

FR HUGH'S HOMILY FOR 8th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

There are some of us, of course I am not including myself, who when asked directions we just want to be helpful. So the car pulls up beside us full of tourists, or a lorry from away somewhere, and they ask us the way to Staveley for example, or how to get to the Spar in Heron Hill. And for some reason we give them directions when we are really not sure at all of the way. How the one-way system will be a real problem, or what roads are open and so on. So off they go, and we feel quite pleased with ourselves, leaving them going off in all sorts of directions, but never the right one.

The old Irish joke, when asked directions you say, "If I was you I wouldn't start from here," would actually be minimally more helpful.

The person who doesn't know first aid but rushes to help is more dangerous than leaving the injured alone. And so on.

The question the gospel raises is, are we prepared to help, save others? But first, do we know our own abilities or faults? What gifts we have to offer?

I think Jesus is asking us to know ourselves, which we do essentially by discovering ourselves through him. Asking him in prayer, "What are you asking of me?" One thing that we can rely on is that if we are asking him for directions about our own life, he will never misguide us.

I was looking at a book recently on Ignation spirituality, and four things stand out: firstly that we can find God in all things, in all his creation, he made it and he mark is on it, secondly, as we are all working in this world in some way, often busy or very busy, we are 'contemplatives in action'. People of prayer, yet not all called to be enclosed monks or nuns. We pray through the work we do and as we do it. Thirdly that, for all its seeming faults and problems, many dire, Jesus came into this world, and is the incarnation of God here with us. He chose to be here, so there is something precious and 'of God' here, an 'incarnational spirituality'. That God is in the 'real'. Finally, the way for us, the true direction, is to find freedom in detaching ourselves from damaging attachment to the things of this world. Those things we do and watch for example, that we use to falsely escape. How can we detach ourselves from them to enable us to seek what is of God.

In think we can use this time of Lent to start to detach a bit. Give up those habits that are all to easy, comfortable and take time away from God. To look afresh at our world and see its faults on the news and the media in general, or even closer to us at times, but yet look for the good. Those who help in small ways. The breakthroughs that are made for the good. The people who are risking their lives for others. Those who speak out for the good.

We can rush to judgement, often a judgement others have made but not informed by our own Catholic sense of justice and good, and blame others. And then we have to consider the plank (or log now) in our own eye.

Look to see God in his people, us, and in his creation. To fight for the value of creation, in the way that best fits our gifts. Sometimes we discover that listening to young members of our family who may not get to church, but have a wonderful sense of this planet we share, of its preciousness, opens our eyes.

Lent gives us a chance to take a good look at ourselves, and then be ready to help others (with good directions if necessary, or just saying honestly 'I don't know'). To serve as each of us is called, in love.