

## Homily for 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A) 21<sup>st</sup> June 2020

If we take the line from the Gospel “*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul*”, can we apply it to our global situation with COVID-19? The answer is perhaps yes and no.

COVID-19 can most certainly kill the body. It would be too easy, and indeed hypocritical, for me to say that therefore it shouldn't be feared. Had I believed that, I would have disobeyed orders and flung open the church doors for you long before today. Our life on this earth is a precious gift of God; the urge to nurture and protect it, the urge to survive is good and true and full of grace.

But it's not the whole truth, it's only a part of the truth, indeed a small part. In proclaiming the Christian Gospel we bring eternity into the picture; we enter the realm of the soul.

So what is COVID-19 revealing about our souls, and what is it doing to them?

What does it do to my soul when I view all other humans as threats to my health and existence? What does it do to my soul when I cannot meet with other Christian to pray, worship, and receive the Sacraments? What does it do to a soul to die alone? What does it do to a soul to say last earthly goodbyes through a screen? Gently, gently, gently we must confront such questions. COVID-19 may not be able to kill our souls, but it can ‘wear them down.’ With great gentleness for ourselves and those around us, we must care for the soul during this time. There is a temptation to underestimate the impact this is having on us, and I name it as a temptation. As I said last weekend, simply surviving is not flourishing.

And so the Gospel today comes with a challenge. Am I spending as much time and effort caring for my soul as I am for my body? Consider, if you will, the lengths we have gone to over the past three months to protect the body and our earthly lives – lockdown, shielding, hand washing, sanitiser bottles, face masks, dancing round people in the street and the supermarket, denying ourselves basic human contact, denying ourselves all the lovely spring and summer things we would have done in all this glorious weather. There's nothing wrong with that – as I said, it's good and true.

But am I going to similar lengths to care for my soul? Am I willing to disrupt my life, my routine, my pleasures for the sake of my soul, as much as I am for the sake of my body? It's a tough examination, and again should be approached with gentleness.

So maybe as lockdown eases it's time to checkout our 'soul-work' – time spent with the Lord; receiving His grace in silence, in prayer, in reading the scriptures, morning time offering, mealtime prayers, and evening time thanksgiving. These may seem simple, and indeed they are, and rightly so. The lockdown and distancing measures required to protect our earthly lives are essentially simple – but effortful. Caring for our souls is similarly simple – but effortful.