

## Homily 2nd Sunday Ordinary Time 2022

'Ring out the old and bring in the new' is the phrase we use at New Year. In Scotland there were many traditions associated with ending the old year and welcoming the new one. My Mum would thoroughly clean an already spotless house and ensure there wasn't even a speck of dust anywhere. Dad would ensure there was a roaring coal fire to warm the incoming year. All of us were expected to be at home for 'the bells' and 5 minutes before midnight on Hogmanay the family would kneel down to recite the Holy Rosary to ensure the old year ended and the new year began in prayer. Only when the Rosary was finished about 10 mins past midnight were we allowed to greet the new year with an alcoholic drink and a big kiss and embrace. First footing followed when I, as the only boy in my family of three sisters, would go outside in the freezing cold. I would then eventually knock the door with a lump of coal in one hand and a bottle of spirits in the other. This was a symbol of wishing all inside a healthy and prosperous new year.

In today's First Reading from Isaiah, after chapters of condemnation of Israel for their wayward ways, the Prophet consoles the people by promising that their past sins would be forgiven and that a new era of hope and joy was imminent. Israel in the new era would be the bride in a relationship with God, The groom, which would be faithful, everlasting and full of unconditional love. The people would be cleansed of their sinful past and a new era of prosperity and peace would dawn.

In today's Gospel St John tells us of the first sign Jesus gave at Cana of Galilee. The changing of water into wine is well known to us but it's significance is often overlooked or even misunderstood. The old dispensation of Judaism based on The Law, The Torah, would be perfected by the new dispensation of love in the person of Jesus. The six stone water jars symbolise the ablutions associated with the old Jewish laws and The Covenant of Moses on Mt Sinai are now replaced by the wine of The New Covenant in Christ's blood which will be completed in Jesus' passion and eventual death on Mt Calvary. The old is not so much forgotten but is rather perfected in the new law of love.

Every disciple is called to live out The New Covenant in Christ's blood by responding to Christ's unconditional love and sacrifice by loving God and our neighbour. Some, according to St Paul, will do so by teaching, others by healing, others by prophesying, others performing miracles, others through prayer and wise counsel. In our parishes our response might be through the ministry of welcome or hospitality, the ministry of cleaning or flower-arranging, the ministry of visiting the sick, old or housebound or music ministry. Eucharistic Ministry and The Ministry of Lector are special ministries which we should carry out with due reverence and great dignity but whatever our ministry is it should be focussed on loving God and loving our neighbour as ourselves.

So this New Year let us 'ring out the old and bring in the new' realising that although there is much to be valued in The Old Law of Moses, a new and perfect Covenant of loving God and one another as Christ loves us is now in place. One very wise parishioner once quoted this insightful piece of advice: 'Fools follow rules blindly the wise use rules for guidance.'