

Let us love in deed and truth

Homily Notes

Introduction

The National Day of Prayer for Survivors of Abuse is the Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Easter. However, parishes can mark it on the preceding Sunday or on another day that week.

It is not an easy subject to speak about but is one that has been raised in the Synod reports and one which concerns many people within the Church and those they know who have left it because of the allegations and convictions.

Below are thoughts that may help in the development of a homily for the Sunday or day on which this is the focus.

Gospel

John 15:1-8

I am the vine; you are the branches.
Whoever abides in me and I in him,
he it is that bears much fruit.

Possibilities:

- The whole Gospel speaks of Jesus' desire for his followers to bear the sound and wholesome fruit that will bring life to the world. In recent years, we have learnt more about how the Church has failed to live up to this commission. Things have been done by people within the Church which have damaged the lives of those they abused, the lives of their families, friends, community and beyond.
How can we, as communities, acknowledge the reality of what is being uncovered and show sorrow for what has happened even if we are not personally responsible?
- The need to remain rooted in Christ is fundamental to any endeavours in bringing justice to and healing for survivors. It is becoming ever clearer that parishes/ dioceses should not just be rooted (or seem to be rooted) in the legal, financial, insurance and similar consequences of revelations of abuse, but demonstrate a deep commitment to Christ who identifies with the victim-survivors and to those who undertake the work of healing.
What does a parish rooted in Christ look like? How do we ensure that we are not seen to be more concerned about (legitimate) secular concerns than with the pastoral?
- Christ desires that the Church bears the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness. (cf Galatians 5:22).

There are survivors of abuse in every community — whether Church-based, family or other setting. Some will come forward, others will prefer not to speak of it — all need to feel safe in our parishes and schools.

How can we ensure that people see us as a community that strives to bear the fruits of the Spirit and works to create a safe, healing space for survivors, their families and friends.

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Second Reading

1 John 3: 18-24

Let us not love in word or talk
but in deed and in truth.
By this we shall know that we are of the truth.

Possibilities

- John, here, is highlighting something obvious. However, one issue that the Church has to face is that there have been many words around sorrow about the abuse but (apparently) less by way of action. How can we ensure that our own love – our response – go beyond mere talk – even when we do not know survivors personally? (This could lead into a LoudFence-style activity – it may not change the world in itself but gives parishioners a means of showing solidarity with those who have been hurt).
- Who needs loving when a community is hit by the reality of abuse in its midst? If your community is directly affected, this is an opportunity to ask how responses of anger, dismay and disbelief can be addressed and reshaped into something that can help the community to recover, to heal and to be reconciled.
 - Survivor (is our response to the allegations loving or...?)
 - Their family/ friends/ groups they belong to.
 - The alleged/ convicted perpetrator – how is it most appropriate to show them love?
 - Those who worked closely with the alleged/convicted perpetrator – they may be shocked/ horrified – feeling guilty that they did not know or did not express concerns – be totally disbelieving that the person they worked with would do something like that.
 - Local community/ other churches/ agencies that the person was involved with (esp. but not exclusively charities involved in work with children and vulnerable adults).