

Homily 16th Sunday Year B 2021

Our readings, this week, speak of a shepherd leader. A shepherd's main concern is caring for his sheep. Fortunately, we have an encouraging shepherd in Pope Francis – a pope who deeply cares about the people he serves: about us, about you and me. Pope Francis has powerful detractors just as Jesus did. They just reinforce his authenticity. His letters, encyclicals, present us with a vision that is both liveable and encouraging. They invite rather than instruct. They inspire hope and purpose because Francis believes, like Jesus, that we are each capable of good things and that together we are capable of more wonderful things. In order to help the leaders in the Church, Pope Francis has invited us, as our shepherd, to hold a synod in every diocese. A synod invites every single person in the Church to speak about their vision of the Church as we gradually emerge from the deadly plague we have been blessed to survive. His hope is that the voice of the grass-roots will help leaders recognise the powerful richness of their voice that can help and guide decisions made for developing and nurturing our faith. Francis believes that we will inspire others to want to be part of this wonderfully human and spirit-filled family.

In his recent book **Let us Dream** Francis writes:

“Covid 19 offers us an opportunity to dream big, to rethink our priorities—what we value, what we want, what we seek — and commit to act in our daily life to fulfil these dreams.”

“In the trials of life, you reveal your own heart: how solid it is, how merciful, how big or small. Normal times are like formal social situations: you never have to reveal yourself. You smile, you say the right things, and you come through unscathed, without ever having shown who you really are. In a crisis, it's the opposite. You have to choose, and in making your choice you reveal your heart.”.

We need a movement of people who know they need each other, who have a sense of responsibility to others and to the world. We need to proclaim that being kind, having faith, and working for the common good are great life goals that need courage and vigour; while glib superficiality and the mockery of ethics have done us no good. The modern era, which has developed equality and liberty with such determination, now needs to focus on fellowship with the same drive and tenacity to confront the challenges ahead. Fellowship will enable freedom and equality to take its rightful place in the symphony.”

*“What is the greatest fruit of a personal Covid? **Patience**, sprinkled with a healthy sense of humour, which allows us to endure and make space for change to happen.”*

A devout old shepherd lost his favourite Bible while he was out looking for a wayward lamb. Three weeks later, a sheep walked up to him carrying the Bible in its mouth. The shepherd couldn't believe his eyes. He took the precious book out of the sheep's mouth, raised his eyes heavenward and exclaimed, “It's a miracle!”

“Not really,” said the sheep. “Your name is written inside the cover.”