

2020 17TH SUNDAY

During the week I celebrated Mass for a Vertical Group at Campion College. The Gospel of the Day was that occasion, early in Jesus' Ministry, when Mary, Jesus' Mother, and some of Jesus' relations, fearful that Jesus' preaching would bring about His execution, came to persuade Him to return home to Nazareth and to give up His very dangerous public life.

Jesus told them, quite bluntly, that He could not do this because above everything else, He had a duty to do the Will of His Father in Heaven. From the moment of His Baptism, when the Holy Spirit had rested upon Him, He had known that it was His Father's Will for Him to do His utmost to bring to birth the Kingdom of heaven on Earth- no matter the personal danger.

I then asked the two teachers who were accompanying the students: In your heart of hearts, what do you believe God's Will to be for you. One, Cheree, simply answered: "To be a teacher." The other, Sarah, answered: "To be a mother." Both were heart-felt answers. To be a teacher- inspiring young people to be the very best persons they can be- is a true calling from God. To be a loving mother- to give one's life for your children, caring for them, encouraging them, nurturing them- is likewise a true calling from God.

Sensing God's call for her to be a teacher, Cheree would have asked - What do I need to do to be an outstanding teacher? And Sarah would have asked: What do I need to do to be a wonderful mother? It is the same question that King Solomon pondered on as a newly crowned king. He knew he needed wisdom and prayed to God: "You have made your servant king. But I am a very young man, unskilled in leadership. Give your servant a heart to understand how to discern between good and evil. Give your servant wisdom."

A teacher needs knowledge. It means going to University and studying hard. It means giving up on an exciting social life during the school term. There are assignments to mark, lessons to prepare, meetings to attend. It is dedication.

And likewise to be a wonderful mother means being totally focussed upon one's husband and the children- living one's life unselfishly-for them.

Once we know what God's Will is for us- whether it be as a teacher, a mother, a dentist, a priest- this must become the focus of our lives, the pearl of great price for which we sacrifice virtually everything else.

But for all of us, even more fundamental than being the best teacher, mother, priest, dentist or farmer we can be, is God's Call for us to come into a relationship of love with the Lord Jesus. Underpinning everything in life, must be our belief that God is reaching out to us and asking for our love.

For us, a relationship of love with Jesus, is the treasure to be sought before all else. It is the fine pearl which we sacrifice everything to gain. In Christ is the fullness of truth, of goodness and beauty. Within a love relationship with Him, true happiness is to be found.

Young people who have found Christ will have a passion for life. They will live ethically and work to bring about social justice. They will be open to saying Yes to voluntary work in service of the poor and the needy. They will challenge their Governments to create laws which enhance the common good. Laws, for example, which will prevent the squandering of the world's mineral and ocean resources in order to fuel insatiable consumption.

Belief in Christ is the path to wisdom- the wisdom sought by Solomon and by all people of good will.

I cannot imagine not being a Christian. My whole perception of who I am, why I am, the very meaning and purpose of my life, are all founded on my belief that Jesus abides in me and loves me limitlessly. Without Jesus my life would be empty and meaningless. Doing my best to respond to Jesus' love, gives me a reason to live.

It is my belief that people who have never heard of Christ are an easy prey to hopelessness. And when life is felt to be meaningless, the fruits are apathy, anger and lawlessness. There is something totally sinister in the widely held belief that God is a myth and that there is no such thing as doing God's Will.

The pearl of great price, then, is to live in harmony with God's Will. We have been created by God in love and called into a love relationship with God's very Self, the Lord Jesus. Alongside this is God's call for us love our brothers and sisters with all the energy of our souls- whether it be as a mother or a teacher, a truck driver or a fruit-picker, a student or a resident in a Retirement Home.