

Sunday Homily

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

1 AUGUST 2021

YEAR B

“Whoever comes to me will never be hungry,
and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.”

John 6:35

Illustration

For years Maura had been trying to educate her children in the skills of housekeeping such as cleaning, shopping, washing, ironing and cooking. One of the boys, Michael, who could turn his hand to most tasks, placed housekeeping low on his list of priorities. No amount of persuasion from Maura could convince him of the usefulness of such skills when he left home. But he had more interesting things to do. He did the minimum demanded of him and then disappeared.

Going away to college gave him a different perspective. He shared a house with other students and found it difficult to live in a messy and disorganised environment. He was obliged to use instant foods while wishing that he could cook more substantial meals. Admitting this to Maura was uncomfortable, but subsequent visits home taught him what he needed to know in order to grow more self-sufficient and to enjoy using his skills.

Maura was delighted at the transformation. Michael had discovered through experience a new vision, one of what life could be like by using his strength of character to admit his needs and with the motivation of a messy house. Thanks to Maura’s willingness to teach him, Michael grew up into a greater maturity. His boundaries extended, his horizons became more exciting and the quality of his life changed for the better and for ever.

Gospel Teaching

The crowds who came searching for Jesus in today’s Gospel reading brought with them a confused set of questions and desires. They wanted to find out more about God; they wanted to see signs of God’s presence among them; they wanted help in understanding the relationship between Jesus’ teaching and the teaching they had grown up with.

Jesus was surprisingly gentle with them. He knew he was making headway in his ministry when the people began asking him questions about their lives and how the way they lived related to his teaching. They had discovered their need for a teacher.

The sick, always in need of healing, began to realise that this man Jesus might be a source of their desire. Sinners had come to see him as one with spiritual authority who could see into hearts, could understand the motivations and circumstances of their lives, one who might grant them God's forgiveness. Lonely people, outcasts from the Temple or society, saw in him a friend who would not let them down, one who, in bringing them together with one another, would also share their exile.

Jesus came to his followers according to their need. Jesus knew them well and recognised their motives but did not judge them accordingly. Instead he offered them a new vision of life and its expectations, a new vision of God. They had originally followed him because they were physically hungry. Now they were ready for something beyond the physical. He offered himself as their salvation, which he spoke of in terms they would understand. Their new hunger could only be met by a new bread. Jesus would be this bread. With him as their bread, he would not only satisfy their temporary needs but would fill them with a new life.

When the people recognised their needs, Jesus was ready to satisfy them and bring them into a deeper relationship with God through himself.

Application

We too must try to understand where our own lives are impoverished: to look at ourselves honestly in order to discover our weaknesses and strengths so that we know what to pray for in order to become more perfect before God.

We are already strengthened and blessed by our baptism, so we are partly prepared. We may have gifts which are underused; ideals as yet unfulfilled; longings for life to be different, a desire to change ourselves and the world more in keeping with God's will.

When we experience these feelings we are beginning to grow in maturity. We see that we can change and we reach for a greater wholeness in our lives. This is the moment for us to ask: "Jesus, what must we do, to be doing the works of God?" Being aware that we need to be told will open our eyes and ears and hearts to the answers. But an earnest desire to grow and to change for God's purposes will give us a clearer vision of Christ and his teaching. He will feed us with the manna from heaven that we need.