

PRAEDICAMUS CHRISTUM CRUCIFIXUM

A Homily for the Third Sunday of Lent (B)

St Paul's Parish, Gävle, Sweden

Texts: Ex. 20: 1-17; Ps 18; 1 Cor. 1:22-25; John 2:13-25.

“We are preaching a crucified Christ, to men an obstacle, but to those who have been called a Christ, who is the wisdom of God and the power of God”. My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, these words from the Second Reading of today summarise everything that the Lord wants us to hear today. The apostle Paul, who addressed the words to the Christians in Corinth many years ago, meant that other Christians from all the corners of the world in all the generations to come would hear them. We, who are listening to these words, are therefore among his audience. The apostle teaches the truth that God, from all eternity, meant for all His children. The first people to whom the Apostle addressed those words lived together with others who had divergent views on Christ and the salvation of humanity. In our own day, we live side by side with people who hold all kinds of opinions about Christ. Some claim that they do not believe in God. Others say they believe in “Something” but have no religion. Others think that all religions are equally good – that all they are saying is “Love one another”. From time to time even some of us are tempted to question our own faith, to relax their commitment to Christ and even to doubt the veracity of the Gospel. Everyday we are faced with two options: of fidelity to Christ and his Gospel or to be “politically correct” in our outlook and our choice of words – in order not to give offence to the majority who profess no religion or those who have abandoned their own faith.

Moved by the Holy Spirit, I stand before you today, to proclaim our common faith – and I want all creation to hear me - that JESUS CHRIST IS THE ONLY SAVIOUR OF HUMANITY. And that He won salvation for us by his merits, epitomised in his suffering, his death on the Cross of Calvary and his resurrection from the dead on the third day. The law was given through Moses to guide the people for a time. And Moses was a figure of Christ. God spoke through the prophets calling the chosen people to repentance and fidelity to the covenant. But at the appointed time, the Word Himself became a member of our human community and through Him God has spoken his final Word to us all.

As a man among others, he became our teacher. His teaching is not like the teaching of the religious teachers of his time. Those teachers taught others the Laws but were lawless. They spoke about the prophets but their own lives were a lie.

All these are evident from the Gospel of today. We see how these people turned the Temple to a market and desecrated the Holy Place. By doing so, they despised the holiness of House of God and preferred monetary profit instead.

In our day we see many examples of how people try with all the talents they have to destroy faith in Jesus Christ. We see how they lead many people astray with all the lies they formulate. And we see how some people prefer the lies composed by men to the Truth revealed by God. We see how so many people can waste precious hours dwelling on such lies rather than spend useful time to meditate on the Truth found on the pages of the Holy Scriptures.

My sisters and brothers in Christ, today, the Holy Spirit is leading us to renew our covenant with Jesus Christ. All the arguments of the philosophers of our time lose their force when we encounter the Redeemer of humankind. Our ability to keep the Laws given through Moses is only assured if the Holy Spirit dwells in us and directs our lives. When he was confronted, the Lord Jesus told his persecutors that His body is the real Temple – the Temple that was “destroyed” by the crucifixion and which He raised from the dead in “three days”. Let us

never forget even for one second that we belong to Christ by virtue of our baptism and for that reason, our bodies are members of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit (Cf. I Cor. 6: 15,19). When the Holy Spirit is at work in us we recognise that Jesus Christ is the Lord and that He alone has the message of eternal life.

This holy season of Lent is the time to drive away all the noise and filth, the deception and apathy, the lies and lust that have entered our lives and have beclouded our vision.

The people of our time may say what they like and write what they like about Christ, but “to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, irrespective of their nationality, we all have a mandate to bear fruitful witness for Christ.

This witness may not be without a price that we must pay. We may not be popular among those who mistake “respect” for complaisance – those who want to us accept them as atheists but who are not ready to accept us as Catholic Christians. To everyone without exception, I say this: in the words of our holy patron, “We are preaching a Christ who is the power and wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength” (1 Cor. 1: 24-25).

Lord Jesus Christ

Renew your presence in the hearts of all you have called.

Strengthen us by your own power and give us the grace we need to know you and to love above all things and to preach you in season and out of season. Amen.

Fr. Damian O. Eze, MSP

Gävle, Sweden,

15 March, 2009.