

Homily. 31st Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.B. 3/4 November 2018.

It's easy to know when we're meeting with genuinely loving persons or when we're speaking and acting lovingly ourselves because gratefulness marks out the experience. A grateful heart and a life lived with an attitude of gratefulness is always a heart and life that's loving, attentively listening to others, gentle and caring of the fragility of our shared humanity whilst being strong and fearless in defence of the weak and vulnerable.

Grateful people have come to know the abiding generosity of God, the providential love of the Lord and God's Grace, unmerited and undeserved, working in their daily lives and prayer. Grateful people look with confidence to all that God has done, trusting that this will not change, accepting their own role in helping God's goodness to be better known and more widely experienced. May I say that my experience in this Parish has shown me that many of us are like this; loving people marked out by a tone of gratitude and gratefulness in living. We're not blind to nor ignorant of the challenges and problems we face. Instead, we face these things with clear heads and courageous hearts that are fixed firmly on the abundant goodness of the loving God within us and ever by our side.

Yesterday Pope Francis tweeted these words, and yes, he's on Twitter; We need smiling Christians, not because they take things lightly or frivolously, but because they are filled with the joy of God, because they believe in love and live to serve. This is what believing in the Good News of God's redeeming love means; living now with a grateful attitude.

Can we be better at this? Well, of course we can! We're not in the Kingdom just yet, still being on the pilgrim way. One quality of grateful hearts and gracious living that always needs some work from us as we become more perfected in love, is nurturing a sincere attitude of appreciation for the efforts of others. This means consciously noting to ourselves the small successes people make, offering compliments in praise of the good we experience and thanking each other for little kindnesses shown and wisdom shared. We can be certain that our generous congratulating, thanking and praising of others for their best won't diminish us one iota. Rather, it'll help build up our community, strengthening us to be the Good News people that the Pope mentioned and that Jesus desires.

It's a sure sign that we've some more growing in loving and grateful living to do when notice, or perhaps have it pointed out to us, that we rarely if ever thank and praise while being ever so speedy at fault finding, criticising and complaining about what others have said, done, ought to have said or done or decided. Lying behind and beneath such miserly negativity and ungraciousness is our fear, a little bit of us that's yet to hear and accept the Good News of God's unconditional love for us in Jesus Christ, a part of us waiting to be redeemed. The next time you notice this trait remember God's kindness and mercy first of all, then choose to beat ungraciousness down with your grateful thanks and praise. Not only will others appreciate this and you more, but you'll be working with God to build up build up and renew rather than tear down and destroy. After all, this is what the Great Commandment is all about.