

Dear Friends

As we enter 10th week of lockdown even with talk of restrictions easing etc I feel we are all finding the everyday life struggles even more draining in some way or another. Just feeling alive during the current pandemic is a challenge let alone let alone adding the word fully as the gospel reading did on Sunday. I began my sermon with a question What makes you feel fully alive?

I have continued to mull this over, yes the things that make us feel alive give us an enthusiasm or a passion in life, our *raison d'etre*. For some that might happen on the terraces or playing bowls (other sports are available). It might be through art, music our pets or nature. Each of us have those things which ignite and inspire us bring joy into our lives and make us feel 'alive' although I wonder is that feeling a superficial adrenaline rush? There is nothing wrong in that, some of those activities bring us joy and a much-needed distraction from the things in life that bring us down. We are all missing many of those joys in lockdown. I miss swimming, my hour or so in the pool had become my time to process all those strands of thoughts running through my head, in that interesting way they do when you have dyslexia. It is not only activities that make us feel alive, being in relationship with others is essential to who and how we are human beings. Some relationships drain us others nurture and support. For each of us that will be different, whether the relationship is personal or with families, groups of friends work colleagues etc. It is clear the true aim for Christian living is not what we do to live, but how we live in relationship with others.

The quote I used from Irenaeus, on Sunday *"The glory of God is man fully alive."* The more I think about living life fully the more I see how this one sentence is about what it means to be holy. To be holy means being fully alive; it means being fully in relationship with God and being the person in life God created us to be. This is not equivalent to the idea that of "living life to its fullest." When we talk about living life to the full or to the max, is self-indulgent that's not what Irenaeus meant about living life fully. A full life is not about being selfish and being self-centred with an attitude of this is who I am and everyone else has to put up with me. It is more about understanding ourselves so we can make sense of our feelings and reactions, our motivations, what feeds and what drain us. It is not about imposing who we are on them that is not living an authentic Christian life.

Lockdown opened up an opportunity for us to reflect on what motivates and what drains us and how who we are can affect others. This inner journey is not easy as we come face to face with our imperfections and insecurities. There are so many loud voices out there telling us we need to live a full and perfect life and how to be rid of all those imperfections we have o careful which on we listen to. I am beginning to comprehend what being true to the person God has made is for me. However, this realisation does not mean the discernment process stops t has simply given it a new clarity. May God's word be the only voice we hear, that still small voice that leads us, otherwise will miss out on the joy of living a life lived fully.

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