

**OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH**  
**HOMILY FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**  
**27<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2013**

We often hear people like the Prime Minister talk about “doing the right thing.”

Public figures accused of an offence deny “all wrongdoing”.

How do they know what is right or wrong?

For many people right means legal and wrong means illegal, but as Catholics we know what is right according to the law of the land may be morally wrong – abortion and same-sex marriage.

What makes one thing morally right and another morally wrong? Let’s see how our readings help to answer this question.

In our Old Testament we hear the prophet Ezra reading the Law to the people after their return from exile. Right and wrong was simple for them.

They thought of God as a divine lawgiver who had revealed his law to Moses in the Ten Commandments and helped scholars to develop a precise set of moral rules. These rules represented the will of God. They laid down what was both legally and morally right and wrong. There was no distinction.

Doing the right thing meant keeping the Law.

We know that Jesus found this precise moral law was too restrictive. In today’s Gospel he gives us a different way of seeing right and wrong.

He is speaking to a community of Jewish believers in their synagogue. He reads them a prophecy from Isaiah saying that one day God would anoint someone with his own Spirit and that person would bring good news to the poor.

St. Luke tells us that God the Father anointed Jesus with his own Spirit at his baptism, so when Jesus stood up to speak in the synagogue he spoke “with the Power of the Spirit in him.”

He tells the people in the synagogue that this prophecy is “being fulfilled as they listen”.

In other words he is showing them the Spirit of God in his own person.

So what does it mean to do the right thing now?

For Christians the question is irrelevant. Jesus shows us that being is more important than doing.

He is telling us to be like him.

Being like Jesus means being a good person rather than doing the right thing. If we must have a law, Jesus told us to love God and love our neighbour.

There is true love and false so he gives us examples of what he means by love

- liberty to captives,
- new sight to the blind
- freedom to all who are downtrodden, bullied, persecuted, abused and exploited
- forgiveness, a new start, new hope

True love sets people free to make the most of their lives, to fulfil the potential that God has given, to find fulfilment, everlasting rest for their souls.

Christ's love releases us from all that prevents us from loving freely, free from all doubt, suspicion and fear of abuse, free from selfish desires, free from anger and resentment.

St. Paul reminds us in the second reading that love has a communal dimension.

Christians are to live in community like parts of one body, and what is good makes the whole body, Church and society, healthy.

Jesus has set each of us free to love, but we have to use our freedom responsibly for the good of the whole community.

St. Luke tells us that Jesus had "the power of the Spirit (of God) in him."

The Church believes that we each receive the same Spirit in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

For Christians, doing the right thing means living in the same Spirit.

**Rev Geoff Carey**