

Homily 28th Sunday Year B 2021

Do we understand the gifts of the Spirit correctly? Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We cannot possess Jesus so we cannot possess the truth. However, as Saint Paul rightly says. Jesus can possess us, enter fully into our lives. Truth, knowledge and understanding are not gifts we possess but which live in us and we can use them but they are at their best when we allow them to take over our lives. Emilia Raducanu said that when she was playing tennis there came a point when her gift, her talent, took over and won the game for her. This only happens after a great deal of very hard work. We need to spend time using the gifts available to us before they will take over our lives. Jesus asks us to hand over our lives to him; our gifts and talents ask the same. Once we believe we own them, that they are our possessions, they will be unable to work effectively and often not at all. John Henry Newman put it like this: *"A great memory does not make a mind, any more than a dictionary is a piece of literature."* We are often told to humble ourselves before God. The more we allow our gifts to teach us as we use them, we will recognise our littleness before God and before others and become humble. We will also recognise our gifts and abilities as true blessings from God. This will prevent us from judging others and from judging the world wrongly. Then, we will only see the brokenness and hurt in people's lives and want to reach out and help them. Jesus loved the rich man and wanted the best for him so he presented him with a choice. He asked the man to see his wealth as a gift to be used and shared with others rather than just for himself. The fact that he could not do this did not mean that Jesus stopped loving him, in fact he probably loved him all the more.

The major choice we face today concerns our planet. Our question is not how to get to heaven but how to best save our world from destroying itself. In living more simply and being more generous towards the poor, using our gifts for others, especially those less fortunate, opens us to hear the cry of suffering and hurt, the desperate cries for help that will move our hearts to want to do more to help as we would a dearly loved brother or sister including brother sun, sister moon and mother earth!

"A little girl was sitting on her grandfather's lap as he read her a bedtime story. From time to time, she would reach up and touch his wrinkled cheek and then stroke her own cheek. Finally, she said to Grandpa, "Did God make you?" "Yes, sweetheart," he answered, "God made me a long time ago." "Oh," she said. "Did God make me too?" "Yes, indeed, honey," he said, "God made you just a little while ago."

Feeling their respective faces again, she observed, "God's getting better at it, isn't he?"