

Homily for the Fifth Sunday of Easter 2023 Year A

I would like to draw one very simple lesson from today's Gospel.

Most of us from time-to-time wonder what happens to us after death. Will we be saved?

Christ's words in today's Gospel should offer us some hope and consolation. Do not worry about it HE advises, there are many rooms in my Father's house. It is almost as though He is saying there is room enough for everybody, no matter what your shape, size, or temperament, there is room for you all, and a particular room for each and everyone of you. If there were not I would have told you.

Now the hope and consolation that those words can offer us is important because most of us, while we live in hope of Heaven, at the same time we live with a profound sense of our inadequacies.

We look back on all that we have been and who we are now, and we do not feel that we will make the grade.

Now the mistake here is that we are looking at Heaven like a block of flats, thinking that most of the rooms are the same shape and size.

In this judging of ourselves what we are trying to do is trying to fit who we are into the patterns and standards of holiness by comparing ourselves to, for example, the great Saints of the Church, and it is all too obvious that we do not measure up.

Our mistake is perhaps that some of those patterns and standards of holiness are not for us; even among the great saints there were hardly 2 who were alike.

Christ is saying that there is a room for you, and that it fits you properly.

Our salvation is God's free gift to us. We do not earn it or deserve it, but it does mean that what is saved is the unique and irreplaceable me, loved and only turned me by God, with all of my strengths and all of my weaknesses.

In all of our desires for salvation we need to realise that it is me who will be saved, not a poor copy of somebody else, so that with God I should always

strive not only to be who I am, but always the very best of who I am, and salvation is that simple. It is to be able to see and accept simultaneously, here and now, not only who I am, but all that I still can be, and to live accordingly.

It is to be able to recapture for most of us something very important and precious, and that is this, a proper sense of our worth and identity, the great dignity bestowed upon us as baptised members of the Catholic Church. We can lose sight of that all too easily.

Saint Peter reminds us of it in the Second reading today. He says, “you are a member of a chosen race, the people of God, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, and the people set apart to sing the praises of God, who called you out of darkness into His own wonderful light.”

Now if you have perhaps temporarily lost that sense of who you are, due to the haste, pressures, and burdens of everyday life, then you have got to do something about it. You have got to take the pains to regain that sense of your true dignity and worth if you want that person to be saved. It is almost as though we must be able to gather up the fulness and richness of who we truly are into our arms to present ourselves to God.

Sin is what threatens our Salvation, and we sin against ourselves and others; we hurt and harm ourselves and others. Then we have lost sight of our true dignity and worth in the sight of God.

If we lack a proper sense of self-esteem and self-love then it is just so easy to lose that sense of how really lovable we are in the size of God and then salvation is experienced as a desperate hope. But it shouldn't be desperate; Christ in the Gospel not only promises that there is a place for each and everyone of us, but that He himself has prepared it and will return to take us to it.

Salvation is a free gift of love; it is in and through Christ; we simply have to want it. We need to take His outstretched hand and closely follow Him. He is the way, the truth, and the life and nobody gets to His Father except through Him. As we heard in the Gospel last Sunday, He is the gate to the sheepfold.

Shortly after the Consecration, in the Eucharistic Prayer we pray, “may He make us an everlasting gift to you”. Each one of us was made that everlasting gift when we were presented by our parents at baptism. We were given, and

consecrated to God, and His acceptance of that gift not only gives us life, but the promise of eternal life.

God never revokes His gift, but we often take back the gift of ourselves when we lose that proper sense of who we are. It is only when we regain a real sense of the amazing dignity of who we are that we can gather ourselves up into our arms and present that gift once more to God.

God never takes us against our will. Our gift of ourselves has always to be given freely, and when it is freely and lovingly given it is never refused. God's acceptance is our salvation.

Who I am, in the fullness of my capacities, is already infinitely loved and cherished by God, not a poor copy of somebody else, but I do need to have a sense of not only who I am, but also the best that I still can be, before I can really become that true self and present myself to God.

Who I am is already saved. The room is there, it is my task to fully become my true self, so that I can eternally enjoy that salvation: to open up that room and take up residence.