

Homily for the 2nd Sunday after Christmas

It is a long time since we celebrated the 2nd Sunday after Christmas because for some years now we celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany on this day. The scripture is magnificent as we have just heard. The book of Ecclesiasticus speaking of Wisdom, personified as a woman speaking in the presence of the Most High, which should give us cause for thought when we think of women's role in the Church, and yet living within the midst of God's people. How important wisdom is in decision making by Governments if people are to live in peace, how important wisdom is for our own decisions, big and small.

Wisdom is taken up in the second reading in a beautiful blessing which is worth repeating in full: "May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed to bring you to full knowledge of him. May God enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit." There is so much for us to ponder in these two sentences, wisdom, perception, enlightenment, revelation and for what, so that we can appreciate what hope God's call holds for us. And hope is needed at this time of pandemic, and as we look around our world and see the results of short sightedness, the lack of wisdom, in the deforestation of the Amazon, or the plastic pollution of the oceans. The misery of the refugee camps, the denial of human rights, the huge inequalities that continue to exist. The truth is that we have it in our power to transform these situations, the question is do we have the will to do so.

The gospel is the magnificent prologue of John's gospel with its opening line, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.' We remember the opening of the Book of Genesis: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' So John is taking us back before time and telling us that The Word was present at creation, indeed it is through the Word that all things came to be. If this is so then the whole of creation is good because the whole of creation is of God, and if the whole of creation is of God then every part of creation deserves our reverence. The Word present at creation now breaks into our human time – The Word became flesh and lived among us – though not everyone accepted the Word made flesh, including his own people.

Those who did accept him are numbered among God's own children. They are the ones who walk in the light of the Word, despite the opposition that the forces of darkness bring. They refuse to be overcome by the darkness in our world in its many forms, but instead not only walk in the light but bring the light of Christ to others by living out of love. The adult Christ will say, No greater love has anyone than to lay down one's life. And today, at the beginning of this New Year we think of, and thank God for, those women and men, known and unknown to us, who have literally laid down their lives in many different ways, and in many different situations, to transform the fortunes of those whose lives have been dark, but who, because of the sacrificial love of others, now see the light and can walk in the light.

Bidding Prayers for the 2nd Sunday after Christmas January 3rd

Celebrant:

At the beginning of this New Year we turn to God in prayer.

Reader:

For the Church – that the Church will reach out with words of hope to the whole world, and especially to those who are suffering in any way.

Lord in your mercy

For Governments and political leaders – that they will do all they can to bring about reconciliation and peace by upholding human rights and acting justly in all they do.

Lord in your mercy

For those whose lives have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic – that medical staffs and care workers will continue to give heroic service to the sick and housebound.

Lord in your mercy

For those suffering from dementia – that they will receive the care they need and that those caring for them will have the patience and support they need.

Lord in your mercy

For those who have died, all victims of violence, accident, natural disaster and the pandemic and George Sparkes, Jack Buckley, Mary Heselwood, Geoff Haigh, Ken Hawsworth, Tony Gowdridge, John Hanlon, Frank Wolstenholme, Anthony Peter Cox, Michelle Bickers and Sr Hilary 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 as we continue to contemplate the birth of your Son, we ask you to renew us in him so that we can face this coming year with confidence. Through Christ our Lord. Amen