

Homily for the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time 2021 Year B

Over the past week we have been reminded once more of the tragic loss of Princess Diana, shown by the celebration of what would have been her 60th birthday, the unveiling of a new memorial to her and the realisation it has been 24 years since her death.

Looking back, there are no adequate words to really express the experience in which we all shared in that tragic event. But in that week, whatever one's belief or sympathies, we witnessed an extraordinary outpouring of human emotion, love and gratitude, the likes of which we shall probably never see again. Much has been written, and will be written, to capture and hold for our own time, and for history, what I call a real moment of Grace. A moment that was timely and important and that we should allow ourselves a little time to reflect upon it once more.

Looking back, I feel that the experience of that week can be seen as an important moment of Grace for us for two reasons.

First of all, in the hard, cynical and often self-serving world in which we now pass our days, what a wonderful thing it was to have witnessed that wonderful release from peoples' hearts of the very best that makes us human. Perhaps there have been times recently when we thought that it did not exist anymore, but out it poured from countless people, those wonderful expressions of tenderness, empathy, shared sorrow, faith and gratitude.

It was a real moment of grace for us to have been able to witness this. We should store it in our memories, so that when we retreat into the privacy and safety of our own hearts once more, we can recall it. Then, when the world once more seems to be a lonely and cold place, we will know that the best is really still there, just under the surface of everyone. Then perhaps the grace of God, through an event or a person, can release it again for the enrichment of humanity. We should treasure people who can have this effect upon others.

Recalling these memories can wake us up to the truth that each and everyone of us can release the best in one another if we really want to and if we try.

The second reason I feel that it has been a moment of grace is that it has deepened people's awareness of how short and sweet God's gift of life is to us. Time and time again over that week people spoke about the suddenness of it all and of the waste of such a young life. In those reflective moments they have

had to confront in the privacy of their own hearts, the reality, and the inevitability of their own death as well. The grace given is the lesson that death, properly understood and accepted can only but enrich and intensify the living out of each day of our lives.

Each day that we have is precious and each moment that we have is priceless and it is God's will that we should live it to the full.

Life is a journey and the length and shape of each one of our lives is different. But we often lose sight of the fact that we are all journeying in the same direction. We are in the company of each other and at the end of that journey, we will share in some sort of mysterious way the eternal presence of each other in the love of God.

The enormous accomplishments during the short life of somebody like Princess Diana, or the many achievements during the long life of a person like Mother Teresa can be daunting. But I think that maybe that is not what matters to Almighty God.

With God it is not so much the amount of what we do, but rather the quality of what we do with our lives.

You and I are not going to move and shake the world. Our lives are lived on a much smaller scale, but they are just as important in the sight of God.

Many of us may well feel that when we go to God, we will go with empty hands, no great achievements, no merits, no fame no glory.

Not so, for if from this day onwards, we can accept the grace given to us, the grace of the awareness of the importance of each single day of our lives as a gift from God, and we just try to live that day to the full. If we can, in the limited area of our own responsibilities, give love, care, and help to others where and when we can, then, in the evening of that life, there will be very few regrets for things we have left unsaid and undone.

If we can try and live our lives like that, then death, whenever it comes, should be nothing to fear.

It will be a wonderful moment when we move into the presence of God and see His smile. A smile that utterly knows us and understands us, with all of our limitations. A smile that knows how hard we tried. A smile that heals and forgives and accepts us. A smile that says, "welcome home, well done".

In the past week, God's grace has perhaps whispered important lessons to each one of us in the privacy of our hearts, and though memories may dim or fade, let us try not to lose or waste that grace.

Cardinal Newman's beautiful prayer says it all

May He support us all the day long

Till the shadows lengthen and evening comes

And the busy beat of this world is hushed

And the fever of life is over

And our work is done.

Then in His mercy may He give us a safe lodging,

A holy rest and peace at the last.