

## **Pro-Cathedral / Donnybrook**

9 January 2022

### **Welcome**

Welcome again everybody. We are still at the start of a new year and we find ourselves looking ahead, perhaps a little tentatively. With some trepidation, we hope things will be better this coming year, at the level of the pandemic, in our society at large. We wonder will the new year hold for us as it unfolds – for myself, my family and my work.

### **Topic**

As people of faith, we can also look forward to this coming year, the year when the Synodal Pathways, started by Pope Francis, will become a concrete reality. This worldwide consultation of 1.2 billion Catholics has never been undertaken before and it is potentially revolutionary. This readings for this feast of the Baptism are a good “launching pad” for deeper reflection are the start of this year of the synod.

### **Steps**

One of the rock-solid fact of our faith is that John the Baptist baptised Jesus. This means that Jesus had heard what John was saying and has become a follower. His acceptance of John’s vision was confirmed in a public way at his immersion in the waters of the Jordan river. This was surely a vital step in Jesus’ own awareness of who he was and what his mission would be. The voice from heaven represents something of that awareness: You are my Son, the beloved, my favours rests on you. Jesus heard a resounding “yes” from God. Eventually, after John’s arrest, Jesus took up the preaching of the Good News. What was that Good News? There are different summaries.

A modern writer, Dorothee Sölle, summarises the Gospel in a new contemporary creed, which begins in vigorous fashion:

I believe in God who created the world not ready made like a thing that must forever stay what it is, who does not govern according to eternal laws that have perpetual validity, nor according to natural orders of poor and rich, experts and ignoramuses, people who dominate and people subjected. I believe in God who desires the counter-argument of the living and the alteration of every condition through our work, through our politics.

And so on. Fighting, visionary words.

This Good News means we are “in there” too. As human beings, we do wonder if God has ever disclosed himself to us. As Christians, we believe God has – in our conscience, in nature, in the different religions, in Judaism and finally in a single fragile human life – the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The reason for God’s disclosure is made clear in the letter to Titus: it was for no reason, except his own compassion – a phrase foreshadowed at the start of the paragraph: the kindness and love of God our saviour for humankind. In the words of a Christmas prayer: in Jesus we see our God made visible and are caught

up in love of the God we cannot see. If at all true, all this is immensely good news for everyone and also for us. Our "task" as disciples then is to receive this Good News, to live this Good News and to proclaim this Good News, in deed and in word. That is who we are.

In the next year, our task as disciples will take us along the synodal pathways, a vital initiative for the future not of church but of the Christian way in our time and culture. In the course of the year, we will be asking ourselves: how should we effectively be as a community of faith so that we may successfully offer this good news today? The question affects each of us personally and all of us as members of the faith community. It touches vision, ministry, government and ministry. In a word, it is about the Christian faith today. Of course, this is not first of all about church – it is first of all about Christian faith, which the church as an organisation exists to serve.

### **Conclusion**

For that task we will definitely need to grace and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are all invited to pray for the synodal pathway and I would like to conclude with the synodal prayer for Sundays:

We stand before you, Holy Spirit,  
as we gather together in your name.

While we walk the synodal pathway,  
let there be a new Pentecost among us.  
Send upon us again the fire of your love  
Breathe in us again the breath of new life.

V. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful  
R. and kindle in us the fire of your love.  
V. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created  
R. and you shall renew the face of the earth.

### **Prayer**

Open the heavens, almighty Father, and pour out your Spirit upon your people gathered in prayer.

Renew the power of our baptismal cleansing and fill us with zeal for good deeds. Let us hear your voice once again, that we may recognise in your beloved Son our hope of inheriting eternal life. Through Christ our Lord.