

Homily. 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.A. 10/11 October 2020.

The 1st reading and the Psalm are often chosen for use at funerals.

There's no surprise about this because both of these readings speak words of hope and consolation to those grieving loss; a Good Shepherd caring for us and leading us to green pastures and restful waters as we make our way home to the joy of the house of the Lord; a fine, rich banquet at the Lord's house on God's Holy Mountain where all mourning ends, sorrow is vanquished and death is destroyed at last.

Like St. Paul, we all have our share of hardships and difficulties in this world; poverty and hunger at times, riches and fullness at others. Unlike St. Paul perhaps we are less reliant on God than he was to help us master and deal with our problems and setbacks. Mindful of this he calls us to a renewed trust in Jesus Christ who alone can guide us safely to the fullness of God.

These verses of scripture are connected to St. Matthew's gospel because the story tells us that what we chose and do now has real implications for our destiny. It's odd, isn't it, that one of the foundations of Christianity and of our Western Society is so little understood? I am referring here to the gift of our free will. Of course, our freedom is tempered by many factors, such as our age, gender and abilities, our culture, upbringing and way of life, to name but a few. Nevertheless, we do have some freedom making lots of choices every day. Some of them will set or even change our direction and our many little choices and actions will shape our future. In the story Jesus told he wants us to wake up and realise that God is always inviting us to the great wedding banquet of life, a life which as one Preface for Christian Funerals prays, is changed, but not ended by our

death. It was the free choices made by the chief priests and elders of the people that led them to not bother about the Kings invitation to the feast; that led them to do their own thing, rejecting God and God's messengers until everything they had built up was left in hopeless ruins.

But, as we heard, God is never defeated. If those invited devastated their destiny by the bad exercise of their freedom, making choices God always respects, then everyone would now be given the choice to come to the party. Going out into the streets, onto the highways and byways, anyone who could be found and who would say their yes, both bad and good alike, were welcomed in until the great hall was filled with guests. Such is the rich generosity of our God who, honouring our personal freedom even more than we do, allows us to say no, too busy, I don't care.

Such is the power and awesome responsibility of this gift shown in the choices we make and actions we take that we determine today what our future, even what our eternal destiny will be. Can we handle our freedom well if we're left alone? Many seem to think so, but the truth is that No, we can't. Thankfully we haven't been abandoned. On the contrary, we have Christ for us, His Spirit living within us and the presence of the Good Shepherd beside us to guide and protect us if we'll listen to His voice. As we have prayed; May your grace, O Lord, at all times go before and follow after and make us always determined to carry out good works.