

Homily. 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.B. 5/6 February 2021.

Some of you will remember that over 12 months ago I said on more than one occasion that we're not living in an era of change, but in a change of eras. Now, even more convinced of this truth I repeat; Ours it is to live in a time of epochal change, a time when one order and way of living is passing while a new one is being created and born. But don't just believe me and my words, believe the Pope whose words and thoughts I'm quoting here. Better still, believe your own experience and eyes which are revealing this change of eras to us right now as its happening.

Since the Pandemic shut us down in the middle of March last year and our re-opening process from mid June onwards around a third of our regular congregation have left us and so far not returned. You can easily see this as you look around this Church. Some have left due to age and infirmity, others because of fear and anxiety about their health, but many more have done so because their circuit of habit and routine was cut during the months of closure and lockdown. Now, I want to assure you we're far from alone in this experience because it has affected every Church, every social group and many businesses and workplaces as well.

On this, our 2nd annual Word of God Sunday, we listen to God and what God is saying to us through the Sacred Scriptures. We can, of course, become like Job, bewailing our situation with heavy hearts, full of defeat and depression. Certainly, there's a place for some Job-like grieving over what's been lost, but that can't be anywhere near our entire response. St. Mark's gospel, his story of Jesus Good-News, tells us of a day in the life of our Lord. As we heard last weekend it began with Him going to the

Synagogue in Capernaum, praying with and teaching the people and freeing a man possessed of an unclean spirit. As the day continued we now find Him going with James and John to the house of the brothers Simon Peter and Andrew for Jewish Sabbath day of rest. Upon arriving, Jesus immediately acted to heal Simon Peter's mother in law allowing her to serve the special Sabbath meal. At sunset, when the Jewish Sabbath day had ended, Jesus set to work curing the suffering and liberating those oppressed by various evil spirits. Early the next morning He was found alone in prayer. Simon Peter and the other disciples urged Him to come back for there were many more people in Capernaum needing His help, but to this Jesus said, 'No'. His mission was to move onwards and outwards to other towns and places, for as He said, 'That is why I came.'

Like you, I have some grief about the losses our community has taken and like Job I sometimes find myself joining in his sadness and lament. However, as Your Parish Pastoral Councillors and others who know me will tell you, I'm coming to see this change of patterns and ways as an opportunity, glimpsing new doors gradually creaking open for our mission of service to others. The simple human fact is that Jesus couldn't heal and free every person He came across during His time on earth. He couldn't even get around to helping everyone who wanted Him in the small fishing village of Capernaum. His purpose was to do what He could giving His witness and then move onwards preaching the Good-News of love and working out the salvation of this world of ours.

The living Word of God we honour here tells us this much, as the powerful Spirit of God within us guides us to discover new ways to do the same today. It's this project, this task and this mission that has to absorb

the best of our energies and resources from this point onwards. Recall this text from St. John's Gospel, Chapter 1. 'In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word became flesh and lived among us. We saw His glory, full of grace and truth.' God's Word lives in each of us making and shaping us into God's Word for others. We can't do, nor can we fix everything any more than Jesus could or did, but by grace and truth we can be Him today promoting the coming of God's kingdom in this time of momentous change. This is the Good-News, the Gospel of God's Word given to us for our living over the week ahead.