

Homily 19th Sunday of the Year – 7th August 2022

When my mum made a trifle, it was quite a major operation; it involved a lot of preparation: Firstly she made the 'jelly' while still liquid, in went the sponge sticks soaked in sherry and the raspas; then when the jelly was setting, she made the custard from eggs, sugar etc, then the cooled custard was poured on the set jelly; then that was put in the fridge, then she whipped the cream, that went on top of the custard; then it was topped with Marachina cherries and sprinkled with 100's + 1000's in all sorts of colours. Then it was put back in the fridge – ready to be enjoyed at the family table.

I say that to today, because Jesus is teaching us in the Gospel today, not to see life as a mere trifle, but rather that life as a human being should be focused on preparing ourselves for the Kingdom of God; for eternal life, and that too takes time, effort and dedication.

We are used to being people of preparation in all walks of life, teachers preparing classes, lawyers preparing cases. Coaches preparing for a football match, priests preparing sermon, farmers preparing the field for a good harvest.

The 'harvest' of Christian Life in our Catholic faith tradition is redemption, eternal life. So it is in love that Jesus implores us through teaching and parables to be aware, to be prepared. Jesus, quotes the Words of Isaiah, (40) "Prepare a Way for the Lord", - make his paths straight".

Redemption to be made possible must go in hand with preparation. As the time of the Jews escaping slavery in Egypt, they have a call by God, through Moses, to prepare a Passover Meal of unblemished lamb, bitter herbs, unleavened bread and the cup of covenant.

Abraham, at the visitation of God, was required to prepare a meal near the Oak of Mamre, in his call to faith. – the book of Leviticus – thereafter instructing the faithful go construct a suitable dwelling place for the arc of the Covenant – protecting and upholding the holy bond of love with God.

The spiritual consciousness of preparation for death and salvation offers that our eyes are set beyond this temporal life; acknowledging that there is a meaning, a purpose for which we encouraged to strive.

Jesus, seals that mindset beautifully in the Passover Meal of the Last supper, teaching the apostles that hereafter they must prepare for redemption by

celebrating the Eucharist in his name; there is finer or more noble task that is laid before us. The climax of our Sacraments of initiation.....

80 years ago, when many Christians were sent to the Concentration camps of the Nazi Holocaust, the priests present, awaiting almost imminent death, would take whatever meagre resources they had to celebrate the Mass with their fellow prisoners and prepare them for redemption.

The Sacrament life of the Church is thereafter aligned to that grace filled sense of preparation; from the baptism of an infant baby, to the anointing of a dying loved one. The reconciliation of a tormented sinner is only made possible by the cross and passion of our Blessed Lord.

Let us not forget that all of life is an opportunity to prepare a way for the Lord, whether it is making a mere trifle, or saying our prayers, giving a helping hand or reaching out in love to our neighbour.

God Bless you in all your preparations, especially in coming to Mass.

Canon Jeremy Bath