

Homily – 6th Sunday of Easter 22nd May 2022

Theme: Make Your Home Catholic'

In the Gospel today from St John, Jesus encourages us all to make our home with God the Father.

Bellway, Barratt and Persimmons etc can build houses but they can't build homes. It takes the lives of the people living in these houses and flats to make them into homes. Its not enough to move in the furniture and decorate the walls. A house can look pretty but it can remain empty and soulless, without spirit or atmosphere or love.

Its relationships that make a house into a home; the presence of love and compassion, the sound of laughter but also of tears and sorrow. The banter of children, the call to share a meal; relax in a chair or watch the baby having his/her first bath at home. What makes a house a spiritual home is inviting God to be at the centre of our homes. Having a crucifix on the wall and a statue of Our Lady on the shelf. Getting the priest to bless the food on the table and say night prayers with the bairns before they go to sleep. To have a crib at Christmas and Palm crosses in Holy Week. To see our homes as a place of prayer, peace, forgiveness, love and kindness.

If I came into your home would there be any signs of your Catholic Christian faith? When Jesus entered the house where the apostles where sheltering, for fear of the Jews, the first words uttered were, "Peace Be With You". Our homes are a sanctuary of life, where new lives are conceived, where children are nurtured, where growth in faith and love is sown, where hardship is softened by prayer and love. Where sickness is tended to by compassion and growing old and dying is lovingly tended to. At the time of death – tradition is to draw the curtains shut.

Jesus often sought to enter into the homes of the sick and the sinner. To give them reassurance and extend his miraculous healing in an intimate and loving way.

Before Covid struck, it still surprised us that more parishioners didn't invite the parish priest to bless their house. It seems sadly that many homes are becoming locked enclosures rather than 'open doors', perhaps signalling increased fear in our society.

When I was visiting homes in India and Africa; as a young priest/seminarian it was considered an honour to have a Man of God in your home and every opportunity for hospitality would be made forthcoming. Having a picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus would be seen as sure protection from all the perils of evil.

Jesus is encouraging today to keep the Word of God central to our homes. Not just literally by having the holy bible in a central place, beautiful as this is, but also speaking and acting in a way that is consistent with the Gospel; with the Word made flesh, putting the Gospel into action in our homes.

Perhaps out of fear of discrimination or the effects of secularisation, many nominal Catholics in Scotland choose to keep their religious adherence hidden under a bushel; denied or buried away; invisible to the naked eye.

This is very sad and regrettable; there is nothing to be ashamed of in being a follower of Jesus Christ. As Jesus says in the Gospel today, 'Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid' – Wear your faith on your sleeve. Remember that our children's minds are formed in faith by what they see; even more than what they hear.... Can they see a Cross in their home, or a statue of Our Lady? Can they see a Holy Picture? Can they see a sign of the cross at bedtime; can they see Holy Water to bless ourselves with?

The ancient faith of our forbears was showered with sign and symbol. Our sacramental life and our churches are decorated with signs of Christian Catholic tradition – Should not our home reflect that reality?

I used to take Holy Communion to a blind lady in Kilsyth, her home was decorated with nice statues of Mary and Joseph, she would take Communion by the fireside, one day, I had to leave in haste; she called me back, blind as she was, declaring boldly, 'Father you forgot to blow out the candle!'. She saw the light and I didn't.

God Bless her home of faith!