

Homily 3rd Sunday Lent Year B 2024

Before we receive Holy Communion, we pray: *“Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.”*

We come to the Eucharist, despite not being worthy, because God accepts us as we are and God’s acceptance is one of love. This suggests God’s love does not look at whether we are worthy or not, but that he wants to enter into our lives which God does fully in and through the Eucharist. Surely this suggests that God sees the good in us and wants to set that goodness free rather than punish us for the wrongs we do. Wouldn’t it be more helpful to believe that we are good people who do bad things rather than bad people?

Ronald Knox, an eminent biblical scholar, wrote: *throughout two thousand years of history, Christians, both whole churches and individual believers, have consistently been able to ignore many of Jesus’ key commandments and invitations. We have either been too weak to follow his counsels or we have rationalized them away somehow.* Yet it is our unworthiness, due to our weaknesses, that brings us to God knowing that we are unable to live better lives without the essential help, encouragement and support of God.

It is said that when instructing a couple for marriage, Dietrich Bonhoeffer would caution them by saying: *“right now, you are in love and you believe that your love will sustain your marriage. It can’t. But your marriage can sustain your love!”*

In the same way we recognise that on our own we cannot sustain our faith, charity, forgiveness and hope but, because of Jesus, we can sustain them through the Eucharist that offers healing, forgiveness, sustenance and new purpose, no matter what happened before. The Jews developed over 600 laws to help fulfil the commandments of God, yet all that Jesus taught us was to love God and love our neighbour and added the beatitudes as the best way to keep them both. Jesus encourages us not to focus on failure but on the good that we can do. Wouldn’t it be more helpful, therefore, to believe that we are good people who do bad things?

Rather than focus on Jesus’ action in the temple expelling the money-changers and the tradesmen as a loss of temper, let us see that he was passionate about restoring Prayer as the key purpose of the Temple, and promote the presence of God. Are we not passionate about righting the wrongs caused by abuse??

Let us listen once again to the wisdom of psalm 118:

The law of the Lord revives the soul and is to be trusted, because it gives us wisdom.

The precepts of the Lord are right, they gladden the heart.

The command of the Lord is clear, it gives light to the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is holy.

The decrees of the Lord are truth and they are just.

They are more to be desired than the purest of gold and sweeter than honey from the comb.

Let us bow down and praise God for his goodness to us proclaiming: *You Lord, have the message of eternal life.*