

## 14<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time

### Learn from me – Following Jesus is cathartic

The word 'cathartic' cropped up a few times during the course of my week. A definition given for it is: 'something which provides psychological relief'. The Greek origin of the word means to 'cleanse or purge'. A cathartic experience is something that gives a renewal and restoration of our emotions, something that gives us a sense of peace and rest.

The weekly online 'lockdown quiz' I've been involved in drew to a close last Sunday night and one of my fellow participants said that he'll miss it as he found it 'cathartic'. Given some of my answers, I'm not sure if that's how I'd describe it!

I've always enjoyed walking and I've done a lot of this over these last 3 months. This *is* certainly cathartic for me. I've been fortunate to have walked sections of the Camino in Spain and the Via Francigena in Italy and now I find myself in a beautiful area here in Mid-Argyll with many great walking routes and forestry trails. And although I haven't been overly adventurous yet, knowing that I can close the door of the house, put on my audiobook and knowing it will take me exactly an hour and a half to walk along the Crinan Canal to Cairnbaan and back, is for me a completely cathartic experience – if perhaps mixed in with a bit of OCD!

It was while listening to my current audiobook on my walk that I heard 'cathartic' being used for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> time in my week. The book is called 'The Girl on the Train' and in it the main character describes her train journey to work as being cathartic while her flatmate says cleaning her flat every Saturday morning is for her 'cathartic.'

A phone call with a friend, a hot drink on a wet day, reading, gradening, fishing - whatever it is that gives us this sense of peace, renewal and decluttering is what gives us this cathartic experience. It puts us in the right frame of mind.

### **Shoulder my yoke and Learn from Me**

As Catholics, as people of faith, the thing that primarily puts us in the right frame of mind is following Jesus and learning from him.

When Jesus says today *'shoulder my yoke and learn from me'* he's inviting us into a cathartic experience - to peace and rest despite the difficulties of life.

### **Lifelong Learning**

To learn from Jesus means lifelong learning.

Christ's whole life is a mystery – his birth and upbringing in poverty, his healings, his death and resurrection. To say we know and understand it all, to say we 'get it' is to not really get it at all. He continually asks us to learn from how his life unfolded, how he treated others and to try to imitate him.

Christ and life always surprises us. To be a follower of Christ is to be open to the surprise, to be child-like and to have a thirst to continue to learn more.

### **Relationships**

And one of the main things Jesus wishes to teach us is to give priority to the heart and to the engage in human relationships over purely external or ritualistic acts.

This means talking risks because people will let us down and we will let people down, things can get messy and we will fall short of loving God the way we should many times.

But it's only in such human experiences, in the stuff of life, with its failures, disappointments and tears along with its successes, joys and laughter; in giving priority to the heart, that we find our souls.

God wanted to emphasise that the concept of relationship is so important to him that he sent his Son to live on earth with us and experience all the things we do.

It put a human face on God, so that we in turn might put God on every human face.

### **Prayer**

We develop an intense personal relationship with Jesus Christ when we take time to pray. Prayer can be added to our list of Cathartic experiences when we take it seriously and devote sufficient time to it.

It's in our prayer where we lay before Jesus all our burdens and he makes those his own, he shares the strain of all that weighs us down. When we make prayer part of our daily routine, our relationship with Jesus deepens and we gradually begin to see how he gives us rest. While prayer doesn't take all our worries away and solve all our problems immediately, with perseverance, it reveals to us deep insights, fresh understanding and reason to hope.

Jesus shows us the direction we must take with whatever is on our mind, whatever is essential in our life at this moment in order to find rest for our souls. This is a blessing that he is waiting to give to all of us if we're willing to enter into a relationship with him in prayer.

## **The Yoke**

Jesus tells us his yoke is easy. His interpretation and re-working of the law is easier in that it's centred on the essentials – love of God and of neighbour – it is something which we can all do now, it's immediate.

But of course, the paradox is that this makes it at the same time more difficult because the demands of loving God and of neighbour are inexhaustible. We can never say we're completely there. We are always in a position to love more.

In learning from Jesus, in entering into a prayerful relationship with him, he shows us how we strengthen our ties with God and neighbour.

In this he offers us a cathartic experience while also helping us to shoulder the responsibilities and the burdens that these bring.