

Trinity One - 18th June 2017

Fr Michael

In the week when we saw another terrible sad loss of life, this Thursday evening, at our Corpus Christi mass I said towards the end of my sermon. "When Jesus had left the disciples, they had to begin to take his place. We take his place today, making him present in the world through love, and when fed by him, so that we can continue to be him in the world. Jesus remains with us today in sacraments, and this is what I am preparing for - to make Jesus present in the sacrament and in the Body of Christ - you and me." My sermon had been centred on why we celebrate Corpus Christi, the importance of the Eucharist and my own personal preparation as I near my priesting. The statement I have just read came towards the end of that sermon and was a challenge to be the body of Christ in the world, and today's theme of mission is a neat and fitting conclusion to that topic.

Our first reading this morning speaks of the covenant between the nation Israel and God, that they obey, keep the covenant and be a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. This was their mission. Obey God and be an example to the world of what it means to be holy. But, human nature being what it is they repeatedly failed, followed other gods, made animal sacrifice a burdensome ritual, amongst many other things, and did not set a good example to other nations so that they might spread the word that Yahweh was Lord.

St Paul reminds us that mission is costly, that there will be suffering but it will create endurance, which will create character, which will create hope which will bring God's love through the Holy Spirit. Mission for us as individuals or for a gathering such as this church, is costly. A Christian life is not always easy. We have witnessed an outpouring of loving concern following the terrible disaster in North Kensington. People of many faiths and none have put themselves out to help, care, donate, pray and even have righteous anger. All of these things are missional and costly - doing the work of God - and even occasionally 'anger' which can lead to change and improvements for people!

We have witnessed a whole community stirred up by the Grenfell Tower fire, - a whole nation grieving over the terrible and tragic events of the last few weeks and there is something of the priestly kingdom and a holy people in all of the grief, love, care and even anger.

Jesus shows all of this human love and care in his ministry - his mission - and in our Gospel we hear the parallels between his work, to teach, to preach, to heal as he shows compassion, and that of the disciples, the twelve, given

their mission and authority to do the same - teach, preach, heal and have compassion.

Now to come back to that original statement - that if we are now the body of Christ on earth - then that is our mission too. But we all know that and we try to do our best, but we also are all too human just like the Israelites and often worship other gods, we fail to make the right kind of sacrifice and do not set a good example to our neighbours. We get weary, we are sometimes afraid to speak out or put our head above the parapet, but, indifference to what we see around us, now that is very problematic - in fact it is deadly. If we accept things just as they are, think that what we see around us is 'good enough' then that becomes our baseline. Jesus turned things upside down, wasn't afraid to upset the religious authorities and we need some of his strength, his grit, his endurance to see change for what it is - life giving.

Jesus comes from outside of our lives to call us to lives of change. His mission was to set free those who were 'harassed and helpless', to proclaim good news that will reveal the hearts and therefore the motivations of those who heard the message - if we are truly the body of Christ here in our corner of Ealing, then that is still Christ's mission - our mission - and like the disciples our lives will start to change and we can honestly say our lives will never be the same again.

When I see the photographs on the television of some of those who are dead or are still not accounted for, I see the 'harassed and the helpless', people who needed setting free. They were marginalised people on the fringe, who were crammed together in a high rise block, with one stair case, no sprinkler system and despite crying out to have their concerns heard, have had to suffer the loss of many, many of their neighbours before the authorities will listen. We have seen the body of Christ in action in that neighbourhood but what about our neighbourhood our borough? Are there fields out there that are ripe for harvesting - in need of workers, are there sheep without a shepherd? Do we encounter in our work, hobbies, classrooms and lives those who are harassed and helpless? The mission is out there, not in here, and change is needed the world over. But if you get weary, Jesus will be your promised rest, if we are afraid, he will calm the storm but if we are indifferent Jesus will have righteous anger. The medicine for apathy and indifference is passion. Do you have a passion for mission, for witnessing that we are the body of Christ, when we gather and when we are fed spiritually and bodily in the Eucharist.

The harvest is great - so let's get out there and work - God's mission awaits us.