

Home Retreat; Saturday 11 May 2024

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“..a week to go to Pentecost..”

..are you almost ready to be inspired by the Holy Spirit to begin to renew the face of your local acre of the world?..& can “she” rely on you?

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- “the world will believe teachers only if they are first witnesses” [ Pope Paul VI ] & everyone of you listening this morning is a teacher of faith..even especially elderly lady who lives on her own, who comes to Mass each Sunday & lives a simple good life is a teacher to rest of us..as she witnesses to the real presence of Christ in her gentleness, prayerfulness, her interest in others in faith & local community, & the unassuming way she shares parts of her life story..she has evidently “been there” & got the t shirt!..renewing face of her local parish & street in which she lives..  
..she speaks & lives her relationship with Christ transparently authentically convincingly & thereby inspires others..  
..”inspires” in-spirits others..the Holy Spirit lives in her & through her in others..
- ..15yrs ago confirmation group weekend here; 30 14/15yr olds & 8 catechists had been on a parish preparation course for four months & came here for weekend to fine tune ready for their Confirmation in three weeks time..a Pentecost moment..it became clear 26 of them wanted to be here & 4 didn’t as the 4 misbehaved “lads being lads”.. on Sat teatime we had confessions I had help from 4 other monks & steady flow of penitents..until, in doorway coming to see me, was one of 4..my heart sank “why me? why couldn’t he have gone to one of others?” he sauntered in & sat down..I was angry at him for disruption so far, & all I could think to say was “how do you feel about being here?” I waited for expletives disdain & he said “I’m glad I came” & I melted & could have wept..I had judged him on his t shirt, his dismissive attitude, his look of “this is all child’s play” & when he got into what he perceived as safe space, where he could take off his mask, he spoke his truth..the Holy Spirit spoke from him through him to me..a kairos moment [ divine moment in chronos human time ] where he inspired me..  
..a lad undoubtedly in relationship with Christ in his brief moment of authenticity & truth..
- We begin weekend Friday evg with question;”tell me about your parish”..flip chart I record every phrase word; so many, I make two columns on the pages..might be 42 offerings from colour of sanctuary carpet to meals for elderly on Wednesdays..then invite them to look carefully at two columns & tell me why they think I have made two lists..soon notice first column is all about the Church building; second column describes what is done in Church & beyond..some groups put 30 of 42 in buildings list, another group 5 in buildings list & 37 in what is done list..  
..& now I know how much work we have to do together in next five sessions..the Body of Christ at its best lives/loves/serves people & is less interested in whether Church flowers look as if they came from an exclusive florist or from Morrisons..the best by the way are often from Morrisons!..

- ..these 30 young disciples are the Body of Christ, whether they go to Church every Sunday or not..I never ask them..but will suggest to them at some stage that maybe 8 of the 30 go to Mass regularly & once they have been Confirmed with Holy Spirit that might drop to 5 out of 30..however the Holy Spirit doesn't come to reward perfect attendance, or those who come with gritted teeth because Mum says so..but to those who come as they are to meet the real Jesus..

..a Jesus who asks them two questions..

..are you loving?..do you serve little people? [ the heart of the gospel message ]
- I ask real questions; "why are you being Confirmed?" why now?..why be a Catholic? why not walk your golden labrador on Sun morning & talk with God then?

..& they melt & come out with real answers..

..how many of you have said you want to be Confirmed?..sheepishly 30 hands go up & I tell them I will ask again on Sun after lunch just before you leave for home..& by then, having got to know themselves & their real relationship with a real Jesus, perhaps 4 or 5 will go home to tell parents they want to delay..to pray more about it.. & then decide..brilliant!..
- ..we don't look at Holy Spirit we go into Holy Spirit..pneuma "the breath of God" of experience of cradling a baby gently lovingly & feeling warm breath of baby on your arm..God's favourite moment cradling us.."apple of my eye..light of my life"..I love you..I will do anything for you..the one who asks always receives"..

divine life breathed into us over us to bring us to life "inspired in-spirited" ..melts warms encourages forgives congratulates affirms empowers..

pneuma; pneumatic pneumonia

"which is hardest..a breath of fresh air or a concrete road?..a non-question..

..take fresh air compress it..a pneumatic drill..& it breaks up concrete..take a deep breath of your love in Holy Spirit & you can break open even the hardest of hearts..

..forgiveness..

pneuma the third person of Trinity;

  - the Father the architect [ imagines dreams of us ]
  - the Son the builder [ brings us to life with our parents;works with among us ]
  - the Holy Spirit [ the caretaker..cleans mends maintains improves ]

hokmah feminine dimension of Trinity; intimacy passion energy soothes heals
- we talk about prayer simply as "relationship" St John Vianney "I look at him he looks at me & we are happy in each others company"

Bishop John Crowley at Conf Mass Driffield; when he..a Bishop..can't pray!

"I can't..but we can"

Herbert von Karajan Conductor of Berlin Philharmonic; two essentials to get place;

"can you play your instrument?..& vitally "can you play in tune with others?"
- we talk about their choice of Confirmation name; one boy chose "Michael"

"because my Grandad is called Michael & I would like to grow up to be as good a Catholic as my Grandad"

- as they warm to weekend to Holy Spirit & me I ask them to compile in groups some questions for me..[ questions inspired by Holy Spirit ]

  - ..is heaven just a state of mind or is it real?
  - ..why did Jesus come to earth 2000yrs ago & not now?
  - ..deep down do you believe in God?
  - ..have you ever sinned..if you have, do you feel guilty?
  - ..do you like milk dark or white chocolate?
  - ..why isn't God stopping wars?
  - ..does God have a best friend?..is he lonely?
  - ..what are your views on LGBTQ+ community & exclusion from the Church?
- they love to hear stories..real gospel stories from real life May 2024 “..& if its not real they won't listen”..

today I would tell them of a gospel story on BBC news last week..told by Fergal Keane..”lapsed” Catholic..BBC correspondent..alcoholic suffers from PTSD.. on station in Kiev 18months ago as mothers & children fought to get on trains leaving fathers behind to fight..”been there & got the t shirt” inspired by Holy Spirit..wears his Catholicism in his heart & in his tears..

“3 wks ago tomorrow at midnight the IDF targeted Hamas fighters & infrastructure in two air stikes in Rafah; 16 children were killed in a housing complex, where Sabreen al-Sakani 8 months pregnant, slept with her husband & 3yr old daughter Malak..all three were killed..Sabreen dug out of rubble & rushed to hospital where her baby was delivered by caesarean section from her dead mother's womb; she weighed 3lbs & was named Sabreen after her dead mother..doctors successfully resuscitated baby using hand pump..a doctor wrote words “the baby of the martyr Sabreen al-Sakani “ on piece of surgical tape & stuck it to her body in incubator..her dead sister wanted her to be called Rouh which means “soul or spirit” in Arabic..Sabreen died 5 days later & is buried next to her mother..

“remain in my love” “I have told you this so that my own joy [ & grief ] may be in you, & your joy [ & grief ] may be complete “remain in my love”

..coincidence or Holy Spirit..”why isn't God stopping wars?” he is trying his best through you & I..as we share the real live gospels of today of Sabreen Malak & Rouh with others..

“come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful, & enkindle in them [ & us ] the fire of your love, & we shall recreate the face of the earth”..
- In my final session with them on Sunday morning I asked catechists to leave us.. first reaction “we can go for a fine walk in the sunshine in valley!” instead I gave them some work; heartwork to bring back for youngsters to take home ..they brought a picture a drawing & explained it to us all..

..a large circle rather like London Eye..across centre of circle it reads “St Mary's Parish St Mary's..& vertically to pick up the letter “r” from parish it reads “service” in four quartiles it reads: “is forever you” “..uniquely valued” “change from spectator to participant” “relationship with God” & round outside of circle it reads

“this is always in motion & you are welcome to get on & off when you need or want to, It belongs to you & you belong to it. God is at the heart & you are always in God’s heart” 27-29 March 2009

- ..& finally I asked them “what next?”  
what will have changed as a result of this weekend , from all you have discovered about yourselves & the Holy Spirit?  
listen caringly proudly tearfully to their beatitudes; their “be-attitudes”

we will see each other more often at Mass  
we become closer to God  
we will pray more  
we have made more friendships from the sessions  
we will take more responsibilities  
just to be happier in general  
we want to be included more in Mass  
we will help our parents more  
it is our responsibility to go to Mass & to pray  
we will listen more  
we will spread the faith  
we hope to be trusted more  
we can & we will live our loves more simply

- ..thank you all for being with me this morning..I got so much out of shaping this Home Retreat for you..it is a joy blessing privilege to be deeply involved with youth ministry here, & to meet Holy Spirit in our young disciples..the breath of God speaks through them believe me..please keep them in your prayers..

their Catechists prayer for you all now as a final prayer..

“this is always in motion & you are welcome to get on & off when you need or want to, It belongs to you & you belong to it. God is at the heart & you are always in God’s heart”

..I hope you enjoy this next precious week, being inspired & inspiring others, as we wait expectantly for Pentecost..

Fr Bede  
11 May 2024

..you can download the full text of this talk &  
..the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit  
..Fergal Keane’s letter to his father Dec 1995  
..the London Eye image

[ blessing ]

# THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

## Wisdom

to help us  
judge in the way  
God does

## Understanding

to help us to  
understand all that God  
has told us

## Right Judgement

to help us to know  
what to do especially in  
difficult situations

## Courage

to give us the  
strength to do what is  
right no matter how hard  
this may be

## Knowledge

to let us see the world  
as it really is

## Awe and Wonder

to give us the power to remember  
and appreciate the greatness of God  
and to help us to want to love God  
and to reject sin

## Reverence

to give us the power  
to love God and each other  
as we should



*Letter to Daniel*

*Cork , December 1995*

*Eamon Patrick Keane died on 5 January 1990*

Behind the bedroom door you are sleeping. I can hear your snores rattling down the stairs to our ruined sitting room. Here among the broken chairs, the overturned Christmas tree, we are preparing to leave you. We are breaking away from you, Da.

Last night you crashed through the silence, dead drunk and spinning in your own wild orbit into another year of dreams. This would be the year of the big break- of Hollywood, you said. Oh, my actor father, time was, time was we swallowed those lines, but no longer.

Before leaving I look into the bedroom to where your hand droops out from under the covers, below it the small empty Powers' bottle, and I say goodbye. And at seven o'clock on New Years Day we push the old Ford Anglia down the driveway, my mother, brother and I. We push because the engine might wake you, and none of us can face a farewell scene. I don't know what the neighbours think, if anything, when they see a woman and two small boys stealing away in the grey, but I don't care, we're heading south with everything we own.

The day I turned twelve, which was four days later, you called to say happy birthday. You were, as I remember, halfway sober, but you didn't say much else, except to ask for my mother who would not come to the phone.

In the background I could hear glasses clinking, voices raised, and you said: "Tell her I love her," and then the change ran out, and I began to understand what made love the saddest word in any language.

Christmas that year you had access to the children. We met in Cork station. I remember your new suit, your embarrassed embrace, the money you pressed into our hands, and the smell of whiskey. We found a taxi and the driver stared at us, throwing his eyes to heaven and shaking his head.

What I see now are many such faces: the waitress at the Old Bridge Café where drinks were spilled; the couple who asked for an autograph and watched your shaking hand struggle to write, before they beat a mortified retreat. And on through pubs and bookmakers' shops to one last café where Elvis was crooning "Love me Tender, Love me Sweet" on an ancient radio. By now nobody was able to speak.

There was a taxi ride home, we children in the back, you in the front, and what lives with me still, always, is the moment of leave-taking, Christmas 1972. Because, as the car drove you away from our lives, I saw through the steamed-up windows that your eyes had become waterfalls.

I was too young to understand what you knew- that we were lost to you, broken away. Down the years we struggled to find one another, but I was growing up and away, and you were drifting closer to darkness. And at the end I gave up writing, gave up calling. I gave up. Until one night my cousin called to say you were gone. It was a few days into the New Year, and your heart simply gave up in a small room in the town in north Kerry, where you were born. I remember that you sent me the collected stories of Raymond Carver for Christmas. I had sent you nothing, not even a card. Now I would send you a thousand, but I have no address.

