

Homily 5th Sunday Ordinary Time

‘In the final analysis we have one of two choices; to abandon ourselves totally to the will of God or to live a life full of worry and anxiety.’ (Johannes Metz, *Poverty of Spirit*, 1968)

Do you remember the days of the old coin electricity meters? Do you recall when you forgot to top it up and on a Winter's night you were scrambling about in the darkness to find your purse or wallet to get ‘a shilling for the meter’? You then fumbled through the coins to ensure it was indeed a shilling and struggled in the dark to find the slot for the coin. Then suddenly, as if by magic, your darkness was overcome as you turned the knob and the coin dropped into the container with a clink. What a transformation the new light made as your heating, lighting and black and white TV came back to life. If we, as disciples of Jesus, hear the Word of God, take it to ourselves and put it into practice then we too will be LIGHT.

In Isaiah today the Prophet calls for The Chosen People to be LIGHT in the darkness by, ‘loosening the bonds of wickedness, undoing the straps of the yoke, letting the oppressed go free, and breaking every yoke.’ So, to live in the LIGHT is to abandon yourself to God’s holy will by living lives of love of the oppressed, the poor, the hungry, the homeless and the naked. Such LIGHT transforms a world so often driven by selfishness and pride. The Responsorial Psalm endorses this message when it proclaims that LIGHT rises in the world’s darkness when people act with integrity, justice, mercy, generosity and abandon themselves to God’s holy will.

Jesus in today’s Gospel, from St Matthew, begins to explain the Beatitudes which we heard proclaimed last Sunday. He starts with the clear and unequivocal instruction, ‘You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.’

Just as that shilling transformed our life on a cold dark Winter evening all those years ago so embracing Jesus’ call to be LIGHT transforms our often-ailing world. Furthermore, by embracing The Cross and abandoning ourselves to God’s holy will, we, Christians will be a counterculture to Individualism, secularism, materialism, hedonism and consumerism. We can indeed show that there is ‘another way’, the way of selfless love which will illumine a world often steeped in darkness. How stunningly beautiful is that?