

Homily for EASTER3C 2019

***The one who has a why to live for can
bear almost any how***

When he pronounced that *God is dead*; Frederick Nietzsche became the poster boy for a mood that still holds sway for many of our contemporaries more than a hundred years later.

What to believe, whether to believe and how to believe are very real questions but some are all too ready to claim that the answers to such questions are of little significance.

Even so, the same questions keep surfacing in different guises and according to different circumstances; most frequently when we witness or encounter human suffering, including our own.

Aware of our own powerlessness in the face of these things it is tempting to conclude that life is a mere lottery, close down our expectations, protect ourselves from too much anguish, deny what is happening, and simply hope for the best.

I think Peter was tempted in this way. For, when the chips were down, and however much he admired Jesus, he denied knowing him out of fear for his own safety. Interrogated about his personal association with Jesus after his arrest, he responded with lies. He was untrue to Jesus, untrue to the facts and untrue to what lay within his own heart.

And after the crucifixion Peter was the first to suggest to the others that they return to their previous way of life. They resumed their trade as fishermen; albeit

with no success, until that is, they once more respond to the guidance of a voice they heard but didn't immediately recognise.

And when they heeded his advice they netted an unprecedented catch, some of which became the food they shared in their shoreline breakfast. As they ate, relationships were re-established and familiar rituals regained meaningful significance.

After the meal it was Peter's turn once more, not to ask questions but to answer them. But he was rather slow on the uptake and the same question had to be put three times: *Peter, do you love me?*

This time, with a great deal of prompting he was able to acknowledge what his

heart really knew to be true; that love conquers fear, and that Jesus held a significance he could no longer deny.

With his love for Christ now out in the open he was ready to take responsibility for the welfare of other believers. He was also better equipped to deal with any personal disappointments, suffering and loss of control that lay ahead. He had discovered that his own life had a meaning whatever came his way. He could live with real faith in the face of all life's questions.

For, to quote a less familiar insight of Frederick Nietzsche:

The one who has a why to live for can bear almost any how.

Like Peter we can come to recognise that even small responses the love we receive from Christ unlock our awareness that God's love is the bedrock that gives meaning to our lives. This can equip us to face up to anything that awaits us.

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