

**8th Sunday in Ordinary Time or Quinquagesima, 3 March 2019 -
given by Fr. Ian Wilson.**

✠ In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Before reflecting on this week's events, I want to share the fact with you that my brother was what is now being called a "child victim", as an unwitting 11 year old, in a public facility. I came close on a few occasions to the same fate as a teenager.

I hasten to say none of this had anything to do with our Church, but I do appreciate the depth of damage this evil can do to an individual from their childhood and through their lives. Saying that, from witnessing the effects on my brother, also highlights to me, that the bulk of this horrific evil happens elsewhere, and this is not being addressed in the public forum.

I do NOT say that, to deflect from the fact of some people in the Church who did this evil, but instead to highlight the forgotten bulk of victims. Most of those affected are not being publically recognised, valued, or given any recourse, as most of them happen in the home environment, many in broken homes, and others in public places.

This then brings me to the important core of what we do about all this as Church. How do we help those many who have experienced ALL forms of violence in their lives?

The Catholic Church will no doubt act appropriately to accept and repent and act on what has happened in the past. It is more the future for us, starting now, that should also actively concern us.

Many human sins and tragedies simply involve individuals, or groups, ignoring and acting against the Ten Commandments and the moral teaching of the Catholic Church. How naively the social leaders and academics of past recent decades, from the 1960's, mocked these ten points of a wise and holy life. They seemed to say "we are well ahead of that, we are all liberated by humanism and psychology, and the new way of thinking". This seemed to be their mantra. The nightly news demonstrates, in a devastating way, that they were horribly mistaken.

What do the readings for today reveal to us, which may help us balance our feelings and how we move on from here?

The Collect prayer theme for last Thursday focussed on pondering spiritual things, and how we then can be liberated and inspired to put what these reveal into our daily lives. Today's Collect focusses on God being a protector, bringing us into a place of freedom, and how he delights in us. The Personal Ordinariate Collect reflects similar themes. These give us an insight into how we can personally copy these acts of God's love. After all, we are called to be His agents in this world.

The first reading from Ecclesiasticus reminds us how life tests us to remove the rubbish that clogs our own growth as a person. This is given as our hope and guide in daily life. This means following a spiritual teaching that foreshadows what Jesus taught, and from His deep sacrificial love for us, for us to follow in our own lives. This is a pattern for goodness that is challenging, and sometimes demanding, but always achievable and rewarding.

The psalm carries on this idea. That the just will be a true good for humanity and inspire others. That means they will bear good fruit in terms of their grace, by shedding goodness and spiritual light on others. From there, goodness grows and evil vanishes.

St. Paul talks of death and asks penetratingly, where is its victory in the light of Jesus' resurrection. To us spiritual, emotional and social death, seems to be the problem of our age. How these days many focus on self rather than others, and ignore others outside themselves. They readily get excited about a human ideology, and yet ignore others who that ideology should be assisting. Many of these ideologies are in fact dead ends.

Jesus always taught we must look to our suffering neighbour first, because they reflect the needy and poor of God. Neighbour means anyone we have contact with, and we can encourage, be kind to, or help. Neighbour also means someone we can pray for, and ask the Saints and Holy Angels to assist, or the dead, where we can ask God to give them light, rest and hope.

Finally the gospel deals with our need to be focussed in what we are, what we pray, and how we act. The "plank" Jesus refers to in our own eyes, means many things, but among them are pride, arrogance, indifference, and self-centeredness. We must avoid these like a plague, so we can deal with the evils that plague those around us, in our society. Thereby, we can keep the Church much more free of sin and evil. Also keep ourselves positive and encouraged in God's healing and strengthening grace. Then to grow an ability to rebound and heal, when we are depressed or feel low.

So there you are. These are some things to ponder, as we begin our renewal of the Church, and renewal of ourselves, to again act as witnesses of goodness and wholesomeness of God's Holy People, to the world around us.

It will not be easy, but would we really want it to be so. Where there is challenge to our Faith, there is also growth and strengthening. May we be guided by the Church and Her true and good leaders, as we move towards being again a light and source of eternal life, to this darkening very needy world.

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