

Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
11th January 2022

READINGS

With what shall I come before the LORD
and bow down before the exalted God?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousand rivers of olive oil?
Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:6-8

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves. Each one should test their own actions. Then they can take pride in themselves alone, without comparing themselves to someone else, for each one should carry their own load. Nevertheless, the one who receives instruction in the word should share all good things with their instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

Galatians 6:1-10

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

Matthew 25: 34-40

REFLECTION

As this is the first devotional of 2022, let me begin by wishing you all a Happy New Year.

New Year marks a new beginning. A fresh start. That's one of the reasons many people start the new year by making pledges as to how they will improve themselves and live better. I am of course talking about new year resolutions. Have you made any resolutions this year?

A survey taken a few years ago showed that the most popular New Year resolution was to lose weight. That was closely followed by the resolution to get fit. Other popular resolutions included spending more time with loved ones, saving more money, and reading more books! It is reported that every January, gym membership increases by about a third as people begin to enact their resolutions.

However, most new gym memberships are cancelled by the end of February. Most people manage to keep to their New Year resolutions for about a month before the pressures of life get in the way, or circumstances dictate that they end up just going back to the way things were before. Every year, there are newspaper stories about someone who has managed to keep to their resolutions and turned their life around. The person who has lost a lot of weight, the person who has run every day and raised lots of money for charity. The reason these people end up in the newspapers is because they are the exceptions, the one or two who managed to stick with it, who actually changed their lives. For the rest of us, by the end of February it seems that resolutions fade and its business as usual. It's not easy making a change to our lifestyle. It doesn't come automatically. It's a commitment and a challenge we have to accept, not just once at New Year, but at the beginning of every day.

I know that I am no different from anyone else. I have made those New year resolutions to get fit and lose weight and eat better. And, like everyone else, they last for a few weeks, before they begin to slip out of my daily plan. So, I have been wondering how to make a New Year resolution that is meaningful and worthwhile, rather than just the usual fare which never lasts. I found this blessing from the Franciscan Order of Monks:

May God bless you with discomfort, at easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships, so that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears, to shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger, and war, so that you may reach out your hand to comfort them and to turn their pain to joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness to believe that you can make a difference in the world, so that you can do what others claim cannot be done, to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.

Its an interesting blessing - challenging even - because it asks for us to be made uncomfortable by God so that we can work for change in the world around us. I wonder if this is the kind of challenge we should be setting ourselves at this time of new beginnings and fresh starts? A challenge to care for others better than we have in the past. A challenge to spend a bit of time putting others first. A challenge to believe that each and every single one of us can make a difference by our actions and our treatment of the people around us? Maybe our one prayer should be for God to open our eyes to the

need around us, open our hearts so we can respond, and open our minds so that we can know how to respond.

Amen

PRAYER

God of grace and goodness,
Your love for us is assured,
Your care for us is guaranteed.

Let us be confident in you,
So that, trusting in faith,
We can dare to ask how we can live faith in the world.

Show us where the need is,
Show us where the sadness is,
Show us where the loneliness is
Show us there the hurt is
And show us what we can do about those things.
Bless us with your Holy Discomfort.

In Jesus name we offer our prayers,
Amen.

