

Homily - 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time Yr C, 20th October 2019

‘Before God and before Christ Jesus....I put this duty to you.....proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist on it.’

One thing I am finding quite strange is living and praying close to a giant Asda. They are not difficult neighbours. They are not noisy or troublesome in any way. Customers and staff go about their business and I go about mine But there precisely is my problem.

‘Proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist on it.’

What happens as I go through the underpass? Am I entering a kind of parallel universe? Do I go through that underpass just to pick up my paper and do some shopping or do I go through the underpass to witness to Christ, welcome or unwelcome?

And is our message just one message among many, one more special offer or spiritual bargain? Or do we challenge the whole consumerist enterprise, root and branch?

‘With the edge of the sword Joshua cut down Amalek and his people.’ Moses, Aaron and Hur would have no truck with secularism and consumerism. Amalek and his people had to be completely destroyed. And this is not the only example in our scriptures of violence in the name of religion.

‘Jesus told his disciples a parable about the need to pray continually’. Here at last is the truly radical option - pray continually.

But what do the vast majority of Asda shoppers actually think of the Catholic Church? What is the predominant image? Is it Jesus helping us to pray and not lose hope? Or is it the sword of Joshua, violence, and abuse, clericalism and coercion?

Before we proclaim the message to Asda we have got to open our doors, open our hearts, acknowledge our own sins and failings, and engage with people on a level playing field. The underpass to Asda is not an underpass into another world. It is all God’s world and the message we must proclaim and insist on, welcome or unwelcome, is to pray continually and never lose heart. And not just to ‘proclaim and insist on’, but to live out day by day and minute by minute.

And ‘I promise you’ we ‘will see justice done.... And done speedily’.

‘Pray continually’.