

Homily. 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.B. 28/29 August 2021.

There's a bit of a chicken or the egg thing going on in today's gospel. A bit of 'does evil get into us or come from within us?' In this conundrum Jesus comes down firmly on the side of the egg. He says that evil comes out of us, from within, and not into us from outside of us. In doing this Jesus is lifting us and our free choices up, making our will important. His teaching tells us that it's the choices we make which are the determining factor behind the decisions we take and the actions we then decide upon, be they for good and for ill.

Jesus says this because He knows, as you and I do if we're honest, that we have a strong tendency to transfer blame onto others for our wrong decisions and bad actions. We're more than ready to blame others, our difficult past, our poor circumstances and even the Devil when we harm others by acting disrespectfully towards them and disrespectfully towards creation itself. There are enough examples of this shape-shifting and blame-game going on around us right now that needn't list examples.

No, says Jesus. Enough of these fake excuses for our own choices and irresponsibility! We're adults and if we're old enough to make our own lives, then we're old enough to own for ourselves our values and attitudes and the goodness or hurtfulness our choices and actions cause. Only by so doing can we put aside any hypocritical pretence and egotism, thereby opening ourselves up to the unlimited forgiveness and mercy of God. In all of this, Jesus explains that our human traditions and ways of doing things are fine and dandy. But, He then warns, that they can become very real problems for us and for others when we make an 'ism' out of our traditions, turning them into traditionalism. When this happens, and it

happens a lot, we end up using our common practices as reasons for our ignorance, for doing the wrong thing and for letting ourselves off the hook from our, free will and mature choices.

Our Planet and our various societies wouldn't be in the mess they are in if we understood our intimate connection with nature and our elemental bond with each other. Our choices would be better if we grasped that we are all in this together, with no other world to escape to; if we would only admit that, although we belong to different races and nations with our own groups, beliefs and cultures, we're still intimately connected as a species, and that unless we all rise as one, then we all fall together.

St. Paul's Letter to the Romans tells us that our thoughts and words, our choices and actions, our life and death, has its influence on others, adding that for believers, if we live we live for the Lord so that alive or dead, we belong to the Lord. This explains why Christ both died and came to life. It is so that He might be Lord both of the dead and the living. The whole point of our Eucharist and our communion is here summed up; that the Father of goodness and light has in Jesus Christ given us communion with God and each other for all eternity. It's given to us for our living so that we can bring His Life to this World.

Jesus was right; the egg did come first meaning that what comes out of us and what we do matters very much in ways we can now perhaps only dimly realise.