

## Homily 3rd Sunday Ordinary Time 2025

### **'Authentic Christian faith and action can heal and transform our ailing Church and world.'**

St Augustine isn't a favourite of mine. His fear of women, after a chequered youth of pleasure, has negatively influenced The Institutional Church's treatment of women till this day. In the same 4th Century AD Constantine, another of my less admired historical figures, made Christianity the religion of The Empire and inflicted upon the Church an imperial power based hierarchical structure from which it has never recovered. St Augustine however, more positively speaks of a choice we must make. We are either to embrace 'The City of God' or make 'The City of Man'.our *raison d'être*. Arguably, the Church has consistently chosen the latter and despite The 'City of Man's' claim that its ideologies would lead to progress, they more often than not have led to division and unfounded fear of those who don't share our attitudes, values and beliefs.

Divisionism is the 'umbrella ISM' in the history of the world and indeed of The Church. Most of the great historical movements have resulted in greater fragmentation, both of society and of The Church, rather than, bringing peoples closer to one another: The Old Testament SCHISM lead to a division of The Chosen People into two hostile camps of Judah and Israel at the time of Solomon; the SCHISM in The Church in 1054 saw Christianity divided into the Eastern and Roman Churches; ReformISM in the Sixteenth century saw Christians further divided, Protestants/Anglicans and Catholics; The Renaissance and Enlightenment brought about a bitter conflict between science and religion eventually leading to secularISM, modernISM and postmodernISM, all dividing people into bitter factions either claiming God was 'dead' (Nietzsche) or the condemnation of such a philosophy; more recently ConsumerISM creates the division, as Bauman's suggests, of the 'seduced' and the 'oppressed', the former with enough disposable income to actively participate in such a society and the latter, due to poverty, disability, sickness, ethnicity, class, age etc. incapable of participation; finally though by no means exhaustive of the ...ISMS, globalISM built on capitalist principles, has seen advances in science, technology and communication connect us more but have not brought us closer together. In fact it has in many respects further alienated us from One another, evidenced by the ever growing rise of nationalism, regional wars, fanaticism and local revolutions.

Is there a way to reverse this depressing pattern and spiral of negativity. I believe that there is a solution. I believe that 'Authentic Christian faith and action can heal and transform our ailing Church and world.' The beginning of a solution lies in The Readings from Holy Scripture today. Nehemiah and Ezra saw the importance of really making The Law a force for justice and peace in the lives of The Chosen People. He carefully and consistently explained why the living out of love of God (First 3 Commandments) and love of neighbour (Next 7 Commandments)\* was so essential to ensure national unity and harmony. St Paul in today's Second Reading builds on this, and acknowledges that we cannot always be in agreement UNLESS we act in such a way that we use our different gifts/charisms, given by the same Holy Spirit, to build up the unity of The Body of Christ.

Jesus tells his disciples to preach unity and love and do so by following his command to 'go out in twos, carrying no money or food for the journey and to be reliant on those who welcome them.' He also reminds his disciples, 'if you wish to be master you must be the servant of all and if you wish to be first you must be last.' Today's Gospel furthermore, reminds us that the 'going out' and servant leadership must fulfil the prophecy of Isaiah, 'to

bring good news to the poor, liberty to the imprisoned, sight to the blind, to set the marginalised and downtrodden free and to proclaim the Kingdom of God to all.'

If we are to grasp this 'kairos' moment (moment of opportunity in a period of Church and global crisis) we must choose to embrace 'The City of God' as opposed to 'The City of Man' To be authentic in this choice The Church and the microcosm of the Church, the parish must:

- 1) rid itself of power struggles, quests for status and free itself from its obsession with money, 'holding all in common' and in so doing become 'servants' of one another as Christ served us;
- 2) not tolerate factions or divisions within our members but be taught to be one 'in heart and mind in the one Spirit', 'forgiving one another as soon as an argument begins', thus embracing Jesus of The Gospel, his words and example;
- 3) be inclusive and see ethnic, gender, ability, age, religious, difference as a potential source of enrichment;
- 4) see the empowerment of the 'sick' and marginalised as our primary focus, 'the healthy have no need of the doctor';
- 5) make 'going out' to meet other Christians, people of other faiths and people of no faith, listening to and respecting their 'story', a priority
- 6) finally actively engaging with politicians and the sciences to address and mend the inequality and unevenness in society, doing our best to eradicate poverty in all its many manifestations.

Can you dare imagine a Church, a parish focussed so? It is my conviction that such a charISMatic approach (led by the gifts of The Holy Spirit) would be an authentic grasping of the 'kairos' moment, bringing greater Church and parish unity and peace where other ISMS have failed so miserably. The Church and parishes would become 'leaven' and 'salt' beginning a process of healing and transformation of our world into a true 'global village' where love of God and neighbour, respect and mutual concern and the upholding of the unique dignity of every human being are at its core.