

4th S. of Easter, Yr. B.

22-4-18.

Finding one's work.

Every year, on this 4th Sunday of Easter, our gospel holds up for our reflection some aspect of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. This year Jesus particularly compares his example of being a true shepherd with the approach which hired people can have to their work. It is worth looking at that for ourselves as well.

A huge amount of our lives is taken up with work. Hence, the way in which we regard our work is of the greatest importance. If our work has meaning, it becomes a blessing. But if it has little or no meaning, it becomes almost a curse.

It is a question that is faced by many of our young people today. Often highly educated they aspire to something that meets their competence and that they can put their heart into. But work of that kind can be hard to find, and they are left disappointed with what is available to them. For many it means retraining for something else, and dipping their toes into various fields before they do find work that brings satisfaction as well as reward.

It is something I had to do on my way to the priesthood. Even while still at Primary school my parents found work for me during the Summer School holidays picking fruit in the orchards around our town, as well as a stint with the milkman pushing and dragging the milk-cart while delivering fresh milk to the customers.

I left school at the end of Primary School, aged 14, after having battled Tuberculosis for 18 months in 1946-47. I found work with a timber-merchant as Junior Office Boy, learned typing and went to Night School to learn Bookkeeping and Business correspondence, That lasted 2 years, after which, as a family we came to Australia in 1952,

I had no English to speak off, so work in an office was out of the question. I got work with a firm that was doing screen-printing for three months, but had to give that away for I could not get on with the man I was assigned to assist. The abuse and the swearing was more than I could put up with.

Thank God I found work in a butcher's shop within a week, and did that for 4½ years, while becoming involved with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the local church choir, and joined the Catholic Youth Organization. That's where God started to niggle me, wanting more of me in that direction, so after struggling with that for a couple of years, I gave in and asked to join the Augustinians, who took a chance with me, sent me to Ireland and Rome to study, and here I am, good 60 years later, still enjoying what I do in the priesthood.

In sharing the Gospel today Jesus is speaking about the attitudes we bring to our work. The hiring generally does what he does because he has to. For him it is just a job,- it bring him an income for food on the table and roof over his head, but as for satisfaction and incentive, that can be hard to find.

Not that it has to be that way. It's a question of finding meaning in what one does, in the service it provides to the community for example, or in the accomplishment of a job well done. For a good shepherd minding the sheep is not just a job, it's a way of life, a vocation. He knows his sheep and cares about them to the point that he is prepared to risk his life to save them. The sheep thrive as a result.

The same applies to us. Most of us are, or have been, wage-earners, - people who don't work for themselves, - but when we take an interest in our work everything changes. Though the work may be difficult and unspectacular, and our lives contain many hardships, deep down there is contentment. We should never equate a happy life with an easy life. The harder the task to which we give ourselves for love's sake, the more the work exalts or ennobles us.

Happy, therefore, those who have found their work, no matter how humble that work is. They are saved from half-heartedness, and from the tragedy of only half-living their lives. That work brings out the best of them, and it is no exaggeration to say that for them it becomes the road to salvation.

I pray we can all say Amen to that.