

SUNDAY 26 (B) (2021)

A) INTRODUCTION

- Today's Gospel is a difficult one to talk about.
- It contains so many different sayings of Jesus pasted together.
- It includes some very harsh sayings.
- Especially those last words about cutting off our limbs.

B) FIGURE OF SPEECH

- What are we to make of those words?
- First of all, I don't think they are to be taken literally: I am sure Jesus does not want us to go in for self-harming.
- They are a figure of speech, a kind of exaggeration for effect.
- Irish: A hundred thousand welcomes: sign of great kindness and hospitality.
- So what is the point that Jesus wants to make?

C) WHAT'S THE POINT JESUS MAKES?

- ***Nothing is more important than our eternal salvation.***
- ***No sacrifice is too great to attain it.***
- The words of Jesus seem so harsh, out of keeping with the image of the gentle, compassionate and forgiving saviour.
- But Jesus says this same kind of thing in so many different ways in the Gospel.
- The Kingdom of heaven is the pearl of great price, or the treasure buried in the field: we must make every effort to obtain it.
- We must try to enter by the narrow gate; not easy, we can't just stroll in.
- We must be prepared to take up our cross every day to follow Jesus.
- Those who follow him must be prepared to leave everything behind.
- Nothing must come between us and our following of Jesus: neither possessions nor home nor even family ties.

D) CALL TO CONVERSION

- All these thoughts can be summed up in the call to repentance, the call to conversion.
- This is something we expect to think about in Lent or Advent: penitential seasons when we are encouraged to take stock, and examine once again the direction of our lives, and if necessary, to do something about it.
- But the need for conversion is always with us, not just once or twice a year.
- We are all weak and frail human beings.
- No matter how much we long to move towards God, and deep down, most of us do, there is still that pull the other way, the pull of pride or selfishness or instant gratification.

E) PRAYER FOR CONVERSION

- So it's good to be reminded of that call to continuing conversion.
- We see it here in the Mass, where we begin always by asking for God's forgiveness.
- At various intervals during the Mass we repeat that prayer for forgiveness, right up until the moment we receive Holy Communion: Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof... and so on.
- Our prayer every day should also include a desire to be sorry and to seek forgiveness, especially in our prayers before we go to sleep.

F) PRAYER TO TAKE ACTION

- But today's Gospel is not only a call to repentance.
- It calls us to look closely at whatever there may be in our lives that prevents us from coming closer to God.
- What is it that pulls us the other way?
- Each one of us needs to discover for ourselves what our own particular handicap may be - the hand or foot or eye that causes us to sin.
- We should pray for enlightenment, through a regular but gentle examination of conscience.
- And we should pray too for the courage and strength to begin to let go, to cut it off or pluck it out
- Knowing that the grace and the mercy and compassion of God are always there to help us
- because nothing we do or fail to do can stop God from loving us with infinite tenderness

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