

## Reflection from Fr. Colm on the 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time

*Audio posted to the Parish Website on Sunday 21st June 2020*

Good morning all, I hope you're okay. Windy day outside but intermittent showers, we needed the rain, didn't we? Of course, we did. Happy Father's Day to all dads out there, I hope you have a well lovely day in lockdown or wherever you might be. I suppose the Gospel readings today, the Gospel especially is about addressing a theme that is very strong at the moment despite all the comforts or maybe isolation that we're in and that is anxiety. "*Do not be afraid*" we hear again reiterated in the Gospel but more of that later.

Just today I've been reading of the medical profession seeking counsel from the army following lockdown particularly for addressing the traumas that young people may experience following lockdown. It's called PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder - it's a military term and it first came into wide usage after the Vietnam War where an extraordinarily high number of American war veterans suffered from it and it became a crisis point when the deaths of those who actually suffered from PTSD exceeded those who actually died in the line of battle. And so, the army does have a wealth of experience both here following various engagements around the world and from the wider medical and indeed army professions.

The three categories that are addressed today by the medical profession are psychological, physical, and social symptoms. Now I hope I'm not making you kind of anxious in listening to this, but I find it interesting in the context of the Gospel that we're hearing. Like everything else with COVID it is highlighting aspects of life taken for granted which were perhaps already giving cause for concern prior to COVID. Environmental concerns, care for the elderly, loneliness, a growing sense of isolation and angst and unease particularly among young people and perhaps last but by no means least disillusionment with leadership throughout the world.

It seems all is now out in the open with that big question should we go back to the way we were? In the above triple symptoms mentioned it is certain that religious or spiritual or indeed soulful symptoms will not be mentioned. These words are not particularly 'in'. Surprise, surprise.

However, in today's readings we wrestle with this issue of giving witness to the fact that there is something else that has an answer to perhaps all three symptoms outlined. Let me, let me just take you through first of all the prophet Jeremiah in the first reading, great figure from the Old Testament. *"But the Lord is at my side, a mighty hero; my opponents will stumble, mastered, confounded by their failure"* says the prophet. Now these opponents are both external and also internal. Yes, the social issues will be massive, physical and mental too, but all begin with our own sense of wellbeing that comes from an intimacy of loving relationship with Christ, with God. This is where real strength come from. It's that safe space where transparency is easy, when the offloading of our deepest anxieties and fears can be securely talked about. *"Do not be afraid. For everything that is now covered will be uncovered"* says the Gospel today, such wisdom, *"and everything now hidden will be made clear. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the housetops"* Here is a true recipe for self-belief and acceptance especially as we engage in a world that will be very different, I think, than it has been.

And let me finish, there's a wonderful French mystic, Francois Fenelon and Francois wrote in relation to quietness and God which is our true resource *"Warmth of imagination, ardour of feeling, acuteness of reasoning, and fluency of expression, can do but little. The true agent is a perfect abandonment before God, in which we do everything by the light which He gives and are content with the success which He bestows. This continual death is a blessed life known to few. A single word, uttered from this rest, will do more, even in outward affairs, than all our most eager and officious care. It is the Spirit of God that then speaks the word, and it loses none of its force and authority, but enlightens, persuades, moves, and edifies. We have accomplished everything and have scarce said anything."* Good morning everybody.