

Homily 25th Sunday in Ordinary Time (A) 2026"

"My thoughts are not your thoughts and my ways not your ways', says The Lord" (Isaiah 55:8-9) We should avoid imposing our thoughts and ways as if they were of God.

Our God is indeed the God of the unexpected. The story goes - At the end of the world God will judge all peoples. He will call the good and will say, 'Come and sit on my right'. He will then call those who have been 'bad', or better who have done bad things, and says to them, 'Come into my Kingdom because I am a loving merciful Father and my Son has paid for your transgressions.' At this, those who appeared to be good rebel against God accusing him of being unfair and unjust and so ultimately exclude themselves from Heaven. The key message is we must be good till the last.

The generosity of God is clear from today's Gospel. Jesus tells the parable (a story taken from real everyday life with ONE key message, the details of which emphasise the key message) of the rich landowner who hires labourers for his vineyard in the morning, promising them ONE denarius for their working day. Towards the end of the day the owner notices other unemployed workers and invites them to also work in the vineyard. At dusk he calls those hired towards the end of the shift and pays them ONE denarius. He then calls those hired at the beginning of the day and pays them, as promised, ONE denarius. The latter are incandescent with rage, complaining that the landowner is unfair and unjust. The landowner replies, 'Am I not free to do as I please with my own money? Were you not promised ONE denarius? Why do you complain about my generosity?'

These parables are consistent with another unconventional statement of Jesus, 'the last shall be first and the first shall be last.' Jesus consistently demonstrates the wisdom of God's thoughts and ways. Conventional wisdom would suggest that the good should be rewarded and the bad punished. Many would side with the labourers who were hired in the morning and worked all day under the sun upholding their complaints as justified. How many in a busy bus queue would agree that those who joined last should get on the bus first?

Our God will always surprise us and there are plenty of examples to support this in The Gospels: calling those seen by people as cheats and liars to engage in ministry as he did with Matthew, the tax-collector; including those negatively marked as public sinners in his inner circle like Mary Magdalen; appointing a hot-headed, denying and obstructive disciple to be leader of the group as he did with Simon Peter; speaking with a Samaritan WOMAN alone, unthinkable for male Jews of his time, as he did at Jacob's Well; mixing with sinners, befriending them as he did with Zaccheus; forgiving publicly a woman caught in the act of adultery with the challenge to those who condemned her, 'Whoever hasn't sinned cast the first stone.'

We in The Church must be careful not to tar Jesus with man-made rules, laws and canons. We must not impose upon Jesus our thoughts and our ways to the detriment of God's holy will. We must look more to Jesus of The Gospel for guidance realising that authentic discipleship is characterised by Jesus' words, 'I have come for the sick and for sinners, the healthy have no need of the doctor.' (Lk5:31; Matthew 9:12 and Mark 2:7) Our Church, which is undoubtedly in crisis could however be, at a 'kairos'* moment, a moment of great opportunity. Yet to do so we must take the courageous step and 'get back to basics' embracing God's thoughts and God's ways rather than promoting a legalism to protect structures largely ignoring the needs of the person. 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.' (John 10:10)

How stunningly beautiful that would be for those heavily burdened with laws, duty and guilt.

*For Tomáš Halík's, "**kairos**" is one of the key concepts of his book **The Afternoon of Christianity**. He uses it to describe the Church's present crisis not simply as a period of decline, but as a **decisive, God-given opportunity for transformation**. **What does "kairos" mean?** When Halík says the Church is experiencing a **kairos**, he means: **This particular crisis is a moment in which the Church can become something new—but it must discern what God is doing and respond**. He explicitly describes the crisis of The Church as "**kairos, challenge, opportunity**." **The crucial point: the crisis itself may be the opportunity**

This is where Halík's thinking becomes quite radical. The Church tends to interpret declining attendance, secularisation, loss of influence, scandals, internal divisions, etc., as **problems to be solved so that things can return to normal**. Halík asks whether that is the wrong interpretation. Perhaps the old "normal" has actually **run its course**. The Church is experiencing something analogous to Jung's **midday crisis**: the structures and assumptions that worked during Christianity's "morning" no longer work in the same way. The resulting exhaustion and disorientation can therefore become the gateway into Christianity's "**afternoon**"—a more mature form of faith.

We must therefore not waste the crisis This is probably the most important practical implication. The kairos calls for **discernment and conversion**—a deeper examination of what Christianity is and what God may be asking of the Church now. Halík calls this approach "**kairology**": **reading the signs of the times theologically**. **What does God seem to be saying through the crisis?** For Halík, one of the great signs of our time is **secularisation**. The Church could simply regard secular people as people who have rejected God. Halík asks a more interesting question: **What if secularisation is also stripping Christianity of things that were never essential to the Gospel?** For example, Christianity can become entangled with: political power; cultural dominance; national identity; institutional self-preservation; legalism; clericalism; triumphalism; rigid boundaries between "us" and "them." Halík argues that the crisis can **purify Christianity of these attachments**. That is why he talks about the "**self-transcendence of Christianity**." Christianity needs to get beyond its preoccupation with itself, its institutions, power, rules, status and survival—and rediscover its mission.

Halík doesn't mean that kairos automatically produces renewal. **A kairos can be missed**. One analysis of his book puts it very well: the "afternoon" form of Christianity is an **opportunity that must be freely recognised and acted upon**; it isn't an inevitable historical development. So, the Church faces a genuine choice. It can respond to its crisis by **retreating into fear and nostalgia**. Or it can say: "**Perhaps God is doing something new here. What are we being invited to become?**" That, for Halík, is the **kairos**.

This explains why *The Afternoon of Christianity* is ultimately much more hopeful than its diagnosis of the Church's condition might initially suggest: **the crisis isn't necessarily evidence that Christianity is dying. It may be the moment in which Christianity is being invited to grow up**.