

Reflection for Thursday 16th July 2020

'Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and those who welcome me welcome the one who sent me.' Matthew 10: 40

It's wonderful have Holy Mass celebrated publicly again in the church on Wednesdays and Sundays. It's a great blessing that the sacramental channels of grace are once more flowing into the souls of those who can attend and receive Our Lord in Holy Communion. This is what we have been deprived of over the last 3 or 4 months. If you haven't missed it I wonder whether you understand the essential nature of the Incarnation, when God humbled himself to share in our humanity so that we might share His divinity, as the priest or deacon says when he pours water into the chalice at the preparation of the gifts. Christianity is an incarnational religion which makes holy the ordinary everyday things of this world, bread, wine, water, oil etc and changes them into channels of sanctifying grace.

There are however some restrictions within the church relating to social distancing and lack of contact with each other, not necessarily a bad thing in themselves and in the wearing of face coverings. I was very interested to watch a homily from an American priest, Fr Jonathan Meyer who preached on wearing a mask, not as a precaution against transmitting the virus, but in terms of wearing the mask of the face of Jesus.

He wanted to take the debate of whether to wear a mask a whole step further. It's not a question of wearing a mask it's more a question of the 'becoming' a mask. In a certain sense we are called, by our baptism, to become a mask. In the Gospel passage above Jesus tells us, whoever receives you receives me. This means that wherever we go, maybe to someone's house, a social occasion, to our workplace or in the shops, who are people really receiving when they see us. Jesus. If we truly want to live out our Christian vocation to bring Christ to the world we do not lose our identity by becoming Christ to others but we are called to wear a mask and that mask is the face of Christ.

Even Jesus Himself, in a certain sense, was a mask, a mask of the Father. He says, '*...whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me.*' And who sent Jesus? The Father. Jesus is sometimes referred to as the icon of the Father, the Incarnate Word of God who took on human flesh in a mortal body like ours and became like us in all things except sin. and an icon is a painting or an image which gives us a window into heaven.

So, as followers of Jesus who are trying every day to become more like Him, we are called to wear a mask, the mask of the face of Jesus. Wherever we are Jesus is. What a great responsibility we have. Everything we say, everything we do, the way we treat others, the way we show our love for everyone is judged by how much we are like Jesus, by how effectively we bring Jesus to the world, by how accurately our mask reflects the face of Jesus, because whoever receives you receives me and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me. If ever we are tempted to take off our mask we would be in effect denying Our Lord just like Peter did in the garden of Gethsemane. If we take off our mask it's very easy to say no, I don't know Him, I've never heard of Him.

So, always wear your mask, the face of Christ to others, bearing witness to the faith and He will protect you.

Deacon Kevin

Fr Jonathan Meyer's homilies are available on youtube and are highly recommended

'Don't just wear a mask, BE a mask' Fr Jonathan Meyer

https://youtu.be/tu_KAcU-cqU