

26th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

St. Luke 16:19-31

Last Thursday, following the two requiem Masses prayed for Her Majesty The Queen, I visited Padre Pio Parish at Glenmore Park, where I had been invited to say Mass and to deliver the homily as they began their parish feast day celebrations in honour of the feast of Padre Pio.

I spoke of Padre Pio's understanding of the drama of our faith—the drama of the sacrifice of the Mass and of the Sacraments.

Unfortunately, so many today fail to recognise the drama of our faith and so, for them, the Church and the Sacraments become nothing more than a backdrop to particular events of their life, and are no more than a precursor to a party or some social event. But for those of faith, the drama of the sacrifice of the Mass and the grace of the Sacraments are the be all and end all in themselves, for they reveal the unbounded love of God which brings each man and woman to the fulfillment of their humanity—a humanity created in the image and likeness of God.

Today, our world is overwhelmed by activism and secularisation. The Church is torn asunder, faith is ridiculed and God is mocked. Even Christ Himself is often portrayed as nothing more than a good example, a nice guy and a sort of role model. The drama of our faith is lost. And with that, we lose our way.

It is why the Saints are so important to us. These men and women who lived their lives for He who gave His life show to us that we are transcendent beings. If we live our life grounded in the world, we will probably be safe and, to be honest, probably quite happy, because we will be accepted and never confronted. When Christ was lifted up from this world, He knew a suffering that no man had ever known before or would ever know again. But it was only

because of the suffering of being lifted up from this world that He came to know the Resurrection. We, too, must accept that we must be lifted up from this world, and yes, to bear the suffering that comes from being alienated from a world that itself has alienated itself from God, if we are ever to come to the fulfillment of our humanity, and to finally see that we are made in the image and likeness of God and so experience the beatific vision—to see God face to face.

Padre Pio knew that we cannot escape pain and suffering. It is a part of the fallen nature of humanity and the world. And he knew that God Himself did not seek to escape pain and suffering but rather entered into the humanity of this fallen world and bore the marks on His own body. Today our world, our society, says that we should have whatever we want, whenever we want and however we want. We should never deny ourselves anything because, as so many TV commercials tell us, “we’re worth it”. So now the only sin left is the sin of denying someone what they want. And so the transcendent fulfillment of humanity is left unfulfilled and glory is sought not in the heavens but in the dust of the earth. We keep our heads down and see nothing more than the gutter and try to pretend that it is beautiful. And if we ever catch a glimpse of a reflection of the heavens, we do everything we can to hide our eyes away because the truth of what we are and who we are created to be is all too much. We hide from confronting ourselves. But, as Padre Pio said, “The life of a Christian is nothing but a perpetual struggle against self; there is no flowering of the soul to the beauty of its perfection except at the price of pain”.

If you are to be men and women of God, then you must enter into the great drama of our faith. Never run from it or let it be nothing more than a backdrop to your lives. Hold on to it and see that the darkness of suffering is nothing more than a tunnel, but a tunnel which we must travel through if we are ever to reach the glorious and un-dimmable light at the end which is the salvation of Our Lord.