

Reflection for 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B

The sudden and untimely death of our Archbishop Philip Tartaglia as Archbishop on the Feast of St. Mungo has left the Archdiocese stunned at his unexpected loss. Tributes have been paid throughout on television, radio and on social media as the Archdiocese come to terms with his loss. He was parish priest of St. Mary's 1995-2004. Although we have returned to ordinary time of the Church's liturgical year, we equally find ourselves living out our faith in an extraordinary way. This week sees Joe Biden installed as the next president of the United States of America. A new chapter in history and a new political force on the world stage. The world is anything but silent as the impact of the pandemic continues across the world.

Noise, chaos and a sense of instability are all ways that we can be dragged down. People do need something to hope in, even if it is simply a sense to think that spring will be on the horizon. The weather is unpredictable; the hours of darkness continue to be long. A sense of order and stability can be lacking in peoples' lives as they struggle daily to try and see light at the end of the tunnel. Home schooling, learning online, working from home are now the new normal which a year ago was unthinkable. A new world has emerged, and a new language has been spoken. Care home residents, front line key workers and other groups have started to receive the vaccine. There is, thankfully, a glimmer of light beginning to shine through the apparent darkness. We are all conscious of peoples' sense of dignity and worth that should be maintained and respected at this time. It is easy in the chaos and uncertainty for these things to be forgotten. Keeping in touch with each other has never been so important as we all try to meet the challenges of the day. It is not easy for us to keep being positive as we continue to see the impact of the pandemic in different parts of the world. Therefore, a positive frame of mind will be good for everyone. Perhaps, these words of Peter Morris, a priest of the Redemptorist Order, might just keep the flame of faith alive in our hearts and minds.

"Though some may not identify themselves as workaholics, they may relate with the frantic pursuit of activity, of keeping busy. Often asked how things are going, people will respond, "I'm keeping busy." The Benedictine spiritual writer, Fr. Christopher Jamison OSB, identified this tendency as a sin of pride. He identified this sin – that felled Satan- in his book "Finding Happiness," as maintaining "self-importance." Keeping busy is a way of showing ourselves that we are real linchpins of our little world, which leaves God out of the picture, or at best pushes God to the side. Jamison suggests the antidote to pride is: "Wasting time creatively, such as playing with our children or by giving time to those who at the material level give nothing back, such as visiting the sick or the lonely...We know that such "wasted time" makes us happier than any amount of "being busy". The reason is that these are acts of loving kindness that come from a pure heart."

It may be a good idea to ask ourselves if our work or our busyness contributes to our sense of dignity as a human person. In his encyclical on human work, Pope St. John Paul II expressed the goodness of work in this way:

"It is not only good in the sense that it is useful or something to enjoy; it is also good as being something worthy, that is to say, something that corresponds to man's dignity, that expresses this dignity and increases it."

There is something wrong going on if, by our work or busy lifestyle, our human life becomes stunted in some way. We are robbing ourselves, or perhaps we are being robbed, of our humanity. Yes, work is supposed to give us a sense of dignity and the knowledge that we are contributing positively in some way to society at large. Yet when work becomes the end in itself – when it has us in its vice – our freedom has been diminished.

Peter Morris, "Christian Playfulness: recreation in the spiritual life," pages 20/21