

4th Sunday of Easter

21st April 2013

Sung Mass in The Parish Church of St. Michael, Louth
Holy Communion in The Chapel of Holy Trinity, Louth

Glimpsing God in all we do

Over the course of Lent over 40 people from across the parish gathered with to reflect on The Summary of the Law – that founding statement of our faith given to us by Jesus: that we are to worship God and love our neighbour. I thank everyone who joined one of those sessions – sometimes overcoming their own apprehensions to do so – as they provided a wonderful insight into people’s faith. As with any set of meetings, each one was different, and some sessions worked better than others (something for me to learn from in the future) But one aspect in particular was hugely important to me – people were asked to respond to their hopes and fears for the life of the Church in the coming years. These responses, together with those of the people you elect to sit on the PCC, will be a key source for discussions by both the Ministry Team and PCC in the coming months. So thank you to all who joined one of those sessions – and please can I encourage all of you to join these conversations as they take place.

But as we consider today’s Gospel Reading I would like to return to The Summary of the Law – that Jesus calls us to Worship God with all our heart, and love our neighbour. One of the things that strikes me about that core statement of our faith is that it is so easy to misunderstand. It is so easy to see those two things as being two separate requirements – that we worship God and serve our neighbour. One of the ways that we can misunderstand it is to see that one or other of those elements is more significant than the other – that we are to devote ourselves to worshipping God with no relation to the wider world, or that we are to serve our neighbour but without grounding this in our own relationship to the transcendent God.

Even when we do acknowledge that both elements are important it is all too easy to see what we do in church – what we are doing now – as ‘worship’, and what we do the rest of the time as ‘service’.

But the truth is that we are called by Jesus to worship God in all we do, and love our neighbour at all times. So as we sit here and place our hearts, minds and souls before God we are called to do so with the needs of our neighbours in our hearts, and as we walk through God’s world we are called to see God’s presence in everything that we do.

This takes us back to our Gospel Reading where Jesus reveals this same misunderstanding in the question that the Jews ask of him as he walks within the portico of Solomon. They ask for Jesus to say that he is the Christ – the chosen one of God – and he replies that the answer lies not in words but in recognising God in the works Jesus has done. Here there is no need to ask the question for the presence of God – Jesus’ worship of him – is not something that is contained in acts of particular piety, but it is something that permeates all he does. So if God is present in the things he does – the Jews can see the answer for themselves. And then, typically of the way John retells these events, Jesus’ does say something – something that takes things much, much further – he says that God’s work is evident in all he does because he is at one with the Father.

So as we strive to live out Jesus’ command to us – to worship God and love our neighbour – let us seek to bring the needs of all we know before God as we worship him here, and let us seek to find God in all that we do. And let us pray that in our lives, in our worship of God and service of our neighbour we might glimpse God in those we meet, and others might glimpse the love of Christ in all we do.