

12th Sunday of the Year

Secrets! We all like to be in on a secret, don't we? Whether it's grandma's secret recipe, or the latest neighbourhood gossip, secrets are a bit like money. We like to have them, they seem valuable, and sharing them is often a sign of friendship. And at the same time, like money, they can be the root of all evil. Two of my favourite French films – *Jean de Florette* and *Manon de Sources* – show how a secret kept hidden can lead to terrible consequences even a generation or two afterwards.

So how do we feel about Jesus telling us “everything that is now covered will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear” ?

But don't worry. Jesus is not talking about our little secrets. Rather he is talking about what St Paul calls, in his Letter to the Colossians (1:26) “the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now made manifest to his saints.”

This is God's hidden plan for the human race. Of course, it was one of those secrets hidden in plain sight. The prophets proclaimed it, the Jewish people lived it (especially in their exodus out of Egypt) and Jesus came to complete it. In most countries of the world, you can buy a Bible and even a Catechism quite readily... and yet it seems to remain hidden for most.

As Jesus puts it to Nicodemus in the Gospel of John, “Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light”.

The message is one of universal love, of unconditional forgiveness, of redemption, of liberation.

We saw an extraordinary example of it this week, in the words of the parents of the boy who was murdered, stabbed to death, at a shopping centre in western Melbourne. “There is no place for hate,” they said. “We know our son forgives his killers, and we forgive them. And we say to their families, even though we don't know you, we love you.”

It is hard not to be emotional, thinking of those words, spoken in the midst of such terrible grief. They are the words of Jesus, as he hung upon the cross, and said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

“The hidden wisdom of God which we teach in our mysteries,” St Paul tells the Corinthians (2 Cor 2: 7) “is the wisdom that God predestined to be for our glory before the ages began.”

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From ancient times, one of the names we Christians have had for the Mass or Eucharist is “The Mysteries”. The Eucharist is not a mystery in the sense that a murder mystery is a puzzle to be solved, nor is it a mystery in the sense that it is a secret to be hidden. On the contrary, Jesus tells us to “proclaim it on the hilltops.” It is rather a mystery in the sense that a human person is a mystery. No matter how closely you come to know someone, there is always more to discover about them. Indeed, we are often a mystery to ourselves: we surprise ourselves with our abilities – or sometimes with our stupidity – if we are self-reflexive enough to examine our own actions. And of course at the heart of the Mysteries, at the heart of the Eucharist, is a person, Jesus, crucified, buried and risen.

The family of the murdered boy, in the depth of their forgiveness, showed us all that they have entered deeply into the mystery of Jesus. Being a Christian is not just a matter of accepting the doctrines: it is a matter of living them. Because we enter each Sunday into this mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus, we should be able to find the faith, the hope and the love to be truly Christian when sorrow and tragedy come our way.

It is by bringing us into this mystery, then, that Jesus shows his care for us. Jesus compares us to the sparrows: “not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing.” He does not promise us an easy life, or freedom from persecution, or the evil actions of others. Sparrows do fall to the ground, after all. He does promise us, however, or rather, he *shows* us, through his Resurrection, that death is not the end, and that he will declare himself for us in the presence of his Father in heaven.

Perhaps that is the greatest secret of all.

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21st June, 2020