

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA WEYMOUTH
HOMILY FOR TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B)

9th SEPTEMBER 2012

This may be the twenty-third ordinary Sunday of the year but it's no ordinary Sunday for us. We are in our new church. Essentially we are in a new church, making a new start in our parish.

So what does the Lord say to us in our readings?

The very first words we heard, from Isaiah, were: "Courage! Do not be afraid."

If we are faint-hearted, afraid of change, that's exactly what we need. It's no pious hope. It's a promise based on Isaiah's faith that "God is coming to save you."

He has already come to us through Jesus. We brought him here in the Blessed Sacrament from St. Augustine's Church and installed him in the tabernacle.

He came with some familiar faces, the statue of his mother, Mary, of St. Augustine and of St. Peter.

He will grace the same altar with his real presence at every Mass.

In other respects the building is still recognisably St. Joseph's but a renewed and fresher St. Joseph's, as if the building has been on holiday and come back looking years younger.

The building was once like the desert in our first reading – literally a building site - but now that you have filled the seats it gushes with new life, like Isaiah's "streams in the wasteland".

I pray that we will all feel at home here. We may worry about where we are going to sit. For this Sunday only there are no usual seats.

St. James has something to say about seats in Church in our second reading – basically we should give seats to those who need them most.

It is absolutely essential for our spiritual health and happiness that we live together as a Christian community, caring for each other and not making distinctions between people – them and us, my place, their place.

We must develop as a Christian community, admired for our faith and our love. That means no distinctions.

St. James warns us strongly about making distinctions between classes of people. We are to value people for their faith and not their wealth or celebrity.

Today the Church wants us to think about justice and peace which are achieved by loving and respecting everyone equally. This means looking beyond these walls to the wider community – to our Christian neighbours, to St. Paul's, to all the people of this borough of Weymouth and Portland and the wider West Dorset District, and beyond that to the whole world.

Another good way to develop as a Christian community is to deepen our knowledge and understanding of Jesus and of all that he taught us.

RCIA is a good way to do this. RCIA starts on Wednesday 19th September. Every Wednesday evening we will be meeting in the new hall to help each other to know, understand and love Jesus and his Church better and help others to find faith and a spiritual home with us. Everyone is invited to come and discuss their difficulties and offer their insights.

Isaiah says that we will see the presence of God among us when “the ears of the deaf are unsealed – and the tongues of the dumb sing for joy. That's one reason why Jesus healed the man with impaired hearing and speech in today's Gospel.

By fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy he showed that God had come in him.

This miracle has more than physical importance.

Deaf people are closed in on themselves; people who hear are open to others. They have difficulty in communicating; they are cut off from community

Jesus wants all of us to be open and sensitive to each other – to hear and speak to each other, to communicate with each other.

His healing words were: “Be opened.”

We have opened the new church.

Now we have to be open, too – open to each other and to the Holy Spirit who will do amazing things in this place, if we let him.

Rev Geoff Carey