

Weekly Message from Fr William for Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time 2022

Dear People of St Mary's – *Desiderio Desideravi* !! Did you get a chance to read Pope Francis latest letter called *Desiderio Desideravi* (DD)? Or at least my one page summary? (see my weekly message for Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2022 still on website homepage). 'With this letter' writes Francis 'I simply want to invite the whole Church to rediscover the power of the Christian celebration of the Liturgy.' (DD16).

Liturgy is, first and foremost, an action of Christ. It is first and foremost Christ's self-offering to the Father in his death and resurrection. (DD7). This action is a living reality in our midst whenever we celebrate the Eucharist and the other sacraments of the Church. And when we celebrate the Eucharist and the other sacraments of the Church we join him in this action. This is Liturgy.

As Christians we all share in the priesthood of Christ. The Second Vatican Council, following the sacred scriptures of the New Testament, is very clear on this, eg 1 Peter 2. It means we all celebrate the Liturgy together. We all offer together the sacrifice of the Mass, Christ's self-offering to the Father, and ourselves to the Father with him. This is why the Second Vatican Council calls each of us to a 'full, conscious and active participation' in the celebration of the Liturgy, a call now echoed by Francis in this letter. (DD16)

But there's more. That was just the first of three sections of the letter *Desiderio Desideravi*. The second section is headed: 'The need for a serious and vital liturgical formation'. And he begins this section with the following challenge:

Therefore, the fundamental question is this: how do we recover the capacity to live completely the liturgical action? This was the objective of the Second Vatican Council's reform. The challenge is extremely demanding because modern people — not in all cultures to the same degree — have lost the capacity to engage with symbolic action, which is an essential trait of the liturgical act. (DD27)

Or as one prominent psychologist explains it: Our left hemisphere has, since the scientific era, dominated our approach, while our right hemisphere, with its openness to the world of symbol, has atrophied. (Iain McGilchrist – *The Matter With Things*).

So, the question I want to pose is: How can we become once again capable of symbols? How can we again know how to read them and be able to live them? We know well that the celebration of the sacraments is efficacious in itself, but this does not guarantee the full engagement of people without an adequate way of their placing themselves in relation to the language of the celebration. A symbolic "reading" is not a mental knowledge, not the acquisition of concepts, but rather a living experience. (DD45)

'We are in need' he writes of a 'serious and dynamic liturgical formation' (DD31) !!

To be continued!



Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 31 July 2022