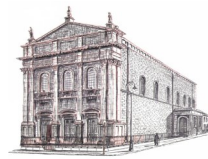




**PARISH OF ST. AGATHA**  
**16TH/17TH JANUARY 2021**



Fr. Brendan Kealy Adm.: 087 9117575 Office:  
 Tel:018554078, Mr John Kelly: Chairperson Parish Pastoral Council  
**Jesus I Trust in You E-mail :** office@stagathasparish.ie **Website:** www.stagathasparish.ie

**POPE FRANCIS: FINDING GOD MEANS FINDING LOVE**

Pope Francis invites the faithful to accept God's call, and responding to it with only love. Pope Francis reflected on the Gospel (John 1:35-42) that presents the meeting between Jesus and His first disciples, which unfolded along the Jordan River the day after Jesus's baptism. It is John the Baptist himself, he explains, "who points out the Messiah to the two, with these words: *'Behold, the Lamb of God!'*" The two, trusting the Baptist's testimony, follow Jesus. He realises this and asks the disciples what it is they are looking for. When asked where Jesus was staying, He responds by telling them, "Come and you will see".

**THE LIGHT EXPLODED WITHIN THEM**

Pope Francis went on to describe this response not as a calling card, "but an invitation for an encounter". The two follow Him and remained that afternoon with Him. "It is not difficult to imagine them seated asking Him questions and above all listening to Him, feeling their hearts enflamed ever more while the Master spoke", said the Pope. He explained that although it is evening, "all of a sudden they discover that that light that only God can give was exploding within them". When they leave and return to their brothers, that joy, that light overflows from their hearts like a raging river. One of the two, Andrew, says to his brother, Simon – whom Jesus will call Peter – "We have found the Messiah".

**THE LORD IS CALLING US**

"Let us pause a moment on this experience of meeting Christ, who calls us to remain with Him", said the Pope. He explained that "each one of God's calls is an initiative of His love". God calls us to faith and to become part of His family as children of God in a particular state in life: to give of ourselves on the path of matrimony, or that of the priesthood or the consecrated life". These are "different ways of realising the design that God has for each one of us, which is always a design of love". The "greatest joy for every believer", he stressed, is to respond to that call "offering one's entire being to the service of God and the brothers and sisters".

**GOD'S CALL IS LOVE**

Pope Francis noted that before the Lord's call, "which reaches us in a thousand ways", our attitude at times might be "rejection", and at others, "fear". "But God's call is love and it should be responded to only with love". "At the beginning there is an encounter, or rather, there is the encounter with Jesus who speaks to us of His Father, He makes His love known to us. And then the spontaneous desire will arise even in us to communicate it to the people that we love: *'I met Love', 'I found the meaning of my life'*. In a word: *'I found God'*." Pope Francis prayed that the Virgin Mary might "help us make of our lives a hymn of praise to God in response to His call and in the humble and joyful fulfilment of His will". (Vatican News staff writer).

I just want to add (Fr. Brendan here!) that when Jesus asked the two disciples 'What *do you want?*' He is asking us the exact same question today. If I want to go to Heaven, then I must begin to **look hard** at my faith and be open to the Will of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is asking us to **look hard** at the Eucharist, and like John, see Him in it as the Lamb of God. He wants us to **look hard** at Holy Scripture and hear His Words. He wants us to **look hard** at each other, especially our enemies, and see Him in there and reconcile. Jesus wants us to become like Peter and be a **rock of faith** especially in times of trials and struggles, because that is when we need to rely on Faith, that Rock Jesus gave us in baptism to lean on. **Archbishop Elect Dermot Farrell** also wrote today: *No matter what way the call to follow the Lord comes to us, St Paul is clear that we do not experience the Holy as disembodied spirits. Our bodies are "temples of the Holy Spirit."* *God became one of us. An embodied spirituality must help us oppose any exploitation of people. May the Lord who opened the ears and heart of Eli to discern Samuel's call, make our ears attentive to his call to us. God bless, Fr. Brendan.*

**Homily of Archbishop-Elect Dublin, Dermot Farrell. Sunday 17th January 2021.**

The publication of the Report into Mother and Baby Homes has helped shed light on what happened to vulnerable women and their children within the walls of those homes and beyond. This Report holds a mirror to aspects of our past which are difficult and distressing, and we can no longer shy away from some extremely painful truths about how, collectively and individually, we fell short in our care of vulnerable women and their children. The Commission's Report highlights a failure, over a seventy-year period, of our society and its culture to acknowledge the dignity of every person. People can now see how it was a failure on the part of communities and families to appreciate what it means to be human. In terms of the social history of our country since Independence, both Church and State now have reason to offer profound apologies to all women and children who passed through these homes, to their families, and to the people of the country.

As I said during the week "a genuine response is required: ours - as a Church and a society - can only be a full apology, without any reservation." There were many ways in which people of faith on this island failed to reflect the gospel values which we espoused and still espouse. As the report indicates, Mother and Baby Homes provided a refuge - a harsh refuge in some cases - when few families were willing to provide any refuge.

The behaviour of some religious who operated these institutions was wrong, and a shameful betrayal of trust. All joy and hope appear to have been leached from the response to these pregnancies and births. Part of the life of faith had become sterile, and many lived in the shadows of what might be best described as a grey world, a life other than what we now recognise as the full life offered by God to everyone.

Equally in terms of the prevailing attitudes of the wider society the Church had a responsibility to instil the values of compassion and care, but in so many instances failed to do so despite the individual good work and practice of so many religious and lay people - women and men.

As a society and a church, we lost sight of the gift that is every child. We kept before us some children and their needs, while others came to be treated as problems. While we are shocked that these places existed, it is a damning indictment of Irish society that they continued to exist for so long. It is to be hoped that understanding our past might give us the moral courage to do something in the present to change the shameful reality that right now other people are still in danger today.

While there were some who, at that time, spoke out, these were few and far between. Still, it is important to remember the many discreet - even hidden - kindnesses, of women and men, religious and not, who brought humanity and warmth into difficult situations in very austere settings. Their work remained unseen as they lived out the call of Jesus not to let their left know what their right was doing (Matt 6:3).

In the Lord's Prayer - which we will pray in this Mass and which we pray throughout our lives - we pray, "forgive us our trespasses." This is not an easy way out, but an acknowledgement of our own failures and of our need of repentance and change. It is not adequate to say, "That was done by others, it has nothing to do with us." As a country we must address the rightful concerns of the survivors by reburial of infants who died in these Homes in a respectful and dignified way. Furthermore, our Christian faith asks us to take up the cross not impose it on others. What is asked of us is to support others in carrying and lightening the burden that has been imposed by previous generations. **+Dermot Farrell. Archbishop Elect.**