

Homily. 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.A. 22/23 February 2020.

Living is difficult and full of challenges, from birth through to death. Human beings are complicated, too. We only have to look at the news, usually bad, or better still look inside of ourselves to know that this is true. What's more, most of us aren't talented at joining up all of the dots so that we can see the whole picture. Mostly, we get only our own little angle, our small perspective, and get that obscurely and infrequently. Wholeness, and its close relative holiness, while clearly being the way to happiness and peace, is a goal that seems too far from our reach, like a dream we have that fades from our memory with the coming of harsh light of day.

God knows well our human imperfections and limits, by creating and sustaining us as we are. Jesus certainly knew this about us, being one of us, with us forever. In his day, and it still remains so, Jesus knew the central commandment and prayer of every Jewish person; that God is one and that there is no other god and that we must honour and worship God with all our mind, heart, soul and strength. He also understood the importance of the 1st reading, which commands us to love our neighbour as we love and look after ourselves.

Taking these two commandments, Jesus joined them as one, like praying hands inseparable for all time. His insight is that the only way for us to live fully and freely, joining up those dots of our scattered, ever changing experiences, is the way of loving. No thinking or philosophy or theology, nor any party or political system ever can do this; only love can.

Some people I know get scared when they hear Jesus say that we have to as be perfect as our Heavenly Father God is perfect. They even feel defeated by these words with their seemingly impossible demand. I can assure you that there's absolutely no need for fear or despair about what Jesus says. The perfection in God is that of love, a generous, kind, just, merciful and forgiving form of love offered freely and unconditionally to all who will receive God's gift. All that you, I, or anybody else have to do, is to say our yes to this offering, saying it over and over again if we must, letting God's love-life put down its roots and grow stronger within us.

As this happens slowly our perspective on ourselves changes, as does the angle we take about the challenges of living and each other. We start to see ourselves more clearly as ever-loved children of God, come what may. We begin to think of each other as sisters and brothers belonging to one family sharing one time in history and one planet together. This leads us to realise that all people are worthy of our decency, respect and compassion, especially those who are difficult to abide. It's God who does this changing, converting work within us, relying on our yes and our co-operation with the Holy Spirit's Divine loving grace and action.

St. Paul who went through this change and re-birth process himself puts it well when he says to us that we are all God's Temple, the sacred dwelling place of God on earth. This means that we must respect ourselves and each other, as we would the home of the Lord. God's perfectly loving power puts an end to our fear and hatred, to tearing out eyes, pulling out teeth, unjust discrimination and the setting of limits to our generosity.

It instills within us where all of our actions are born, the only force that can join up the dots of our human experiences, making us fully human, both whole and holy and as perfect in loving as is God. It turns each and every one of us into a walking, thinking, talking, compassionate and caring Church, a truly decent home for the Father, perfect in loving the world. This is the church I mean, which gets fed and nourished here at Mass, each and all of us. As such, all of us are becoming ever-more the living Temple of God sent to serve this broken world in the same way that Christ gives of Himself in service to us who, together, all belong to God.