

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear Parishioners,

It can be tempting to lose hope in the age in which we live. Mourning about the society of the day is as ancient as the human race itself. The Romans thought the world had gone to the dogs and they had little faith in the next generation. We too are acutely aware of the shortcomings of our time and culture: social media is a great engine of our discontent. We often complain of the falling standards in every walk of life. We are conscious of the breakdown of community, of an increasing number of people living on the streets, of a decline in moral values and of a fracturing of family life. There is an increase in suicide, especially among young men, and this is disturbing evidence that there are many people who see our times as devoid of meaning. We could easily lose hope in our contemporary society.

The words of Paul in today's second reading are very striking. *"This may be a wicked age, but your lives should redeem it."* (Ephesians 5, 16). Later, when writing to the Romans, Paul suggested that they not allow themselves to be overcome by evil but to take steps to overcome evil themselves by doing good. Paul was acutely aware of the dark side of his own culture and of the various cultures he encountered on his missionary journeys. Yet those cultures, decadent though they may have been, did not discourage him. He was convinced that the lives of believers could redeem the age in which they lived. We don't often think of ourselves as redeemers. The term 'redeemer' is one we reserve for Christ. Yet Paul is prepared to extend that term to all who have been baptised into Christ. He recognises that the Lord working through can redeem the time, the age, in which we live. We can never underestimate the extent to which the Lord can make us a force for good, a source of life and light in our world. As Christians we recognise that if the Lord is to work in a redeeming and life-giving way through us, we need to keep our relationship with him alive. On the feast of the Ascension we were given the task by Jesus to continue his mission, to evangelise. We can only do this if we have a relationship with him and work on it.

Father Patrick

