



TCH32

32nd Sunday Ordinary Time Aiii – Excerpts From Wisdom 6, 1 Thessalonians 4, Matthew 25

All in a Row

This parable is not about the end of the world, but rather about whether we are ready or not to welcome Jesus as our King
Fr David King – 8th November 2020

You will benefit greatly from reading through the Gospel before reading this (Matthew 25.1-13)

1. The Cenacolo

Sadly the Diocese didn't go to Lourdes this year on pilgrimage. It was of course cancelled like everything else this year. God willing we will go again next year. For the last few years some of you may know I've helped out on the pilgrimage with the Redshirts, that's the 14 – 16 year olds coming from all around the Diocese, we usually take about seventy of them.

- And on top of all the main pilgrimage things, where we all meet together as one big group, we also do our own thing in the Redshirts, we have loads of fun, we learn about our faith, we go for ice cream, but last year we did something rather special as well.
- In Lourdes there is a Cenacolo Community. You may have never heard of The Cenacolo Community before, it's not a big movement, though there are several of these communities dotted all around the world. But these communities are very special places.
- The first Cenacolo Community was founded by an Italian religious sister, Sr Elvira Petrozzi in 1983. She grew up with an alcoholic father, and witnessed first hand the misery that this brought to the family. When she became a religious sister, was determined to help men who were suffering from addictions to drink and drugs, so off her own back she set up this little community and invited...
 - The idea was that, through the support of community life, a shared daily routine of work and prayer, these guys would get back on their feet again. It was a very simple idea.
- And it worked! And it grew, and now there are about 60 of these communities, including one in Lourdes. And last year we arranged a visit for the Redshirts. We drove out of the town for a few minutes and arrived at the place and we all were seated in the chapel not knowing what to expect.
- Then a guy came in called Darren and he gave us his story. After getting into drink and drugs at an early age, Darren had been in rehab ten times and it never worked, & having stolen from everyone he loved, he had completely destroyed his family relationships. By some miracle, he heard of the Cenacolo Community. They agreed to take him in, he got a room, and agreed to participate in the community life. He shared in the cooking and the cleaning. He prayed the rosary with them daily, he worked during the day and before he knew it, he was off the drugs and building a life for himself.
- It was a wonderful testimony to hear, he'd found such peace & hope through this simple life of community, work & prayer. & moreover, he was excited about the future, the guys get to transfer between the houses after a while, & take on positions of responsibility, so there's a whole route open to them. & it was all started by this one nun who wanted to help. Darren gave his testimony & we all listened, enraptured by this incredible story. & we all gave him a *huge* round of applause.

2. The Coming

- Now, a lot of people think that Jesus is talking about the end of the world in this story. But I am not so sure he is. Some of the biblical scholars that I admire and read say instead that we should look to the context of the parable and that will tell us what it's about.
- So, don't forget, that at this point in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus has just ridden into Jerusalem on a donkey, overturning the tables in the temple. Both of these acts were a direct claim to be the Messiah, Jesus knew exactly what he was doing, he was evoking what was written in the scriptures. And here, he settles down in the temple to have his last few rounds with the Pharisees before he gets arrested and his whole passion and death gets underway.
- That's the context, and *that's* what this parable is about! He's already likened the coming of God's kingdom (which, as the Messiah, he was bringing to earth) to a king putting on a wedding feast for his son, and some were just not interested in coming, we looked at that parable a couple of weeks ago, and he's back using the same metaphor!
 - Jesus has arrived in Jerusalem, like a groom ready to meet his bride, and some are ready to welcome him and some are not. This is what the kingdom of God is like says Jesus! Some are ready to receive this news and to welcome him as their Messiah and king, and some are not.
- This makes so much sense. Jesus uses this story to explain and comment on what's happening right here right now in Jerusalem, and to highlight the stubbornness of the Pharisees. And again, it's got what seems like quite a harsh ending, but actually, given the situation, you would expect that. The role that Jesus was inhabiting was that of a prophet, and part of the prophetic vocation was to speak the truth to Israel if she was pursuing a path that led to ruin. So he's warning them! But don't forget, Jesus wasn't talking about *eternal* ruin. Rather, he knew that if people rejected his way of peace and reconciliation they would be courting disaster when Rome turned up the heat (which they did a few years later, in AD70). This is what the parable is all about!

3. The King

- Now, as I said a few weeks ago, you might think that this makes it *less* relevant for us, the fact that Jesus wasn't speaking to us at all, but the people around him who were living in a particular time and a particular place. But actually, to me this makes it all the more relevant.
- Jesus' disciples and all his followers were the ones with their lamps lit with oil at the ready, they were the ones who were ready to accept Jesus as their king. So the question is, are *we* ready to accept Jesus as our king? And if the answer is yes, then we have to ask ourselves a further question, 'What does it mean to live with Jesus as our king?'
- That is a massive and important question, in many ways it *all* comes down to this. We cannot answer it fully here, but I would say this one thing. When Jesus ushered in the kingdom of God on earth, he began the work of *putting the world to rights*, a work that will be completed when he comes again. But for the time being, to live with Jesus as our King is to carry on this task of putting the world to rights. And to bring this full circle, that's exactly what we witnessed the Cenacolo Community doing in Lourdes. They were living with Jesus as their king, and making the kingdom present on earth, by putting the world to rights. And that is our task as well.

Jesus, help me to live life with you as my King, by putting the world around me to rights