

Sunday Message from Fr William for the Thirteenth Sunday of the Year 2023

If we're destined for another world, and as Christians we believe we are, then let's set out to learn about it. Let's learn what it is going to be like. Some might say, 'How can we possibly know?' It's true that science on its own, powerful as it is to analyse and model this world, is powerless to tell us anything about the other world. The Bible on the other hand is packed with glimpses into it, and all we have to do is unpack it, with the guidance of wise guides, gifted with gifts like wisdom and understanding.

Who is going to be there? This is probably the best question to start with, because as human beings we have this wonderful capacity for interpersonal relationships. Each one of us is unique, with a unique set of physical and personal qualities and characteristics. We have the capacity for an almost limitless number of personal relationships. And each one of these relationships is going to be unique. It's through these relationships that we grow and flourish, both in this world and in the next.

So without further delay let me introduce you, if you're not already acquainted, with the second person you will come to know deeply in the other world. In the words of Jorge Mario Bergoglio: 'I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ' and to letting him encounter you. (Evangelii Gaudium 3). Although in this world he has been momentarily taken from our sight, he is with you, at your side, your constant companion, upholding you with his strength, supporting you with his love. In his own words: 'I am with you always, yes to the end of time.' (Matthew 28). Turn to him at any time of the day or night, asking for his help, asking for his love. May this invitation to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ be for you the beginning of a personal relationship that will grow throughout your time in this world and carry through into the next, into the other world, with a depth and constancy that you cannot begin to imagine.

I like the insight William Paul Young shares in his novel *The Shack*. At the remote shack that Mackenzie treks out to deep in the Oregon wilderness he has, among other things, a life changing encounter with Jesus Christ. It's a work of fiction, but the author evokes the companionableness of Jesus. As they walk together, talk together, skim stones together across the lake, close their eyes together as they lie on the jetty, and open their eyes together to the splendour of the stars and the universe, Jesus imparts to him his gentle strength, shares with him his strong and gentle wisdom, fills him with his strong and gentle peace. I would challenge any reader of this novel not to long so spend day after day and into eternity with such a companion, with this man Jesus Christ.

There's so much more I want to share with you about this man Jesus Christ, and about our personal relationship with him, as it can be in this world, and as it will be in the next. In a later reflection I'll share with you how close he wants to be to you, how close you can be with him even in this world, and how you can, even in this world hear him speaking to you. But it's time to introduce you, if you're not already acquainted, to the third person you will come to know deeply in the other world.

To be continued...

William

Thirteen Sunday of the Year, 2 July 2023