

Today, we heard of the faith and patience of God's people during their days of captivity in Egypt. As God had promised through the former prophets, he delivered His children and destroyed their enemies. Through the fulfilment of this unsurpassable victory, God was glorified through His people.

We also heard today of the faith and patience of Abraham, his wife Sarah, Isaac and Jacob (cf. Heb. 11:8-9). Abraham obeyed God which meant he had to sacrifice everything which was familiar to him. A sacrifice involves relinquishing something good, but we often forget that such relinquishment is a consequence of taking up something which is a *greater* good. Abraham left his homeland for the promised land. There he lived in tents throughout his entire life, always looking toward the city whose architect and builder is God. Abraham shined in faith and patience. He believed that, though barren, his wife would conceive, even when she was too old

(cf. Heb. 11:11). Abraham believed that although he was in his old age, descendants would be born of him, these numbering as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore (cf. Heb. 11:12). When asked to sacrifice his son Isaac, St Paul said Abraham believed that God could raise someone from the dead (cf. Heb. 17-19). In all things, Abraham had faith in God, patiently waiting to see how the goodness of God would develop. We all do well to imitate such faith and patience modelled by Abraham.

In addition to the inspiration we receive from Abraham, Jesus gave us a parable we heard today in which he urges us to be persevering in our faith. Without perseverance, we could relapse into our old sinful nature. No one knows when the Lord God shall call us to appear before Him. We cannot afford to have our lamps snuffed out, unlit. We cannot afford to be sleeping, un-alert. We cannot afford to lose our salvation when we have

endured so much until now. Jesus said, "It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom." In other words, the Kingdom of God has been created for us, for our eternal joy and peace in the continuous presence of God. This joy is not limited to the joy in the after-life, for joy is that uplifting spiritual consolation which is experienced as a consequence of following the Holy Spirit's inspirations to follow Christ. Joy is that which you experience when you give yourself as a sincere gift to others. Joy is also experienced by ourselves when we receive the sincere gift of another's self-donation. We can give gifts which are separate and distinct from of ourselves, and this will cause pleasure. How much more pleasure do we experience in the giving and receiving of our very selves? This takes place in reciprocation of the **"Father's good pleasure"** he experiences in his desire **"to give you the Kingdom."**

For this reason, Jesus added, **"Blessed are those slaves whom**

**the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them."**

This parable is striking because slaves are not served by their masters. If you're a manager of a business who has staff working under you, that would be like 'licking the stamps' so that your staff could lash out and join you in eating out for lunch!

This way of managing staff is not what's usually done, but that's Jesus' point. Faith and patience are regarded as spiritual virtues that are so great in the eyes of God, that as a reward to those who possess these qualities, Jesus will sit down with them, serve them and eat with them. Such a reward implies that we have first served Christ in response to his love for us. To be able to serve Christ as His sons and daughters, and to find our way home to God's Kingdom is made possible through the Sacrament of Baptism. Thus, we need the Priesthood. We need priests not just because

they're usually the ones who administer the Sacrament of Baptism,

but because priests help us be faithful to our Baptism.

Let me explain...

There are two forms of the Priesthood: the Ministerial Priesthood; and the Royal Priesthood.

Christ calls all the Baptised to the Royal Priesthood so that Christians may be a light to the world.

From these, Jesus calls men to the Ministerial Priesthood to inspire the Baptised to live their Royal Priesthood.

Priests are Ordained to represent Christ:

- Head to His Body;
- Shepherd to His sheep; and
- Bridegroom to His Bride.

As we are in *National Vocations Awareness Week*,

we would do well to pray that those whom God is calling to become priests will answer their call so that we may enjoy the leadership we need to live our faith.

Today, Jesus also said: **"From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been**

**entrusted, even more will be demanded"**

(Lk. 12:48).

In other words, some will have to give a greater accountability before God than others.

Such accountability is especially the case for those who are entrusted with the care of souls.

More will be demanded of them.

These persons consist of the clergy, parents who have children, teachers, the politicians, the judges and lawyers, the police, and so on and so forth.

Each of these, according to their vocations and occupations, shall be made accountable.

Beyond any doubt, a mother who has children will have a greater accountability to give to God than a childless woman.

What kind of accountability will that be?

Parents will be asked if they: raised their children in the Catholic Faith; if their children were Baptised, Confirmed, and made their First Communion; and encouraged their children to go to Confession regularly and Mass at least every Sunday.

Essentially, all these ways of helping children grow in their faith-development are spiritual obligations

of Catholic parents.

As to the basics that all of us will be made accountable for on the Day of Judgment – irrespective of our status in life – we will be asked if we went to church every Sunday and on the Holy Days of Obligation; if we supported our church with our time, talent and/or treasure; if we strived to grow in our faith through prayer, study and works of charity; if we helped spread the Catholic Faith; and if we received the Sacraments of Confession and the Holy Eucharist on a regular basis.

While it is true that the greatest degree of accountability will be expected of priests and religious sisters and brothers due to their role of guiding souls to a life in Heaven which has no end, in another sense, we priests and religious enjoy the least degree of anxiety in living out our vocations. Ultimately, the leadership we provide is the very task which is expected of us.

We priests and religious enjoy, as our full-time occupation, the task of helping people to respond to the love of God.

This task is tremendously fulfilling because we have the opportunity to be in touch with thousands of people.

The Royal Commission has revealed that just as priests and religious are in the best position to influence the most number of people in positive ways,

they can do so in negative and gravely harmful ways.

But like any other gift which can be abused,

this gift should not prevent it from being used. For example, intelligence, when abused, can lead to pride, but such arrogance does not mean that we should not exercise our intellect.

Food can be abused by selfish and greedy people, but such gluttony should not mean that food should not be used for nutrition and joyful hospitality, and so on.

- What gifts has God given you?
- How are you called to use your gifts?
- How are you encouraging others to use their gifts?

These are all good questions to ask ourselves given that we are in *National Vocations Awareness Week*.