

## 22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday (A)

- How do you measure success in life? What is life without success?
- We all want our lives to be measured by some degree of success – most of us would want to leave some mark on the world – some positive footprint that I've been here & I've made a good difference in the world for my being here.
- But then - how do you really measure success in life?
- There are courses for which people pay big cash that advertise how participants are guaranteed success in business or in advancing their investment portfolio if they follow the recommendations.
- Obviously we need to know **what** to pursue & in **what order of importance** – priorities - in order to make our lives truly successful.
- Here are some things that people pursue to achieve a successful life: money, fame, power, worldly importance, happiness, contentment, satisfaction, good health, good relationships.
- Some of these are fine & none are necessarily wrong in themselves, the question is **how** do we get there, & if people think that things external to themselves ensures their success & makes them happy, then they are bound to be disappointed.
- Last week the disciples were asked the question by Jesus – "*Who do you say that I am?*" & it was Peter who answered – "*You are the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of the living God*".
- They had been around Jesus long enough to experience his 'success' in the ways he healed people, in the ways he touched their lives as no one else did & the ways he spoke with authority captured the hearts of people.
- Jesus was obviously a success that proved that he wasn't like anyone else, so joining with him would mean that their lives would also be successful – **or** so Peter thought.
- But Jesus really puts a spanner in the works of Peter's plan & vision, because now Jesus foretells what will happen to him in the near future & it certainly isn't sweet, nor a prediction of anything resembling success, & Peter does not want to go down that track, neither for himself or for Jesus – after all, he has so far proven himself to be a success story.
- Jesus saw his mission as being faithful to his Father's will, that he was to free people from all that would hinder them to be fully alive, & he was determined that he would not stop at anything that would compromise extending his Father's love for people.
- This, of course, troubled the authorities of his time who had vested interests in maintaining things as they were & so he was crucified in order to eliminate his meddling.

- Jesus lived & died, not for his own sake, but for the sake of strengthening people's relationship with God.
- We too, like Peter need to reassess what success is in God's eyes, & consequently, what can elicit true happiness in our own lives & that it is different from the ways we can sometimes measure success.
- And what God calls us to is to lift people up to know their worth & to free them to live life more fully.
- We are called to do that for people around us in our families & workplaces, at school, by the ways we treat them with dignity & respect.
- As individuals & as a nation we are called by God not to be mean-hearted.
- To do that, we are asked to take on the mind & heart of Jesus, as Peter was asked to do in today's Gospel.
- Paul in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading exhorts us to reject the standards of the world.
- That's is a very difficult path to follow, especially when it seems that those who conform to the standards of the world in this age prosper.
- Following Christ can place barriers between ourselves and others.
- If we no longer share their values & their interests, we may feel alienated.
- We need to remember that Jesus' message antagonised many people in his own day; so those who proclaim the same Gospel message in their own contexts need to be prepared for a similar reaction.
- Knowing things about Jesus doesn't make us real Christian, it is about being in relationship with him.
- The Eucharist is the primary means by which we are brought into relationship with Jesus & through which we grow in that relationship.
- The Eucharist feeds us with the very life of Jesus that we might become like him - this food which doesn't do much to feed us physically but feeds our inner selves.
- There is a deep inner self that we have that really makes us unique & who we are – as different from anyone else.
- It's that inner self, the unique part of me that can't be fed by ordinary foods.
- For that inner self to grow, it needs to be nourished by the One who makes us unique – the One who creates us to resemble Him in unique ways. That inner self can only grow if I am close to God.
- The food that enables our inner selves to grow is the very life of Jesus – his spirit which we receive & share in the Eucharist.
- That is what the Eucharist is ultimately about – God's great desire to pour out his love for us by living within us, strengthening us & enabling us to live life to the fullest so that we might be the expression of God's care & love for others.
- And in this time when we can't physically receive the Eucharist, what can I do to allow Jesus into my life to nourish me?

- I'd like to conclude with a prayer that I've heard & prayed before, but which I've just come across again now, that speaks to me, as it may to you in these unsure times:

Jesus, my Lord, come to me, comfort me, console me.

Visit the hearts in strange lands yearning for you.

Visit the dying and those who have died without you Jesus.

My Lord, visit also those who persecute you.

Lord Jesus, you are my light in the darkness.

You are my warmth in the cold.

You are my happiness in sorrow.

I asked for strength that I might achieve;

I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.

I asked for health that I might do greater things;

I was given infirmity that I might do better things.

I asked for riches that I might be happy; I was given poverty that I might be wise.

I asked for power that I might have the praise of others;

I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.

I asked for all things that I might enjoy life;

I was given life that I might enjoy all things.

I received nothing I had asked for, but everything that I had hoped for.

Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered;

I am, amongst all people, most richly blessed.