

Reflection for Friday 3rd Week of Lent

Hos 14:2-10 Mark 12:28-34

Love is more important than sacrifice.

Jesus said that the two greatest commandments were: that we should love God with our whole heart... and that we should love our neighbour as ourselves. The Scribe agreed fully with Jesus, and went on to declare: 'This is far more important than any sacrifice.' In other words, love of God and loving service of our neighbour, are more important.

In our first reading, the prophet Hosea admonished the people for not bringing their lives into conformity with their worship. We have already seen that God is not impressed by a fasting that is divorced from justice and concern for the poor and the needy.

We too are challenged to bring our lives into conformity with our faith and worship. To offer sacrifice to God is a great thing. But to show mercy to a fellow human being is an even greater thing. And it is harder, especially when the person in question deserves to be punished, and when it is in our power to do so.

One thing should be a big help to us, namely, the conviction that we ourselves stand in daily need of God's mercy. And we should remember the words of Jesus: 'Blessed are the merciful; they shall have mercy shown them.'

It is tragic to find religious people devoid of the chief human attribute – compassion for others. But when a person combines true religion and deep compassion, you have a powerful combination. Here you have true holiness.

It is always easy to let worship become a matter of the Church building instead of a matter of the whole life.

We Christians today are being called to follow Jesus in a total commitment of heart, mind and strength, to loving God and to loving, unconditionally, our brothers and sisters.

During this Lent let us open our hearts to a total and unconditional love of God and of those around us.

May the Lord open our hearts when they are closed, fill them when they are empty, heal them when they are wounded, and mend them when they are broken, so that we, his disciples, may bear the fruits of love.

Fr Patrick