

14th Sunday of the year; Fr Marcus' Reflections

Dear friends

This Sunday's first reading begins with the words 'Rejoice heart and soul' and we rejoice that people can go back to Mass again, albeit in a restricted way. Not all churches will be able to comply with the stringent conditions and only limited numbers can be admitted in order to keep the social distance. Nevertheless it's a matter for joyful thanks and hope for the future. Those of us who are regarded as 'clinically vulnerable' are advised to stay at home as much as possible. Sadly, that means I shall not be able to celebrate one of the public Masses at the Cathedral for some time yet, and several of you may not be able to go to Mass either.

But we continue to live in joyful patience and we can rejoice with the prophet Zechariah that the Lord comes in humility and peace. That reading is about 2,300 years old – the word of God coming to us over the centuries. It tells us the kind of person the Saviour would be. What's emphasised is that he would be humble and peaceful. Jesus drives the point home again in today's Gospel when he says 'Learn from me for I am gentle and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls.'

St Paul reminds us (2nd reading) that our interests are to be in things that are spiritual, things that last. Not like human achievements; they disappear eventually, as though they had never been. But the words and works of God endure for ever.

It is very tempting to seek earthly glory and to want people to look up to us. It's not so much to be thought of as learned or clever these days but to be rich and a celebrity. We are encouraged to get things done; worldly success and accomplishment is the watchword. And I know only too well that often we suffer from pride, being unduly pleased with our own skills and achievements.

Of course we must use our abilities to the full, but not to 'live unspiritual lives.' Instead, give thanks and praise to God the giver of all our gifts and skills. We have been chosen by the Lord to live for the love and service of our neighbours, to live with patience and trust, and to live like Jesus with gentleness and a humble heart.

A profound and wonderful quotation to end with. I believe it was written by Henri Nouwen:

'A gentle person treads lightly, listens carefully and touches with reverence.'

Live close to Jesus, and may Mary, our humble and gentle Mother, assist us with her prayers.

Fr Marcus