

Homily for the Second Sunday of the Year – B

Readings 1 Samuel 3: 3-10, 19; 1 Corinthians 6: 13-15, 17-20; John 1: 35-42



Fr Michael says:

God's Call

All of us are seeking, living and being challenged by our callings in life, the rich diversity of who we are and what we do in so many wonderful ways, is awesome – and can be quite frightening. It is something that is explored today, with the calling of Samuel, such a simple call for such a great calling to build up the nation of Israel. Created as we are in God's image and likeness we are temples of the Holy Spirit, called to ensure our bodies are used for the glory of God! John, who relives the first week of Creation in this first chapter of his Gospel, narrates the call of the first disciples. Jesus shows Himself and gradually reveals who He is: the Epiphany continues: John calls Jesus, "the Lamb of God and Andrew calls Him, "Messiah!" We have a new beginning here and we see how Peter is highlighted as being essential to this start.

It is therefore of importance to see ourselves as God sees us, in His Son, filled with the Holy Spirit. Christianity affirms the beauty and dignity we possess, as Temples of the Holy Spirit. Our human lives have become part of the life of God: Jesus first discourse of farewell after the Washing of the Feet, reminds of this: Jesus is now IN us, not just with us! We have had a tendency to see the body as the prison of the soul, of little importance. We are God's glorious "work of art" as Paul reminds us. Today's Society tends to see the body apart from the person: the perfect figure, it is young and beautiful – this is exploitation and not respect! Care of the body and fitness are important but must not override other values – we need a healthy balance between body and mind. It is for this reason that we respect the body from its earliest moments of existence till its natural demise: we see this in the anointings that are offered in Baptism and to the Sick, we are clothed in a white garment. Incense is used at the Funeral, as a sign of the respect which is due to the body, because it is the means by which we live the Lord's divine life and seek to walk evermore closely with Him. We are buried in blessed ground, or our ashes are treated with respect.

Jesus took a human body for fulfilling His Mission of salvation, as He anoints in the Spirit: in the Resurrection we too are raised to glory, in our human form – we are destined for eternity. We thus have the basis of how we should treat ourselves and how others should treat us: with respect and due reverence. If these values were put across to our young people and lived by ourselves, many of the social problems we have been agonising over for years would be attenuated: violence, teenage pregnancies, and the spread of AIDS. On this Peace Sunday, we are to address these and other issues, here and abroad, as we are one in Christ. Our values must challenge the powerful; work to find non-violent ways of addressing issues at all levels; to find ways of forgiving injuries and to love those it is hard to love. We must speak out for victims of injustice and above all create a feeling of hope in a world which so sadly needs it!

Reflection for Unity Sunday: 2nd Sunday of the year B, 2015



Fr Tom says:

We have been presented with some dynamic and life-filled images these past few weeks. We began with Jesus' birth in a stable, an event full of music, exaltation and joy. The New Year opened with the presentation of Jesus in the temple and the wonder-filled characters of Samuel and Anna and a great sense of thanksgiving. Not to be upstaged, we were then greeted with the appearance of the Wise Men from distant lands and a sense of solemnity, dignity and honour. And, before we could catch our breath, we were taken, all too quickly, to Jesus' baptism to hear the thunder of God's voice and be greeted with the appearance of the Spirit. All pictures filled with wonder, awe inspiring, and each bringing more and more light into the world and into our lives.

This week our picture presents a collection of images that challenge and call for a response. Samuel's response to God "Here I am Lord, I come to do your will." A response to an invitation! St. Paul reminds us that, in baptism, we became temples of the Holy Spirit and are given a mission. While, in the Gospel, we encounter Jesus who invites us to "Come and See" which demands a response like that of Samuel and the apostles. With Jesus it is always an invitation, but an invitation that requires a response: Yes or No. As we reflect on this picture we realise that these are factors common to all Christians: a calling to which we have responded with a YES - facts that unites us all.

As you are aware, we are being called to focus on evangelisation by Pope Francis, based on his encyclical 'Evangelii Gaudium' - 'The Joy of the Gospel'. Helpfully, Francis reminds us that faith is caught rather than taught. And, in our search for greater unity among Christians, we can discover the riches and insights lived by other Christians and share those of our own so that we are all enriched. Much of this has been happening among us in recent decades through our meeting and praying together.

Today is Peace Sunday and the second day of Prayer for Christian Unity, the theme of which, this year, is a focus on 'Unity in Diversity' which is an essential ingredient of any kind of real Peace.

Unity in Diversity has been an Assumptionist theme from the beginning but more so since Vatican II in the 60s. Diversity is promoted (i.e. we promote international communities as the norm rather than the exception) because it leads to a greater source of enrichment, sharing and challenge within our communities. It opens up our vision by extending our horizons, bringing new inspiration and focuses our questions on how best to live our faith and our charism as a gift to be shared for the benefit and growth of the Kingdom of God and our own faith and understanding of God.

Christmas reminded us that Jesus came for all people and everyone is welcome and wants everyone to be part of his family. Epiphany emphasises this. Each of the gifts brought by the wise men bear significance in the life of Jesus: Gold for a King, Frankincense for his priesthood and Myrrh for his death. It also shows that in coming together with our own particular gifts we are better able to discover the true richness of Jesus Christ as each of our gifts have come to us from Christ. It even suggests that diversity is not only a source of enrichment but a necessary, even essential blessing not to be ignored.

The great benefit of ecumenism for the Catholic Church has been the insights gained from it. The Church now promotes local customs and traditions more freely, and has no problem with diversity. There are various ancient rites used in India, the Orthodox Uniates, and the various customs particular to the different nations and cultures of the world are all embraced. In this country it has promoted faith sharing and biblical reflection groups, and different forms of prayer service like that of Taizé. To promote this growth and development, Pope Francis is promoting Local Church decision making.

Since there is now a general acknowledgement of what unites the different Churches our prayer and our work is to seek to strengthen that unity, celebrate our diversity, and work harder to reflect more deeply on our differences with the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit whose temples we are! This reflection will help us understand better our own traditions and beliefs for the benefit of us all. 'Coming and seeing' is Jesus invitation to engage with other's Churches and foster greater Unity. This, too, is not only the work of Evangelisation but an essential element of it!

"To journey together is already to be making unity. Unity will not come about as a miracle at the very end. Rather, unity comes about in journeying. If we do not walk together, if we do not pray for one another, if we do not collaborate in the many ways that we can in this world for the people of God, then unity will not come about." (Pope Francis on Unity)

"We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God's face. Trusting others is an art just as peace is an art. 245. In this perspective, ecumenism can be seen as a contribution to the unity of the human family. (Evangelii Gaud: 244,245)