

OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH

HOMILY FOR THE 6TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 11th 2018

Today's Gospel consists of a conversation between a leper and Jesus.

Like so many of the miracle stories, it tells us much about the relationship between Jesus and ourselves.

Hopefully our being here at Mass means that we do want a relationship with Jesus because this is one reason why the Church teaches that being at Mass is so important.

The conversation is very much about *wanting*.

The sick man really *wants* to be healed.

He did not just ask Jesus, he was desperate; he begged and pleaded with Jesus. And then he seems to wonder whether Jesus *wants* to heal him.

Jesus replies just as strongly: "I do want to," and he healed the man.

Prayer is answered when the person praying and God both want the same. The Gospel challenges us to be honest about what we really want.

There are different kinds of wanting.

There is the *feeling* kind of wanting - I feel like a long sleep.

Feeling is about what will give me pleasure.

Then there is the *thinking* kind of wanting – I want this because it is good.

Let's apply this to our going or not going to Sunday Mass.

Some of us may not feel like going to Mass and do not go even if we could. Others might think I want to go to Mass but I don't see how I can.

The feeling ones are saying: "I won't go"; the thinking ones "I can't go."

God, being perfectly reasonable, cannot expect a person to do anything that is beyond their ability. Everyone has to decide honestly with God what is beyond their ability.

And what if you come to Mass and find it hard?

The homily might be irrelevant, the music terrible, the words meaningless and other people irritating but that must not distract us from our reason for being here.

We come to Mass just as the leper came to Jesus to be let him touch us in Holy Communion just as Jesus touched the leper in person.

The leper was healed physically and spiritually; we are healed spiritually.

Think how hard it was for him to come to Jesus. He was infectious with a terrible disease; he was meant by law to stay outside the town and away from other people, but he forced his way through crowds of people to reach Jesus.

He really wanted the healing that Jesus could give him.

St. Paul knew the conflict that can arise between what we feel and what we really want when he wrote to the Galatian Christians:

For what our human nature wants is opposed to what the Spirit wants, and what the Spirit wants is opposed to what our human nature wants.

We can be certain that the Spirit wants us here at Mass. So if there is a tension in your lives about going to Mass, ignore your feelings.

“I don’t feel like it” comes from our human nature and should be ignored.

“I really want to” comes from the Spirit and should be followed up.

If you really want to be here but find that other good and serious demands on your time make it impossible sometimes, then it may be true that you can’t. The ultimate test is whether or not you feel sorry, not guilty but sorry.

What do I really want?

As Jesus showed, God always accepts genuine wanting.

There are no exceptions, not even for lepers.

Rev Geoffrey Carey