

Homily 5th Sunday of the Year 15th May 2022

Love – This is my commandment

The opening line of the Psalm striking!

‘The Lord is kind and full of compassion, slow to anger, abounding in love’.

Are you abounding in love?

Am I abounding in love?

Most people, I think, would like to see themselves as a loving person; but perhaps that love comes with terms and conditions, partly out of fear or self-preservation, or again, past memories of spoilt or broken love. Or the expectations of love are not mutual. Jesus personifies love in his whole self. Affirming the doctrine, that ‘God is love’. Logically speaking, then, if we profess to be a Catholic Christian then we, who are formed in the image of Jesus, should be a loving person too.

It is not always the case, just look at the Gospel, we’ve just heard, Judas Iscariot, has just professed his love for Jesus, but almost in the same breath, leaves the upper-room to betray him. This does not deflect Jesus at all from his mission, to proclaim the commandments of love.

You will never embitter Jesus by rejecting his love. This sadly, is not the same with us.

I was having a pub lunch up near Tain last week, and the beer on sale was called, ‘Bitter and Twisted’ – it was a bitter and it did have a nice twist to its taste.... ironically – however, to be serious, Scotland, the world, even our own families can be tainted by bitter and twisted attitudes; we see bitterness in Ukraine as a result of war, we see it on the Citadel of Jerusalem where a Palestinian Christian woman’s coffin is attacked by Israeli Police officers. Or again the legacy of bitterness in Scotland + Ireland from bigotry and religious discrimination, it can happen too in families for all sorts of reasons, many irrational, our pride, jealousy or misplaced loyalty and ignorance.

The spectre of social evil delights in making people bitter and twisted – after all the objective of evil is division and destruction.

So, the antidote to all that is Christ Jesus himself. It is redeeming plan to reconcile the world through his sacrificial love. It is true faith in God that turns

people's lives around, building up a city of God that epitomises the heavenly Jerusalem.

And so, the Book of revelation aspires to that heavenly Jerusalem – a state of being where, as it says, tears will be wiped away, no more death, no more mourning and sadness – the sadness of the past has gone!

It is for us as Christians to strive towards that heavenly realm; to confront bitterness and anger with a spiritual prescription of Divine love. As St Paul says 'We all have to experience many hardships before we enter the Kingdom of God' Never let them drain your capacity to love and be loved.

Let me finish with the beautiful words of Pope Francis, and his encyclical, 'Fratelli Tutti' on Fraternity +Social Friendship –

'Love, then, is more than just a series of benevolent actions. Those actions have their source in a union increasingly directed towards others, considering them of value, worthy, pleasing and beautiful apart from their physical or moral appearances. Our love for others, for who they are, moves us to seek the best for their lives. Only by cultivation this way of relating to one another will we make possible a social friendship that excludes no one and a fraternity that is open to all.

God bless you all!

No more 'Bitter and Twisted' except in a pint glass!