

OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH
HOMILY FOR THE 27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
7TH OCTOBER 2018

Hello everyone today. Why are we here? We're here to experience the Divine mystery, a privileged encounter with the very person of Jesus Christ. And when we start Mass, we sign ourselves with a cross. Do you realise that's this means we are reminding ourselves that we belong completely to Christ? It is also an outward sign to show others that we belong to Christ. And if we recall that we have invoked the name of the Trinity it can remind us that we are invited into the depth of a love that is deeper than we can understand that even exists within a marriage.

We can consider this mutual agape¹, we are not here simply to feel good although this is often a consequence of being at Mass, we are here to offer ourselves to God together with our struggles and our joys, and God offers himself to us.

Sarita and I have been fortunate to be at a Celebrate weekend recently. The joy, the praise and the worship simply opened our hearts to hear and receive what God wanted to say. And whilst this style of celebration may not suit everyone pope Francis has exhorted us all to share the gifts that the charismatic movement has bestowed on the church. Please don't categorise people, the early Church was massively "charismatic" in nature. When we are Baptised, we receive all the fullness of the Holy Spirit, however too often we never release and experience his wonderful gifts. So, let's just explore one of these gifts, the gift of love.

Jesus came to fulfil the Law and not to change it. So, when the Pharisees came to Jesus and tried to trick him by asking if it was unlawful for a man to divorce his wife he knew their hearts and simply challenged their attitudes without giving a direct answer. You see the law of Moses was quite clear on this, that a man could give a writ of divorce. Now Jesus did not comment directly on this instead he referred back to Genesis where he demonstrated the perfect union that had originally been designed by God. We are made in the image and likeness of God and a part of this image is incredible unity and a completely pure and self-giving love.

Then throughout scripture the salvation story describes God and Jesus as the groom and the church as a bride. If we jump to the book of Revelation we see the completion of God's plan for his people with the marriage feast of the lamb and his bride, that is to say Jesus and the church.

Now I recognise that there are many people here who are either divorced, or divorced and remarried. And I am aware that in many cases these second unions work well and are full of love. Please notice that at no time does Jesus criticise anyone in this position. What he does beautifully is to elevate the law back to its original state when rather than a written law it was simply a law of love. Such an agape love that no rules were needed. It is towards this perfect union that we are being called, we are being called to elevate our lives to the perfect union that existed in the

¹ Agape (pronounced a-gap-ay) is Agape is a Greco-Christian term referring to love, "the highest form of love, charity" and "the love of God for man and of man for God". The word embraces a universal, unconditional love that transcends and persists regardless of circumstance.

beginning. Jesus knows we get this wrong; he knows we make mistakes and mess things up and so he shows us the ideal that we are aiming for.

The gospel today concludes with a lovely section about little children. Children have an ability to see things simply, not to overcomplicate things, that is why Jesus urges us to welcome the kingdom of God like children. Let's keep things simple and aim for a perfect love between ourselves and God; everything else will follow from this. We need to start from where we are, knowing that God understands when we have gone wrong, so now is the time to start and aim for this perfection from our current place.

So back to my original question why are we here? I suggest to you that it is to keep offering ourselves to God with an awareness that if we accept his offer of love and keep listening to his teaching then we are on a journey two wards the perfect love that God has had in mind for us from the beginning of time. And God will do everything to help us get there.

Last weekend at celebrate there was a lady who was suffering from an acute illness. At the time there was no access to medical help, so someone stepped out in faith and prayed for her. She was healed of the infection which was making her feel ill and therefore was able to benefit from being at the conference, and her faith levels are hopefully being increased. I mention this because at the end of mass today, people are available to pray with you. This may be for physical healing or it may be for psychological healing; indeed, it may be for healing of memories and help in forgiving people who hurt us. God wants a healthy bride so let us acknowledge our weaknesses and ask him to help us.

Finally, it is so easy for us to be sleepy in faith. My friends, we really need to wake up and stir up our desires for God. There asked so many things being put on in our parish to help us in this. The I believe course starts this Tuesday, do try to come. This course explores what we say that we believe every week in the creed.

Also, to look forward to a reminder that on Saturday 16 February next year young Jasmine is organising a day event at Thomas Hardy School. (probably only £10 per adult). Wherever you are in your journey with God this is a day that a 19-year-old girl is organising to help you both learn more about God, and to experience something of what God has to give you. So, stay awake, be alert for updates, put the date in your diary, and recognise that God is calling you to something more.

We may well have missed the mark so far in His plans for our lives, but God always gives us more than we give him, so please come not only to show your support for this young lady but perhaps to meet God in a new way, and hear what he is saying to you. God bless you.

Rev Jonathan de Kretser