

Homily. 23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. A. 9/10 September 2023.

If I asked you to say in a few words what the work of Jesus was, how might you answer? If you've thought of something like; reconciling humanity and the world to God, then you'd be on the right track. Jesus was sent by God to call us to conversion, to turn us around to God's will and ways. This call was heard and accepted by some, but by and large it was unheeded by most and was actively resisted and rejected by others.

God, however, is not so easily silenced, so how then could God's merciful, forgiving and reconciling will and work be brought to completion? Well, as it turned out, and by our human decisions and choices, only by Jesus total commitment in faith to God, even as far as giving himself over to the Cross, and then through it into new, risen eternal life for us all.

When you really look at and think about the Lord's Prayer which we all know by heart it asks only one thing of us, a big thing too; that we forgive each others offences and trespasses against us as we ourselves have been forgiven by God in Christ. In fact, this prayer tells us that our own reception of God's merciful forgiveness is predicated on our willing desire to work for reconciliation with each other. The rest of this key prayer is all about acknowledging God's wonder and work for us. If we accept our role in the forgiving and reconciling process, then we'll be doing our part in keeping God's name holy, advancing God's Kingdom of justice and peace and living out God's will here on earth as it is in heaven.

In St. Matthew's gospel Jesus said us that where two or three are gathered in his name, he will be with us and that God will hear and grant

those requests of ours that align with God's just, kind, forgiving and healing will. We were reminded that we who follow Jesus and try to live in his Spirit have been given a share in the power of God, to bind others up in or to loosen them from their debts and sins. This awesome power and authority is serious stuff. It means that you and I can choose to keep a tally of others failures and offences or stop the count and wipe the slate clean. No one says that this is a quick and easy process, but it is within our grasp if we recall all that God does for us daily and then get on with living and acting in a way befitting of Jesus brothers and sisters today.

Jesus went so far as to lay out for us a little step by step guide for our work, beginning by privately sorting matters out, then having a couple of witnesses who can verify any claims of hurt and trespass, through to involving the community, ending, if this fails, with a new evangelisation just like we would with anyone not yet won totally over to the good news.

So, back to we're we started, focusing on God's work and Kingdom plan, bought and paid for us by Christ's sacrifice. As always, this is the example we want to imitate, as well as the destination where we seek arrival. It's what this and every Eucharist makes present, nourishes in us and freshly empowers us to do in our relations with each other. Or, as St. Paul says, so well, it's all about loving your neighbour as yourself, for love is the one thing that cannot hurt anyone which is why it is the answer to every one of the commandments, the heart of our Christian faith.