Reflection for 19th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B

As of Monday, we will see a number of restrictions lifted that we have had to live with when celebrating Mass and other liturgies in the Church. After almost a year and half, there is a feeling that we may be able to return to some sort of normality as we can once again open the doors of the Church albeit with some restrictions still in place. This is the beginning of life in the post-pandemic church where it will be different. The relationship between Church, society and faith is now seen in a different light. Churches throughout the world have had to respond to the pandemic. Many have seen it as an opportunity to engage with their parish communities in a different and new way. Many people have faced hardships, struggles and difficulties that few would have thought possible but have nevertheless had to deal with the implications of it in their lives. As cities begin to open up, there is also the step into the unknown of what the future might look like. Will cities be as busy as they once were? Will people continue to work from home? What impact will it have on the hospitality sector from the upmarket restaurant to the coffee shop that relied so much on people having a break from the office and picking up a coffee on their way? Do people feel comfortable about taking the bus or the train or would they rather just walk or take their own car? In a similar way, we could have the same questions about the Church, its relevance to people's lives and how does it meet them at the crossroad of life, the street corner or the marketplace? There is no pre-prepared answer to these questions. We are going to have to be patient as we look to the future with a renewed hope and sense of purpose. Therefore, as a focus for our reflection this week, let us first take these words from Pope Francis as the Church continues to reflect on the Eucharist in the liturgy of the Word as the Church opens the doors to Christ.

"The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door. There are other doors that should not be closed either. Everyone can share in some way in the life of the Church; everyone can be part of the community, nor should the doors of the sacraments be closed for simply any reason. This is especially true of the sacrament which is itself "the door": baptism. The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness. Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems." Pope Francis, **"Evangelii Gaudium,"** paragraph 47

Last Friday, the world celebrated 76th Anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a poignant reminder to us of a fragile world. Let us not forget these moving words of Fr. Pedro Arrupe SJ as he recalled the events of that fateful day, twenty-five years later.

"The roof tiles, bits of glass, and beams had scarcely ceased falling and the deafening roar died away, when I rose from the ground and saw before me the wall clock still hanging in its place but motionless. Its pendulum seemed nailed down. It was ten minutes past eight.
For me that silent and motionless clock has been a symbol. The explosion of the first atomic bomb has become a para-historical phenomenon. It is not a memory, it is perpetual experience, outside history which does not pass with the ticking of the clock. The pendulum stopped and Hiroshima has remained engraved on my mind. It has no relation with time. It belongs to a motionless eternity."

Pedro Arrupe, SJ, **"Essential Writings, Modern Spiritual Masters Series,"** pages 188