

Homily 14th June 2015

I get the distinct impression that we Catholics are at a critical moment in our history. Old certainties seem to have gone and we are a bit nervous about what the future may hold.

'I call you friends says the Lord, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father.'

Jesus makes known to the apostles everything that he had learnt from God his heavenly Father – the Faith once delivered to the saints and now taught and preached by the bishops and priests, deacons and catechists of the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church, the faith that you the faithful are supposed to follow, obey and propagate.

A couple of weeks ago the people of Ireland didn't just vote in favour of gay marriage, the people of Ireland voted against a church that thinks it has a prerogative on the truth. The people of Ireland voted against a church that thinks it can tell people what to do and how to behave.

'I call you friends says the Lord, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father.'

I do not believe that Jesus made known once and for all that people in second marriages should never be allowed to receive Holy Communion. I do not believe that Jesus made known once and for all that all homosexual acts are intrinsically evil.

One of my great ecclesiastical heroes is Diarmuid Martin, the Archbishop of Dublin. He is suggesting that what the Church needs is a reality check. The reality that we need to check into is the reality that Jesus calls us his friends, not his obedient servants but his friends. This will be the message of our missionaries from the Legion of Mary who are undertaking this week a Peregrinatio pro Christo – a pilgrimage for Christ.

Friendship with Jesus is not hierarchical. Friendship with Jesus puts us all on an equal footing. We are all friends of Jesus together. The Catholic Church is ultimately a shared endeavour, hence Vatican councils, Synods and Parish Pastoral Councils.

That 'everything' that Jesus learnt from his father is not, I believe, a great list of moral laws and commandments, that 'everything' is the 'everything' of love, friendship and mercy. And it's that the 'everything' of love, friendship and mercy that we celebrate as a community in the Mass.

So, what is the Catholic Church? Where does its future lie? Is it the Faith, delivered, packaged and prescribed once and for all or the Faith that as friends of Jesus we are still struggling to understand in all its fullness?

Is it a large, fully formed shrub where the birds of the air can find shelter and shade, or, a tiny mustard seed buried deep in the earth?

A community that has already seen the answers to all life's questions or a community that walks by faith?

'I call you friends says the Lord, because I have made known to you everything I have learnt from my Father.'

Pray for Pope Francis, pray for the Synod of Bishops meeting in October, pray for our parish.