Now he calls him Satan! Jesus is not suggesting that Peter is in league with Satan, the tempter, but that to deny the place of the cross in the life of the Messiah is to give in to the forces of evil and to cease walking with Jesus.

The teachings of Jesus encourage us to focus on our relationship with our fellow pilgrims in life as a way to God. Jesus teaches us to love, forgive, show respect and mercy, avoid passing judgement, seek what is right, be fair and just, all of which lead us to a healthy relationship with God and neighbour. He also urges us to nourish our relationship with God by prayer and reflection. In doing this many crosses will come our way without seeking them out. Put all this together and we have a recipe for growth toward human and spiritual maturity.

So as we wait, as we pray, as we take up our crosses, we pray with great hope the beautiful psalm today, “I will walk in the presence of the Lord, in the land of the living.”

Fr Graham