

Homily – 5th Sunday of the Year – 7th February 2021

Going through my coat pocket, sifting out all the rubbish, sweetie papers etc. I come across a 2 pence coin, minted in 1971, at the time of decimalisation; Feb 1971, was the move from pounds, schillings and pennies to the decimal coinage. I looked at the coin and said to myself, that coin is fifty years old now and still in circulation! I was ten years old when it was minted; now its in my pocket at 60years old and its still legal tender!

How our lives move on; as Job says in the first reading, ‘swifter than a weavers skuttle my days have passed....’ In his lowest ebb; he dwells on the futility of life without hope and joy.

Job, who lives in a pagan culture but believe there is a God, presents the human condition similar to Ecclesiastes. He emphasises as I did earlier that:

(i) Life is short

But he also wrestles with: sufferings are countless, the grace of youth is followed by the struggles of adult life, that there is a degree of impurity or imperfection in humans, something mysterious that can so easily ruin that what we undertake or strive for! And lastly, but not least, when looking at life, they would like to live forever, which is not granted to them.

Job is a microcosm/or an example of the human struggle with the point of life. Amongst all his despair he suddenly sees the light and declares.... (chapter 19:25ff)

“For I know that my Redeemer lives and he, the Last, will take his stand on earth. I will be there behind my skin and in my flesh, I shall see God”

What matters for him is not the sentence of God or the destruction of his adversaries or to see his right defended – but only to see God.

What he expresses here is the longing of many of us: that we get to see the other side. – that life is worth living well. It has an end plan.... A resurrection.

Think of the words of Jesus on the cross, paving the way to resurrection. “Father into your hands I commend my Spirit” “It is accomplished!”

This week alone I’ve met people in all sorts of personal struggles....

A man struggling with a broken marriage

A teenager wrestling in falling in love

An old soldier tormented by Shell Shock

A retiree contemplating growing old and wishing a quick end

A family striving to give a loved one a dignified funeral.

A student nurse toiling with her work load.

Job is the image of the toiling human being- that’s all of us!

Job is a good man who is never blasphemous, God despite his struggles...he has still to know Christ and hear the message, “how good the Lord is towards those who serve him with love” – to retain that hope.

In the Gospel today we hear of Jesus in countless ways reliving the plight of the broken hearted; the diseased, the sick, the possessed, the spiritual hungry.

Resentment towards God is found today in those who reflect true Christianity. The guilty, the lapsed and angry hide, not Jesus, God goes and searches them out like a good shepherd. – hoping for conversion. The key for us all is to really seek out the person of Christ – to have that patience of Job – continuing to do good – knowing that the desire to do good ultimately comes from God. The book of Job then, teaches us how much we need the 2nd coming of the Son of God. On one hand, as long as God does not present himself openly, we cannot avoid doubting and resenting him. On the other hand, as long as someone feels he alone is responsible for his own perfection; he cannot feel as a Christian believer does, nor come into the reign of grace – Job is rewarded because he never loses faith in God.

St Paul is converted because he hears the voice of God on the road to Damascus – He then, sets his sights on saving the souls of others even to the point of sacrificing his own life. – He too teaches us to find the right attitude to Life by faith in Jesus.

God Bless you all

Fr Jeremy Bath