

## Homily for the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart

Recently I was having a conversation with a very good friend of mine who later this year will qualify as a surgeon. She was telling me of doing a ward round and talking with a patient whose heart she had held for a very short while a couple of days before. The patient was expected to make a full recovery which was very good news for her and the whole medical team. This reminds us that the heart is a muscle, but and it is a big but, the heart is also THE symbol for love. Think of poetry, think of music, think of art, think of the Scriptures. Today we think of our own parish of The Sacred Heart.

In the first reading the people were told that God had set his heart on them, what a beautiful phrase, why? Well it wasn't because they were powerful or numerous, or deserving, but simply because God loved them. And this theme of being loved by God was taken up in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading. St John uses the word love no less than 15 times culminating in three words, "God is love." And God showed God's love for us in the person of Jesus who loves each one of us more than we can ever know and especially when we are at our wit's end, when there are more problems than solutions, when we don't want to get out of bed because everything is a burden. Let's listen again to Jesus's words and not just listen but hear them said to each one of us, *"Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light."*

Two words are used twice, yoke and burden. What burdens are we labouring under? For many throughout the world it is the pandemic, still not able to work, or to recreate, to visit, or to share a meal. For some the burdens are imposed by others, insufficient food due to the unequal distribution of resources; a lack of freedom due to the absence of the rights most of us take for granted; a powerlessness because of corrupt or abusive leaders; fear even in the heart of the home when children are molested. In some countries animals are controlled by being yoked together and we know that people can exert inordinate control over others which is another form of being yoked. When this is the case we lose our inner freedom and sense of perspective and we need someone or something to help us move on.

Jesus is inviting us to see him offering us that help. To shoulder his yoke is to tie ourselves to him and his way of life. This will not mean that we will never experience suffering, but in handing over our burdens to Jesus we get an insight into the heart of God, we walk together and have moments of oasis which allow us to feel the gentleness of God in the midst of our pain, to stay with the experience knowing that we are not alone and that we do not have to be controlled by trying to live up to the expectations of others, or indeed, sometimes, ourselves. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is a symbol of God's love for each one of us and an invitation to open our hearts in love for God and one another by shouldering his yoke and finding rest.

## Bidding Prayers for the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart

Celebrant:

As we think of God's love for us symbolised in the Sacred Heart of Jesus we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

For the Church – that the Church will reach out without question to people of every race, language, culture and way of life.

Lord in your mercy

For Governments and Leaders of Nations – that they will govern in such a way that even the least among us will know they are respected and valued.

Lord in your mercy

For the sick and those who are suffering especially from heart disease – that they will experience the heartfelt love of Jesus and receive the medical care they need for recovery. Lord in your mercy

For all Fathers on this Fathers' Day – those who have died and those with us still that they will be loved by their children. We remember too those who do not know their fathers and those who are estranged from their fathers, that they may have peace.

Lord in your mercy

For those who are burdened by others or by themselves – that they will respond to Jesus' invitation to go to him for rest.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the pandemic, and Ernest Robinson, John Rafferty, Peter Timothy Morris, Audrey Healey and Donald Chadderton 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:

Jesus Christ, Saviour and brother, may your wounded heart heal us, may your burning heart warn us and may your Sacred Heart sanctify us. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen