

OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH

HOMILY FOR THE 20TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

19th August 2018

Good morning everyone! Our antiphon would have been “one day in your court is better than 1000 elsewhere.” Do we mean that? We are here aren’t we, spending some time in God’s court. Do you know that there is no one luckier today than we are? We are in God’s house, we are going to celebrate the Eucharist and Eucharist means thanksgiving. So, we are here thanking God for the gift he gave us, himself.

Last week Father talked about murmurings, when people moan or complain, especially when they disagree with something. Well, it’s OK to disagree, but if we don’t agree with certain teaching let’s research it in depth and then use our conscience; but our conscience must be the result of both prayerful consideration and sufficient research, it must be an informed conscience. But as I said you are here, so to some degree I am preaching to the converted. So, thank you for listening, yet let’s see if we can be more converted, because the more we understand and the more we believe the more powerfully God can work in us, and the more evident our witness to others is through our lifestyles.

So, let’s ask ourselves, just how much do we believe. Well I would like to highlight a couple of verses we just heard from the book of Proverbs: “Who is ignorant? Let him step this way.” Who is ignorant? Me certainly, you maybe. “Come and eat and drink, leave your folly and you will live and walk in the ways of perception.” We are invited to come freely with nothing but ourselves and receive the greatest gift that exists, Jesus Christ. And then the Holy Spirit in our lives will walk us in the ways of perception.

My friends, the more we know the more we start to believe (and vice versa) and this is good both for us and for others. This is so exciting, let’s get excited; we are told in our psalm “to taste and see that’s the Lord is good “. It is as simple as that. And this message is so important we had excerpts from the same psalm last week and we get it again next week!

When you taste a beautiful cake, desert, wine ... you, well I, want more! I am hungry for more of God... are you?

Now, to help us live in the way of perception we continue with St Paul’s letter. Last week we heard of a new way of living, to never have a grudge never lose temper and to be friends and forgiving with everyone. This week he continues and tells us to be careful with the sort of lives we lead. Well, thank you again for coming today because being here reflects the type of life we want to lead, and by hearing God’s word this helps us to live the life we are meant to live. Paul is speaking to the Ephesians about the wicked age they live in, this is relevant today as there is much wickedness around. But if we do the will of God, if we let the spirit fill us, Paul tells us that our lives can redeem the world! Your life and mine can redeem the world!

Here we are, soon to receive Jesus (which includes receiving a blessing), and the outcome of this is that we are filled with the spirit and then the way we live our lives will shine out to everyone, and this has real power, power to change ourselves and the world. Now that is exciting. When we do that we will give thanks to God always and everywhere, as Paul instructs us, simply by how we live. I do hope as you leave today you will repeat in your heart, indeed sing in your heart, “taste and see that the Lord is good”.

And today culminates with Jesus's promise. I don't understand it, no one can understand it, but I do know it. Either we believe what Jesus says, or we have to change our minds and say that's the Bible is simply a good book and Jesus a good man. Well the Bible is much more than a good book, it is God's love letter to us and a guide about how to live, and it goes further than that because it reveals just who Jesus, God himself, and that we can know him intimately.

Jesus's love is so great that he gives himself to us. This community is a loving one, I see it in so many ways, I see it beautifully when people help each other when coming forward for communion or for a blessing. I pray that this week we may all recognise this love of Jesus for us; tangibly so when father consecrates the offering. You see the Jews were arguing, they could not accept what Jesus said. Earlier in John's Gospel we heard Jesus tell the Jews that their fathers in the desert ate the manna, the free food from heaven, but have died. And that now they are being offered the living bread from heaven, Jesus himself. In reply to their complaining he tells them directly that his flesh is real food and his blood is real drink. He tells them and he tells you and me that anyone who eats his flesh and drinks his blood lives in him and he lives in them, and they have eternal life.

This is God himself speaking, and as I said a few weeks ago God spoke and the world was created. When God speaks, his words create reality. If I say you are arrested, you can laugh at me. If a policeman says so, it happens. When God says this is my body-it is.

This is exciting good news. It is also mystery. Sadly, many Christians have lost this truth. If you go back to the early Church, in the days of those who had lived with the Apostles, it is apparent they believed in the real presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. I really do want everyone to realise just what a gift we have, to share in this gift of God to us. It kept me going through many difficult times and gives me the desire and strength to try to tell others what the truth is. How can we keep such good news, such a good gift to ourselves?

We all know many friends who know longer come to church. There are many reasons for this but if we can demonstrate just how wonderful hearing God's word and receiving him in the Eucharist is, then maybe we can build this church community so that it will be a beacon of love and hope for the whole of this area.

Please know that I am simply trying to encourage us to get deeper into our knowledge and love of God. I know not everyone is called to stand up here and preach. Around the world the church is growing, despite persecutions, but in many parts of the western world the church is being pruned. Do we believe that one day in God's court is better than a thousand elsewhere? Are we thankful for what we receive? Does part of us believe Jesus is really present here? I do, and I am thankful, even though I know I don't always show it. And I believe that each of us here in our own measure, have some degree of belief and thanks. So, we need to be a vibrant light, I dare say we need to meet together (more than just for one hour on Sunday), so that we will grow and be able to show and to share what we have.

We have tasted, it is good. You are good people, help others taste and see how good it is to be one of God's children.

Rev Jonathan de Kretser