



Fr Michael says:

Peace Sunday 2014

If you ever go to Brands Hatch, the excitement of the day is in the speed of the cars and the skills of the drivers, negotiating the bends and challenges of the course. Two forces are in play: the centrifugal one, moving us out to the side, because of the speed and the centripetal force – which moves us back to the centre again, so that we can go round the bends.

These forces are at work in our world today and we need to discern which of them is dominant. Our media often stress the negative, the centrifugal; Scriptures stress the positive, the centripetal. It is in this perspective that we see the Mission given to Isaiah of our first Reading. The Gospel presents us with the Lamb of God, who banishes evil, restores hope to Israel and brings all peoples together. In the descent of the Spirit on Jesus, she is handed on to us to show that indeed the centripetal forces are stronger! We accomplish this task by uniting, gathering, loving to ensure the opposite values are corrected. We show today how Jesus brings healing to our world.

We live in a globalised world, Bishop Francis in his Exhortation on the Joy of sharing the Gospel, talks about something very insidious: “the globalisation of indifference – the sights and items on poverty, destitution, famine and other disasters, can dull the minds and hearts of us all. Our concept of free market stresses freedom – though mainly for those who can access it! It does depend on us to show that we do have the power to improve things, because of the values that we hold. We do not accept indifference, but rather show solidarity – which is very much the theme of today: “living as one family is the foundation of peace,” something which is indeed very centripetal: in Christ, our human community, indeed the whole of creation – is God’s salvation and action of the Holy Spirit, which reaches to the ends of the world.

I will end with a few words from Bishop Francis’ Exhortation: he is talking about conflict and the best way of facing it. “It is the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and make it a link in the chain of a new process: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers.’Solidarity, in its deepest and most challenging sense, thus becomes a way of making history in a life setting where conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity....the unity brought by the Spirit can harmonise any diversity. It overcomes every conflict by creating a new and promising synthesis.” He then quotes the bishops of the Congo: “It is only in unity, through conversion of hearts and reconciliation that we will be able to help our country to develop on all levels.”



Fr Jean-Marie says:

Theme: Witnesses to Jesus Christ.

A Christian, a follower and disciple of Christ, is supposed to be someone who tries to be a good **witness to Christ** in word and deed. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to be servants of God to spread his message to the whole world.

The first and greatest witness to Jesus in the gospel is John the Baptist, who showed him to the people. He gives us an example of what we should be doing as disciples: to introduce Jesus to our brothers and sisters in the world. But before we can fulfil this mission, we need to know who Jesus really is. Even John had to acknowledge that at first he did not know who Jesus really was and that he had to be converted, to learn who Jesus was and what he stood for. Only then could he become a firm witness. We too, like John, we need to learn who Jesus is and what he means to us and to people, so that we can become closer to him and attract people to him.

Who is Jesus for us then? What is the name for us that would best fit him? In the gospel, John the Baptist bears witness to Jesus and tells us that he is truly the Son of God, the chosen one of God, who is filled with the Spirit of God. He testifies that he himself saw the Spirit descending upon him. Jesus is the **Lamb of God** that takes away the sin of the world. The sin of the world is this indifference that men and women experience before the challenge of believing in God. This is the sin of the world that Jesus has come to remove. The Christian community recognizes Jesus as the servant of God who will be the light of the Nations so that God's salvation may reach the ends of the earth as announced by Isaiah. Saint Paul, in the second reading, calls him Jesus Christ and acknowledges him as the Lord of all who believe in him. He considers himself an apostle or a servant whose task is to proclaim Jesus as the Lord of all.

Today, on the witness of John and Paul, we are called to welcome Jesus as the Son of God who comes to take away our sins and to purify our lives, so that we can overcome our sinfulness and become God's people in truth and live as the true sons and daughters of God. We are called to reaffirm our allegiance to God and to witness to him in the world.

Let us pray that the Holy Spirit may descend upon us and help us to know Jesus better; and give us strength to preach him boldly and to bear witness to his love in the world. Amen.