

Homily 28th Sunday Ordinary 2021

Someone wisely once said: 'Fools follow rules blindly but the wise use rules for guidance'. Holy Scripture is the revealed truth and wisdom of God which we should apply to all aspects of our life to guide us even in the most difficult of situations. I once had a student who was sent to me for denying God in an RE lesson. The situation could have been dealt with by the teacher or The Subject leader but anyway Daniel ended up in my office where I was having a chat with my Deputy Head. 'Sir' the boy protested, 'I don't believe in God and even you can't prove that God exists, can you Sir?' I prayed for a moment as I didn't know how to prove God existed for a 15 year-old. Then the wisdom of God 'spoke' and I thought of the words of Genesis 'created in the image and likeness of God' 'Daniel when I look into your eyes I know that God exists.' mysteriously tripped off my tongue. The First Reading of today's Liturgy states: I prayed and understanding was given to me. I entreated and the Spirit of Wisdom was given to me. Compared to her gold is as a pinch of sand. God's Wisdom can only be accessed by reading of Holy Scripture, prayer and entreaty.

St Paul in his letter to the Hebrews endorses this understanding of Wisdom when he states: 'The word of God is alive and active. It cuts like a double-edged sword between bone and marrow.' How many times have you been stopped in your tracks on hearing the Word of God? The Beatitudes are a prime example of God's Wisdom when Jesus proclaims happiness and blessedness on those who put their total trust in God, accepting His Holy Will no matter the personal cost; peacemakers; mourners; the merciful; the pure in heart etc. Or indeed other teachings of Our Lord: 'Forgive 70x7!'; 'Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you'; 'Turn the other cheek.' Yes, indeed God's Word 'cuts like a double-edged sword'.

In today's Gospel Jesus demonstrates the ability of God's Wisdom to cut 'between the bone and the marrow'. The rich young man had done everything expected of a pious Jew but Jesus invites him to take the radical step of selling all he has and giving it to the poor. When the young man, torn between a life of comfort and familiarity and a life entering the unknown, its culture and values and following Jesus, simply walks away as 'he was a man of great wealth'. Jesus then tells the disciples a sobering truth: 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter God's Kingdom'. The response of the disciples is basically what chance do any of us have then, it's almost impossible. It is at this point that the divine Wisdom manifests itself. 'For men it may be impossible but nothing is impossible with God!'

Daniel's life was never the same again when he realised that the real proof of God's existence was he himself 'made in God's image and likeness.' He followed his Dad's footsteps into the army and spent tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan where he witnessed unimaginable horrors. It was his belief in God, in his own words, that helped him through the terrors of war. Daniel continues to practice his faith and now in his late thirties owns his own business and puts it all down to the day he realised that when he looked in the mirror that there before him was a reflection of God. Next time we look into the eyes of our spouse, relative, friend or more importantly someone who 'gets on our nerves' we should look deeply and carefully for there lies the presence of God Himself.