

*Take
possession
of the Land
that the
Lord the
God of your
fathers is
giving you*



Eucharist by Fr Marko Rupnik

(The title of this resource is a line from Sunday's First Reading from Deuteronomy 4:1 - we are, in responding to this invitation from Bishop Denis being invited to, in a real manner, take possession of the land the Lord has given us)

An Invitation from Bishop Denis to Reflect and Respond

On Sunday, August 29, when preaching on the Gospel of the day in The Capuchin Friday in Kilkenny Bishop Denis issued an invitation to parish teams, liturgy groups, Parish Pastoral Councils and to all the people of the Diocese: to reflect and share with him their thoughts and ideas on how people can be encouraged and welcomed back to regular Sunday worship.

In this short resource, we are sharing that Gospel passage and the homily, together with some guiding steps and questions that might support a local conversation in the parish.

A Pathway for Local Reflection and Conversations

1. Take a moment to still yourself and welcome God in your midst. Ask God to open your heart and your mind to hear God's wisdom and prompting, as you share and listen to one another in this time together.
2. Read the Gospel passage and the homily preached by Bishop Denis.
3. Read a second time, underlining key sentences.
4. Share among those gathered the key sentences people have chosen and tease out together the practical implications of what God is calling you to do in what is being highlighted. What are you saying? What does/might this look like in your parish?
5. In light of this sharing, can you name what you are inviting people back to when you speak of returning to regular worship?
6. Are there concrete steps the parish can begin to take to make the Sunday celebration more attractive and welcoming for those already coming and those still to return?
7. Are there concrete steps the parish can take to continue to support families - as a domestic church - while drawing them closer to the life of the parish community?
8. From your conversation, what thoughts/ideas/suggestions would you like to share with Bishop Denis and with the people, religious and priests of the Diocese who will reflect on these responses.

**Responses can be forwarded by post to
Most Reverend Denis Nulty, Apostolic Administrator,
Ossory, Diocesan Office, James' Street, Kilkenny
or email to:
bishop@ossory.ie**

You put aside the commandment of God, to cling to human traditions

The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered round Jesus, and they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them. For the Pharisees, and the Jews in general, follow the tradition of the elders and never eat without washing their arms as far as the elbow; and on returning from the market place they never eat without first sprinkling themselves. There are also many other observances which have been handed down to them concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes. So these Pharisees and scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?' He answered, 'It was of you hypocrites that Isaiah so rightly prophesied in this passage of scripture:

This people honours me only with lip-service,
while their hearts are far from me.
The worship they offer me is worthless,
the doctrines they teach are only human regulations.

You put aside the commandment of God to cling to human traditions.' He called the people to him again and said, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand. Nothing that goes into a man from outside can make him unclean; it is the things that come out of a man that make him unclean. For it is from within, from men's hearts, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within and make a man unclean.'



Homily of Bishop Denis Nulty

Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – Year B

29.08.21, 12 noon: Capuchin Friary, Kilkenny

The letter of St. James is a powerful bridging text to our gospel from St. Mark this Sunday. You can have all the ritual and regulation you like, but if the orphan and the widow are neglected, forget it! And I think it works both ways – being aware of the orphan and the widow with no reference to our baptismal calling is very much a sense of being good, being thoughtful, being kind – but it develops no further than that. Faith nourished out of our baptismal responsibility pushes us beyond ourselves. Ritual offers us an opportunity to meet our God. Regulations give us a framework to avail of that opportunity. Too many miss both ritual and regulation and in doing so suggest: “sure I’m doing no one any harm!” But how much good am I really doing them?

The word hypocrite is used to describe the Pharisees in Mark’s text. Hypocrite comes from the Greek verb “to act”, to play our part in one of the great Greek drama’s. Another word I like is ‘pretender’. As Freddie Mercury of the rock group Queen might sing “Oh, Yes, I’m the great pretender” – we all are, if the truth be known, pretenders! We may look something, we may act some way ... but what are we really like inside? The human being is capable of such great love and equally such great aggression, none of us are immune to either. What we are witnessing in recent days and hours in Kabul is a stark reminder of the potential of evil that lies beneath the surface, too many surfaces.

History reminds us the Capuchins came here to the marble city in 1643 after their house in Mullingar had been burned down. After ordination in 1988 I was privileged to spend my first ten years as a priest in Mullingar. The Capuchin presence long gone by then. It was Francis Nugent, a Walshestown man, a native of Mullingar parish, who was the one to petition the Pope of the day (Pope Paul V) to sanction a Capuchin foundation in Ireland. One of the earliest foundations was my native village of Slane in County Meath established by Francis himself in 1631, Mullingar was founded in 1633, Kilkenny ten years later.

Time passes but memories linger. I am also privileged to have a Capuchin presence in Carlow, established in the relatively recent past of 1977 in a former building that once housed a bank. Bishop Patrick Lennon, one of my predecessors, who invited the Capuchins to Carlow reminded all at the opening ceremony, that in effect the ceremony was the conversion of what once was a “temple of Mammon into a temple of God” ! Wherever the Capuchins minister both orphan and widow are assured of a welcome.

The Capuchins have through the centuries bravely taken possession of the land that they have been given by the Lord to establish their presence. We are invited in a very real way to take possession of the land the Lord has given us. I think the pandemic has resulted in all of us losing a little of the grip on



what is sacred in our lives. I certainly have concerns that there are some who have yet to make the return to public worship simply because Mass has slipped off their radar. When a prudent decision was made at the beginning of this pandemic to remove the Sunday obligation, it gave permission in some ways for these people to stop attending and other attractions became the focus of their weekend. There is no anger there, no walking away, just slipping out of habit and when it happens, it's hard to reintroduce a practice, simply put it's hard to start again.

The solution is not in my opinion to reintroduce the obligation. That would be a missed opportunity. It's a return to understanding our baptismal calling and the responsibility that comes out of that calling. Teaching people, reminding people, reeducating people why Sunday is so special that they will want to go to Mass rather than feel compelled to attend Mass is key. A Sunday without giving God time is a Sunday less well spent, is a Sunday yet again where we have failed to take possession of the land, the space, the holy ground God is offering us. During the depths of the pandemic when we had no public worship, there was much talk about Eucharistic starvation, as if the Eucharist was a prize to be possessed rather than a missionary mandate to go out from Mass and heal the sick, bandage the wounded, welcome the stranger, including the orphan and widow.

We have met the Lord in our little domestic churches; we choose to come to church on Sunday, in the awareness that we can meet Him at home, but in church we meet with and are supported by the gathering of a faithfilled people. In receiving Eucharist we become His body – we become what we receive. When there are some people missing, that body is incomplete.

I invite all our parishes to reflect in the month of September on how the parish can be supported to be more welcoming to those who are slower to return to regular worship – our brothers, our sisters, our sons, our daughters, our grandchildren, our friends. I invite you to write to me or email me your thoughts, your ideas. Blessings and thanks to all of you who have returned and to the many who continue to tune in on our webcams. And blessings on the Capuchin presence here in Kilkenny since 1643.

