

Donnybrook

24 September 2021

Welcome

Welcome again everybody. Since Sunday, I was in a retreat centre in Co Wexford, Ballyvaloo, with some priests of the diocese of Cloyne. It was pleasure to be with them – quite a few of them had served in my home town of Youghal. Most were retired – one man, still celebrating three masses on a Sunday – is ninety. The commitment to the faith was very evident, as the psalm puts it, still full of sap, still green. Nevertheless, having people of such an age still at work is unthinkable in any other situation. The future is definitely going to be different, as we know from the Building Hope consultation.

Steps

The readings today are directly helpful. At the time of Haggai, the Temple in Jerusalem had been partially rebuilt. The risk then and now is a failed “rebuilding”. The message of the prophet is clear: the important thing about the Temple is the presence of God, God’s glory or his “shekinah” in the holy place. Otherwise, it is a waste of time. The Gospel points us directly to the figure of Jesus: who do you say I am?

At the present moment, the whole Catholic Church is rediscovering “synod”, consultation and participation. This is good and there is hope. If effective, it will mean a huge resetting of the compass for us all. At the same time, there is a risk: the risk of making “the church” the centre of concern.

Conclusion

Here we take inspiration of St Paul: “we do not preach ourselves”. Instead, we have to put in centre place God, the Gospel, the vision of the Kingdom, the events of salvation, the work of the Spirit. Only then can we rightly begin to imagine how we should be so as best to serve Gospel in our day. Then we can hear the words of Haggai: courage! To work! There is a lot to be done.