

COMMUNION

BEING FOR: 'WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?'

Our Parish throughout its 171 years has welcomed different migrant groups. Today it welcomes over 60 different nationalities from all over the world – from every continent. We touch the great challenge and gift of our time – the global phenomenon of migration. There are over 67 million refugees world-wide. What is it to be human, to be Christian in this context? Being human is to be in community, to find ourselves in the journey outwards enabling others to find themselves. To be the neighbour to the other is our identity. The Church is called to be just such a community, a sign of what community, what humanity can become. Being Community is being true to the God who is the Community of Love – being community is the essential ground of Mission, of being for, being the Neighbour. Made in the image and likeness of God we are made for 'Otherness', we are only whole, and we find our centre in the 'Other', the Other at the core our being, the Other in the people, the society, the world around me.

Who do I not want to be in community with? Who do I refuse to be neighbour with? Our favourite parish hymn is 'All are welcome in this place' – we were challenged by the Holy Spirit to ask ourselves 'Who are not welcome in our church?' We rejoiced in our multi-cultural and multi-ethnic make-up; we were used to welcoming the poor, homeless, addicted, the refugee through our doors, not only to serve them, but to be with them, alongside them. But... what about the LBGT+ community? That was God's challenge to us.

Who is God challenging you to welcome, to engage with? Who do you prefer to shun, avoid, judge, condemn? The migrant? the Muslim? the homeless? the mentally ill? the addict? the Gay? the young? the old? What are my fears? Jesus comes to bring a perfect love that will cast out all fear (1John 4: 18). He calls us to 'cross over to the 'other side' to a land that seems dark to us, our Zebulun and Naphtali (Matt 4: 15-16) (that we might bring light, find light!). He left his Nazareth, his familiar 'comfort zone', to 'be with', an Emmanuel, to accompany, serve, protect. Pope Francis talks so much about the gift that the migrant is to us, that we are poorer in humanity if we build walls against the 'stranger'.

Jesus, the Word made Flesh, reveals to us who God is and who we can become, who we truly are at our deepest! He is the Flesh of a God whose love is truly Universal; he is the flesh of a humanity who risks having a heart as large as this God. The Word was made Flesh in the poverty and misery of Nazareth, the homelessness of Bethlehem and the refugee journey to Egypt. This is where and how God entered fully into the human drama, the human condition – in a place of turmoil, oppression, injustice, conflict. The Light of the World came to guide us into the darkness of poverty to discover the true light of love and humanity. We are challenged by this God, this brother who lives the 'Option for the Poor'. The rich, comfortable and powerful will only find their true humanity by reaching out and receiving the gift the poor will give them. The poor, if we live with them, for them, gift us with our true selves. They bring us more light than we bring them! We cannot find ourselves, come into the Light unless we allow the poor to reveal to us our darkness, our poverty of heart.

SCRIPTURE FOR REFLECTION

Luke 10: 29-37

But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' In answer Jesus said,

'A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him and passed by on the other side. In the same way of Samaritan traveller who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him. Next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the inn-keeper and said, "Look after him and on my way back I will make good any extra expense you have."

Now which of these three, do you think, proved himself a neighbour to the man who fell into the bandits' hands?'

He replied, 'The one who showed pity towards him.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise yourself.'

Reflections from the parish of St Nicholas of Tolentino

