

Homily for 30th Sunday of the Year 2020

On Wednesday's Thought for the Day the speaker, a Rabbi, said that part of loving our neighbour is wanting for them the rights and opportunities we would want for ourselves. I mention this because of Jesus' answer to the question, 'which is the greatest commandment of the Law?' He puts the whole-hearted love of God first but does not end there, saying, 'The second resembles it; you must love your neighbour as yourself.' The two are inextricably linked as St John reminds us asking, "How can we say we love the God we cannot see if we do not love the neighbour we can see?"

There are aspects of loving our neighbour in the first reading from the Book of Exodus. It is interesting, especially in today's world of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, that the first demand made by God is not to molest the stranger. A major reason for this is that God's people in the past had been strangers in a foreign land, their history included slavery and possessing no rights. God had freed them and wanted them to learn from this that they should offer strangers hospitality. Strangers cease to feel estranged when they are accepted, respected, and given the rights and opportunities that others take for granted.

Next mentioned are widows and orphans among the most vulnerable people, often invisible and disregarded, again with the injunction not to treat them harshly. We might ask who they represent in today's world? Who are among the most vulnerable, those living under dictatorships, like Nicaragua or where there is an increase of violence, e.g. Chile? Whose daily suffering goes unnoticed by the majority, e.g. those in Yemen from famine and war? Who have no rights, no recourse to benefits, no place to call a home, who cannot get employment, provide for their children, e.g. those affected by the current pandemic? Those who are self isolating, those who are confused, those who are anxious.

When people have very little and they need to feed their children they sometimes have to resort to borrowing money with often disastrous consequences. Money lenders, loan sharks, lend money but at such extortionate rates that the debts quickly outstrip the money borrowed. Clearly such people have never listened to this passage of Exodus, not to play the usurer, not to demand interest! What an impact that would have on modern living if it was taken literally.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus tells us that anyone who is in need, near or far, is our neighbour and to love them as ourselves. Love of self can be misunderstood as selfishness. In reality it is a willingness to accept ourselves as we are, to show compassion to ourselves, to acknowledge the sufferings as well as the blessings in our own lives. Experience tells us that those able to do this are more likely to show compassion and love to others, are more open to sharing who they are and what they have with others, be that money, food, clothing etc, or time and a willingness to listen. This not only reflects God's love but is in itself, loving God.

Bidding Prayers for the 30th Sunday of the Year 2020

Celebrant:

Loving God and neighbour is the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets, with this in mind we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

For the Church – that it may make known the love of Christ in its pastoral ministry to the most vulnerable in our world.

Lord in your mercy

For all who are oppressed especially those who are aliens in a foreign land – that they may be treated with dignity and compassion.

Lord in your mercy

For all who are suffering violence, especially in Chile and Nigeria – that ways to reconciliation and peace may be found.

Lord in your mercy

For those who are anxious, confused or afraid of what the future might bring during these times of the COVID pandemic – that the sick will be cared for, the impoverished will be provided for and all will seek to encourage those with mental health issues.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the pandemic, for Bridget Sherwing of Warburton Court who died on Tuesday, and Mary Margaret Palmer, Denis Greenwood, Edmund Bottomley and John Lancashire whose anniversaries occur this week – that they and all who have died may rest in peace and rise in glory.

Lord in your mercy

Either aloud or in silence we pray for our own special intentions...pause...then

Lord in your mercy

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

Celebrant:

All loving God your Son told us that to love you with all our heart, mind and soul, leads us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Show us the depth of your love and strengthen our faith in moments of doubt. Through Christ our Lord.