

## Homily for 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

The last line of today's gospel has Jesus telling us that 'I have come so that you may have life and have it to the full.' All of us, in our very different situations may well ask what 'having life to the full means'? In this time of pandemic there will be very many people wondering: those struggling to draw breath, connected to a ventilator, scared stiff that the PPE will not protect them, unable to visit their relatives or to be with them at the last moment of life on earth, or when dead to give them a proper funeral. What does life to the full mean to those who have been furloughed or made redundant or whose education has been curtailed? Those locked in abusive relationships.

If we go further afield what does having life to the full mean to the Catholics of Mozambique who have been subjected to a spate of devastating attacks by jihadists, including the targeting of churches during Holy Week, which have been attributed to extremist group (ISIS). Speaking to the Catholic Charity Aid to the Church in Need, Bishop Luiz Fernando Lisboa described how 52 young people were massacred on 7<sup>th</sup> April for refusing to join the extremists. Or to the poor in Yemen, forgotten by so many in our world, about which the United Nations has said nearly one million displaced people risk losing their shelter, warning of a dire funding shortfall and a 'very real possibility' that the new coronavirus is already circulating undetected in the war-torn country. Many have shown a resilience which is heroic but that does not mean that we should not work to better their conditions.

What has seemed a full life, power, prestige, popularity, possessions has so often failed to be so. Jesus is inviting us to listen to his voice and to find in him the life which is overflowing and truly fulfilling. Part of listening to him will be to discern the way he is inviting us to live. Part of our understanding is that we are known by name, not just collectively but individually, and that each one of us has a role to fulfil which is unique. For many that will be as married people, for others it may be as a single person by choice, not circumstance. For some it will involve profession as a religious and others ordination as a priest. There is no hierarchy in these different ways of life, rather each one is a response to a calling which we may deeply feel but not always adequately explain.

In a similar way people, gifted in different ways, are called to different ways of contributing to the good of others. In the current pandemic the front line medical and care workers are receiving the sort of gratitude and appreciation that should be taken for granted, as they give themselves totally to the care of others. Many others are doing the same, ourselves included, trying to preserve life by safe contacting, regular washing, remaining indoors, sometimes at great cost to themselves, but knowing that they are in this way living life to the full. When we feel that we do not have life to the full we could do a lot worse than remember that Jesus' life ended in apparent failure, death on the cross, but that was not the end, nor will it be for us especially if we listen to his voice.

## Bidding Prayers for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

Celebrant:

All loving God, you protect all those who seek to listen to your Son who gives us life so that we may have it to the full, we pray for the healing of our world.

Reader:

For the Church – that it may always follow the voice of the Good Shepherd who opens the gate to all who believe.

Lord in your mercy

For all world leaders – that they will never depend on themselves alone but discern with others what is good and necessary for global peace and well being.

Lord in your mercy

For all those who are ill at this time both as a result of coronavirus and from other causes – that they will know the healing touch of Jesus and the expertise and care of medical staff and family.

Lord in your mercy

For those whose lives are potentially limited by the circumstances in which they find themselves – that they may hear the promise of Jesus in today's gospel and be given an inner freedom and peace.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident and natural disaster, for Fr Tony Pearson a retired priest of the diocese who died last Wednesday, and Gerard Johnson, Ellen Murphy, Thomas Patrick Tobin, Frances Thompson and Florence McDermott whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord hear us

Either aloud wherever you are or in the silence of our hearts we pray for our own special intentions...  
pause...then Lord hear us

We ask the prayers of Mary as we say, Hail Mary...

Celebrant:

God of your compassion, your Son, the Good Shepherd never leaves his flock untended. May we hear his voice today and follow his example in serving our brothers and sisters this coming week. Through Christ our Lord. Amen