

## **Pro-Cathedral / Donnybrook**

31 July / 1 August 2021

### **Welcome**

Welcome again everybody. As you know, there is an ancient pilgrim walk across the north of Spain called the Camino de Santiago. One of its many attractions is the variety of people you meet on the way. Pilgrims have different motives: faith, culture, fitness, holiday and so on. Occasionally you meet people on the walk who are facing a major decision and they just need a decent amount of time away and alone to mull things over. These people are trying to read their own hearts – what do they really desire deep down.

### **Topic**

This question stands at the heart of today's Gospel: "what must we do to do the works of God?"

### **Steps**

First of all, this is a very good question and a deep one. It takes the question what do I desire to a faith level, what does God desire of me? Perhaps we don't often think of it that way ... what are God's hopes for me? What kind of person does God wish me to become? Like the person I met on the Camino, this can be a major life decision; it can also be at any turning point in my life. In this new concrete situation, what is being asked of me? It is also important not to rush in with an answer but to stay with the question as long as I need to.

The Gospel according to John is a great resource here. In that Gospel, there are marvellous stories of people on a personal journey, such as Nicodemus or the Woman at the Well or the Man born Blind or Mary Magdalen. Not only does the Gospel offer inspiring quest stories (very appealing) – it is also full of really good questions. The very first words of Jesus in this Gospel are: what are you looking for? Towards the end of the Gospel, Jesus asks a similar but different question: whom are you looking for? In our Gospel story today, the crowd is a bit like ourselves. They are hungry for some deep meaning and direction but are not sure what that might be like. They ask a really good question "What must we do to do the works of God?"

The response on the lips of Jesus is also worth considering: this is the work of God, to believe in the one whom he has sent. This response takes us in two directions. Firstly, to believe here means not simply to be convinced about something but to trust. Believing in Jesus means entrusting ourselves to him. Secondly, to believe means to live a life in accordance with that fundamental act of trust. Here today's second reading can help us:

I want to urge you in the name of the Lord, not to go on living the aimless kind of life that pagans live. Now that is hardly the way you have learnt from Christ, unless you failed to hear him properly when you were taught what the truth is in Jesus.

You must give up your old way of life; you must put aside your old self, which gets corrupted by following illusory desires. Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and holiness of the truth. (Eph. 4:17, 20-24)

It is a big vision of discipleship and change. We are all called to such deep conversion of life and heart. Such faith, such discipleship is demanding, of course, but so is anything really worthwhile. It also brings with it fulfilment, deep happiness and a quiet, constant joy.

## **Conclusion**

On the Camino de Santiago, pilgrims receive a blessing at the start in Roncesvalles, which could be a prayer for everyone on the journey of life:

*O God, you brought your servant Abraham out of the land of the Chaldeans, protecting him in his wanderings; you guided the Hebrew people across the desert: we ask that you watch over us, your servants, as we walk in the love of your name to Santiago de Compostela.*

*Be for us our companion on the walk,  
Our guide at the crossroads,  
Our breath in our weariness,  
Our protection in danger,  
Our albergue on the Camino,  
Our shade in the heat,  
Our light in the darkness,  
Our consolation in our discouragements,  
And our strength in our intentions.*

*So that with your guidance we may arrive safe and sound at the end of the Road and enriched with grace and virtue we return safely to our homes filled with joy. Amen.*