

## Homily 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Year A 2023

From the first moment we begin to speak, we start asking questions which, in those early years, are many. As we mature and grow, the questions keep flowing and become more challenging but they never cease. It might even be possible to say that once we stop asking questions we begin to die. Along with this desire to understand and to know, there is an innate desire and struggle to be in control, to make our own choices. We even fight to be freed from those who want to make our life choices for us. This presents a real challenge for those who want to follow Christ, because Jesus asks us to hand our lives over to him, to give him full control. Difficult though this can be, on reflection we come to understand that we will have to do this any way when faced with death. We do not have a choice when we die. Wanting to be in control was at the root of the first sin. Adam and Eve were offered the possibility to be free from God and took it. The same offer was made to Jesus who refused - fortunately for us.

The question raised this week is not about physical death but about spiritual death.

So, what is spiritual death??

When we are baptised, we become a temple of the Holy Spirit. It is because God loves us so much and so intimately that he sets up home in the place at the centre of our being – in our hearts. We are loved into being and that same love is offered to us every moment of our lives. Yet, we are free to acknowledge that love and let it inspire, motivate and lead us to great acts of caring and loving that go way beyond our human capabilities or not. Denying that presence and that love would be like starving oneself to death. Paradoxically, even if we deny or turn our backs on God's presence within, the love of God continues to work in and through us in ways we are unaware. Spiritual death is choosing to live without the help, guidance and love of God and eventually shrivelling up.

To encourage us therefore, on encountering Jesus, he always says *"Be not afraid!"*

**Be not afraid** is a call to accept the multitude of possibilities Jesus offers each day. With the help of the Spirit within, we are better able to respond to these possibilities.

The real challenge we face is **HOW** we will live our lives - with or without God:

*In the game of cards called life one plays the hand one is dealt to the best of one's ability.*

*Those who insist on playing, not the hand they were given but the one they insist they should have been dealt, are life's failures.*

*We are not asked if we will play. That is not an option. Play we must! The option is how?*

A famous poet (Kabir) asks this:

What good is it if the scholar pores over words and issues of this and that but his heart is not soaked through with love?

What good is it if the ascetic clothes himself in saffron robes but is colourless within?

What good is it if you scrub your ethical behaviour till it shines, but there is no music inside?

Disciple: Master, what's the difference between knowledge and enlightenment?

Master: When you have knowledge you use a torch to show the way. When you are enlightened, you become a torch.

It is the light of Christ, given in baptism, that will make us the best torch that we can be!

**A juggler, driving to his next performance**, is stopped by the police.

"What are these matches and lighter fluid doing in your car?" asks the cop.

"I'm a juggler and I juggle flaming torches in my act."

"Oh yeah?" says the doubtful cop. "Let's see you do it."

The juggler leaves the car and starts juggling the blazing torches masterfully.

A couple driving by slow down to watch.

"Wow," says the driver to his wife. "I'm glad I quit drinking. Look at the test they're giving now!"