

24th Sunday (C)

15th September 2019

‘Come & See’

Ex 32: the Lord relents from His wrath after golden calf. Ps 50: *Miserere mei Deus*

1Tim 1: *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*

Lk 15: *‘this man ... welcome sinners and eats with them.’*

I chose this evening/morning to read the shorter version of the Gospel passage given to us for this Sunday. Not because the rest of chapter 15 of St Luke isn’t important! — In fact, it’s vitally important to know and to reflect on the great parable of mercy which is ‘The Prodigal Son’ which builds on the simpler parables that Jesus preaches first. The Lord teaches us in such strong terms that the heart of the Father is mercy, and that in whatever circumstances we can turn again to Him in sorry, seek the forgiveness of our sins, be renewed by Him in grace, and restored to His friendship. On another occasion, and as I have done before, it’s good to take that longer parable line by line, and to see in the details all that Jesus is wanting to teach us about God’s merciful love.

But today I want to talk about something else, though not altogether unconnected. The mercy of the Lord — the joy that Jesus speaks of over one repentant sinner — is

indeed a huge relief and a great attraction. Knowing that we can turn to the Lord, and that He will have us back ... Or, indeed, *carry us back* ... is surely a blessed realisation that helps us to draw closer to Him, and place our trust in Him — not just in a minor way, but in its fullness: we can give our whole life to Him, for He cares deeply, and wishes us not to be paralysed by our sins and wrongdoing. He wants us to flourish in His love, and to know Him as the loving Father.

So, it’s important that each one of us takes the chances to grow in love of God, openly sharing our faith, and leading others to Him. Thus autumn we are offering something new, a chance precisely to come and reflect on the basis of our faith, God’s love for us and our love for Him. And the idea is that this is open to parishioners, and to non-parishioners alike; it’s open to those baptized members of our community, and it’s also open to those who are not baptized and confirmed, to those who were baptized in other Christian traditions, to those Catholic adults who have never had the chance to prepare for Confirmation, and

to anyone interested. This is the ideal opportunity to come and bring someone along who wishes to find out more about what it means to be a Catholic Christian, and to enjoy the fullness of life in the Spirit. If you already come to Mass regularly but are not a baptized and confirmed Catholic, well, definitely think about coming on this course! There's no pressure, it'll be informal, and friendly, with a bit of video input — made locally, here in Westminster! — and plenty of time for discussion. We're starting on Monday 23rd September, in the crypt below the church here, and running through to early December. The dates are all in the Newsletter; there is a couple of weeks' break in the middle, when I'm away, but it'll finish a good while before Christmas. After Mass today, as well as myself, there'll be a couple of parishioners with flyers for the programme, which we've entitled, 'Come and See,' So do speak to me, or one of them, if you wish, and ask any questions you wish to about it. "Come and See" is what Jesus said when a couple of disciples approached Him to know more about Him; that's what we want to offer, to anyone in this parish,

and to anyone you know whom you want to bring.

Let's be encouraged by the words of St Paul which opened our 2nd Reading today: "*I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, and judged me faithful enough to call me into His service, even though I used to be a blasphemer and did all I could to injure and discredit the faith. Mercy, however, was shown me ...*" When we hear how St Paul came to faith, despite previously having been far from Jesus, we know that anyone and everyone can have a place in the Father's house. But we need to respond to the Lord's invitation to receive His mercy.

This *is* the invitation; this may be the invitation you were waiting for. Why not respond with a generous heart, and without fear? Our parish can only benefit, and can only grow, when we spread the Word, invite others into deep faith, and share what Christ means to us. Please consider coming, then, to our 'Come and See' evenings; bring someone along too, if you can, and let's share the joy and peace that we all know comes with a deep and lifelong relationship with the blessed Son of God, our Lord Jesus.