

What should I preach about today?

How about social justice? *For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome.*

Or from the first reading, how about *the true shepherd* who will *bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong*?

And what about the great God of Judgement who *separates sheep from goats* and who says to the wicked *“Go away from me with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels”*?

And all this on a Sunday when we are baptising a young child and celebrating our young people.

The key for me is the second reading from St Paul where we find one of the most amazing verses in holy scripture: *Just as all men die in Adam, so all men will be brought to life in Christ.* St Paul is holding out the possibility that eventually every single one of us will be saved, that every single one of us will indeed *enter that Kingdom prepared for us since the foundation of the world*, that every single one of us will come to *dwell in the Lord’s own house for ever and ever.*

But doesn’t such a message undermine the moral life? Why feed the hungry and welcome the stranger if we are going to heaven anyway? And there is so much evil in our world. Surely some people really do deserve that *eternal fire.*

But St Paul never said that it was going to be easy. Jesus doesn’t come among us waving a magic wand and issuing us all with automatic passports to eternal bliss. Jesus comes among us as servant and slave to care for us and bandage our wounds, to suffer and die and, as we will pray in a few moments, to offer himself on the altar of the Cross.

There will be no other way. The *whole creation* really will be *set free from slavery*, but only in and through the Cross. This is heaven. This is the *Kingdom prepared for us since the foundation of the world.* These are the *green pastures and restful waters.* To share in the Cross of Christ, to share in his wounds and to share in his work of binding and healing, feeding the hungry and welcoming the stranger.

This is what it means to be baptised. This must be the joy and hope of our young people – to share in Jesus, to share in his wounds and to share in his work of redemption, *so that God may be all in all.*