

Reflection from Fr. Colm on the 5th Sunday of Easter

Audio posted to the Parish Website on Sunday 10th May 2020

Good morning everybody. Weather change means perhaps more confinement to home, so patience is a virtue. Perhaps the message this evening from the PM will lift those spirits, let's hope so anyhow. Ominous statements from the Anglican Bishop of London this morning on church openings probably well into the Autumn we're told that's Anglican church, we don't know about our own yet so let's be positive.

However, I want to talk to you this morning briefly about an extraordinary human being who died recently. Many in the younger age group will probably not know who I'm talking about but those who are interested in music, particularly popular music will recall the name of Little Richard. Yes, I received a text yesterday simply saying "*Little Richard is dead.*" How influential was he? Well let me just quote Bob Dylan one of the greats on hearing of this news, he said "*Little Richard was the original spirit that moved me to do everything I would do.*" Dylan then added that they became good friends, often engaging in long conversations when they crossed each other's path on tour. Both being deeply influenced by Jesus I can only imagine that the Lord Himself will have been pivotal in some of those conversations.

For myself, I remember as an eight or nine-year-old tagging along with my two older brothers and their pals to a cinema nearby to see a film called "*The Girl Can't Help It.*" The film itself was rubbish however what it had by way of musical input it was to become I suppose hugely influential. It had some of the names in it that would go on to be giants of rock popular music rock and roll in particular - Eddie Cochran, Gene Vincent, Fats Domino and of course Little Richard.

Little Richard was born one of twelve children to a poor African American parents in Georgia. He struggled with a physical deformity throughout his life, he also struggled with the racist attitudes that were a part of the deep south at that time, to some degree maybe still. He recalled as an example, that struggle, his friendship with a wonderful singer named Buddy Holly. Buddy invited him one time to his home in Lubbock Texas however Buddy's father refused to allow Little Richard to join them for the meal because of his colour. Buddy said, "*If he does not join them neither do I.*" Buddy sat down but he did say afterwards "*I bet*

Buddy's folks washed those dishes twenty times after I had touched 'em." The hurt stuck.

Little Richard went on to become an Evangelical Minister carrying that same hurt but he did find acceptance in both church and community. He continued to be a flamboyant, complex, sadly drug addicted until his recent death.

That story I just mention it because I feel gosh these are the individuals throughout our lives that have a great influence and can have a great influence in society and yet they do struggle with their demons and yet they do believe in Christ and Christ is such a presence. And that constant need for rebuilding that is a part of each and every one of us is very much in our readings today, wonderful readings.

In the Acts of the Apostles the newly formed the Greek or Hellenistic Christians are finding themselves also being neglected and probably for racist reasons by the Hebrews, their widows especially and that's why the disciples have to make a stand here and it's a very important stand they appoint seven. And they do emphasise in the readings that it's not just enough to focus on the Word of God it has to follow up with action. people have to be fed, in whatever form that takes. The second reading the first letter of Peter we read that wonderful, wonderful oft quoted statement "*The stone rejected by the builders has become the cornerstone*" or the keystone. And the Gospel completes the building narrative by Jesus reassuring us that "*In my Father's house there are many rooms*" That final one, the Gospel from John, is often used as I've said before in funerals but let's again not confine that to that geographical space it's - we're talking about now. There's no sense in just talking about the comfort after death it's what happens now. That prejudice that sense of "*I'm okay*," that cosy view of keeping God at a comfortable distance *my God* that doesn't demand an urgent action in the here and now. That's not acceptable.

We are now entering more challenging times in both isolation, lockdown, frustration, anger, hunger all these issues may impact on us at a social and mental level. So, let us *please* be vigilant. Any, *any* identification of such issues that cause us to be concerned, please contact me, okay? God bless everybody.