

## Reflection for the Fourteenth Sunday

There is lots of talk about change in the air and this is not surprising. History records how nations have changed following life changing events in the past. There is no doubt that this Pandemic is a life changing event and I am sorry to say it has not ended. I am sure many organisations having been doing rethinks as well as many individuals. The BBC have run an interesting series of programmes on how things could change, called rethinking or rethink. They played a short extract from an interview that Pope Francis had given to Austen Ivereigh in *The Tablet* some weeks previously. In this short extract Pope Francis was talking about rethinking poverty. What I took from his message was the connection between change and conversion. I was left with the impression that nothing will really change unless there is a change of heart. As a society we can make changes to policies and procedures and this helps, but unless there is a change of heart, the programmes we put in place only touch the surface. For the Pope conversion is also about how we see things and people. He said that just as nature is not just something to be used, but contemplated as a gift, likewise with people. We are to think of each person as someone whose mother loves them – especially the poor.

We could say that the Pope is inviting us to see nature and people in a spiritual way and to put an end to seeing nature and people as ‘units to be used’ rather than as valuable in themselves. St Paul says: *“So then, there is no necessity for us to obey our unspiritual selves or live unspiritual lives.”* It is not a bad starting point when we are being invited to say what needs to change because of what the Pandemic has shown up in our world. Although I understand that the Pope’s remarks caused a stir in some quarters there is also a growing sense that it would be good idea to use this moment to ask some searching questions about our world and build sustainably for the future. That includes the Church as well, we will have to take part in the rethinking. But for us it is important to see the ways the Lord is calling us to change and this is part of our contribution, our service to the world. If we can discern the voice of the Lord and speak to the world in an understandable way, we will be fulfilling our vocation. It is not only what we say, but also the way we say it! In our first reading the Messiah comes into Jerusalem *humble and riding on a donkey*. This reading takes us back to the Gospel accounts of Jesus entering Jerusalem on a donkey which we remember and celebrate on Palm Sunday. It is a sign of humility, an approach of someone who comes *not to be served but to serve*. We are now in our moment; this is a crisis, this is a turning point and with humility we come with the Lord at our side as ones who come to serve and not to be served.

Where might our focus be at this moment? The words of Jesus in the Gospel guide us: *“Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.”* We will need that humble and gentle ministry of Jesus ourselves and we must be humble enough to bring our labours and our burdens to him and to ask for his help. That is also the conversion Pope Francis speaks about. This may be as simple yet as difficult as spending time before him in prayer seeking his rest for our souls. In doing this we may see the way of inviting others to seek his rest. We would certainly have set a good example, it is engaging in the spiritual life, it is a humble approach, it is a service and it allows a bit of rethinking. If you know people who because of the Pandemic are doing a bit of rethinking, maybe as part of that, they spend some time bringing their labours and burdens before Jesus. He may help us all to see in a way we never have before. A change of heart, a humble rethink, by placing a high value for the people and the world around us – both currently labouring and overburdened.

God bless you, Canon David