

Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear Parishioners,

There are many among you who will be disturbed and upset by recent developments in the life of the Catholic Church. The rumbling dissatisfaction with Pope Francis' visit to Ireland voiced by some very articulate and influential people is one thing, the frontal assault on the Pope's authority and the questions raised by his reputation from within the ranks of the papal diplomatic service quite another – and much more grave. It is best to let the dust settle on both these occurrences and, certainly at parish level, most people get on with the day to day business of practicing their faith and continuing their life of prayer. The wider question, which is raised by the scripture readings this weekend, is how we keep that balance between traditional Church practice and the challenges which rapid change in world and society present to our cherished beliefs and to the traditions we love and which give us both security and joy.

Tradition has always played an important part in the Catholic Church's history and development. It is our belief that God reveals himself to us through Scripture – God's word – and tradition. We are convinced that the practices and faith of the early Church has a unique role in shaping our practices and what we believe today. After all, we know the New Testament was written in the first century and that the Creed we profess each Sunday was composed in the form in which we now recite it early in the fourth century (AD 325). Our forefathers in the faith across many generations have nurtured themselves on those scriptural texts and professed the same faith for almost two thousand years. Christians have met to hear God's word and to celebrate the Eucharist on the Lord's Day ever since the first Pentecost. And they have done it in much the same way. And they have worked at community-building right from the outset: our parish, in its structure and in its life, has a long history behind it.

Tradition is thus important. And yet times change and the acceleration of change in our day is bewildering and unprecedented. Inevitably our cherished traditions have to face reassessment in the light of such social, economic and political change. So, discernment is particularly necessary for the Church as a whole and for us as a parish in particular. It might be an ideal moment to ask ourselves what it is we really value and what it is we can live without. The scripture readings of today help us to reflect on these issues. There are those who say we must go back to the very beginning, see and consider what the first generation of Christians – many of whom had known Jesus in the flesh – did and how they lived. It is not a bad start. One thing we do know about them, they were admired for the way they loved one another. So, even if traditions evolve, even if our understanding of the truths of our faith change in the light of the times in which we live, we can still strive to love one another.

Father Patrick