

Homily 16th Sunday of the Year – 31st July 2022

Today we are aware, or some of us are, of the fragility of creation at the mercy of God – the rise the earth's temperature is causing more extremes in weather, - flood in Bangladesh and the Philippines, even in Australia, forest fires in America +Europe and extreme famine in Africa – not to mention Ukraine.

In Genesis Chapter 6, we read of God's concern for the world at that time, - the immorality, greed and wickedness of humanity was very prevalent – God even regretted creating human beings; but fortunately, God identified with one man, Noah, someone who he describes as, “a man who walked with God”. Walking with God is a description of a person of prayer, so close to God, that they are always mindful of each other, so mindful was Noah, that when the flood receded, and life on earth was saved, he built an altar and gave thanks to God in prayer for saving his family and all the living creatures, the rainbow in the sky was seen as a sign of Covenant between God and humanity, a humanity personified in Noah, who proved himself to be virtuous and very importantly a prayerful human being. Throughout salvation history God identifies with those who recognise the importance of that Covenant and renew it by faithful prayer and reason of goodwill, a sort of consciousness of God that recognises our blessings and prays for strength in times of trouble- think of Abraham, sitting outside his tent one day, realising that God was near him and exclaiming, “My Lord, if I found favour in your sight, don't pass me by”.

Prayerful people have that inner awareness of the truth of life and death, that intuition of goodness and evil; that consciousness of how near of far they are to the will of God.

Take for example of the night that Eli was an aged man of prayer, sleeping and praying near the ark of the covenant, even though he was half blind, - he was aware that God was calling on Samuel to become a person of prophecy, as he too was one of prayerful spirit. So, the advice to Samuel is, when you hear the voice of God calling on you, your reply should be, “Here I am Lord, I come to do your will”. How often so I see my life as doing God's will instead of my own?

So, prayer is three key things for us in every age; firstly, a desire to walk in the company of God, like Noah, Abraham, Eli, and Samuel, to become a true disciple of God, to have the faith to know God is with us.

Secondly, it is an awareness that by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, an eternal covenant has been sealed between God and humanity – a bond of spiritual love that should be nurtured in prayer and not rejected. A covenant that leads us forward to redemption, the kingdom of God, and away from evil and self-destruction. A covenant made real in the Bread of Christ. Thirdly, that prayer helps us to know and do the will of God in our lives that though we have natural grace and the capacity to know and love God; the powers and dominions of evil will always be seeking to draw us away from God to have a selfish will that causes misery and sadness.

I tell you all this, and I hope you are still with me, in spirit. Because the prayer, the one prayer that Jesus teaches us, encapsulates all these objectives and more. The very first line of the prayer says so much, 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name'. Jesus' inviting us to have a very personal relationship with God, like a child to a loving parent. 'Abba Father'

It is such a beautiful universal prayer that we all recite so often; that we know the words, but do we ever stop to reflect on what we are saying, i.e., when we say "Give us our daily bread" or when we pray "And lead us not into temptation".

Jesus is teaching us in love, that the future of the world depends on us being prayerful people, since the dawn of creation. We cannot afford to abandon our prayer life. Because it is akin to abandoning our faith, abandoning our walking with God.

Again and again, Jesus takes time to be in prayer to and with the Father, to give him strength and give us example. We ignore his advice at our peril, especially think of Jesus, praying to the Father, to carry him through the cross to the resurrection.

To know what we must do to save our souls from damnation.

So, when we pray the Our Father today at Mass, let us 'Walk with God'. 'Know He is with us, and listen carefully to what we are praying' – God Bless you all this day as we pray for our Daily Bread.

Amen.

Canon Jeremy Bath 3