

It's a sad fact of life that in our world might is so often right whilst the weak and helpless are crushed under the heel of power, money, exploitation, and indifference by the powerful.

But our era of history is by no means unique in this respect.

I think we think it is because, in the past, we didn't have the suffering of humanity beamed into our homes immediately it happened.

And yet suffering's been with us since the Fall of humankind, embodied in Adam & Eve; and will be until Jesus comes again at the end of time when: "God himself will dwell with [us]. He will wipe every tear from [our] eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away." Rev. 21: 4

In our country the quality of our lives – on the whole – is very good.

Of course, there are people here who suffer from poverty and injustice; but compared to so many other countries we do live the good life.

We're encouraged by the world in so many subtle, and not so subtle, ways to do what the ungodly person says in the Book of Wisdom.

To: "Enjoy the good things that exist and make use of creation to the full. But let our might be our law of right, for what is weak proves itself to be useless." Wis. 6: 6 & 10

Or, to put it in the words of that great female jazz singer, Billie Holiday: "Them that's got shall have, them that's not shall lose. Yes, the strong gets more, while the weak ones fade."

Billie Holiday & Arthur Herzog: God Bless The Child

James is so right when he writes in his Letter that: "This wisdom is not such as comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, [and] devilish." Jm. 3: 15

In our reading from the Book of Wisdom, the world – the ungodly – home in on one man, and say: "Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions." Wis. 6: 12

This 'righteous man' is, of course, Jesus: He who will be tested: "With insult and torture [and a shameful death] so that we may find out how gentle he is, and test his forbearance." Wis. 6: 19

Jesus, who as He stands cruelly beaten and bruised before Pilate, proclaims: "I was born for this, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth." Jn. 18: 37

This truth; this wisdom, which the Church speaks is diametrically different to the wisdom of the world.

"The wisdom from above [as James says] is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity." Jm. 3: 17

With that in mind, let's put aside the notion of the Church as one human institution among many others.

So what is it that sets the Church apart? What is at the very heart of the Church?

Power: power is at the heart of the Church.

But I'm not talking about power exercised by the use of force, be it spiritual or physical; I mean the power of Jesus Christ.

The power Paul knew at work in him in the weakest moments of his life.

Those times when the Lord came to him, and said: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. 12: 9

And why he could say: "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." 2 Cor. 12: 9

So when Paul's at his weakest, then the very power of Jesus Christ rests on him: and that makes our faith a paradox.

It turns the wisdom of the world on its head.

And Jesus calls us to a completely different manner of life to that of power and force.

He says: "If anyone wants to be first, they must be the very last, and servant of all." Mk. 9: 35
The Disciples were no different to us, even though they lived in the physical presence of the Lord every day for three years.

When He told them that He was: "Going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days, he will rise from the dead." Mk. 9: 31 they were completely baffled. What bewildered them completely was the thought that the Son of Man, this divine figure who embodied God's authority, glory, and sovereign power, should have to take frail flesh, suffer, die and rise from the dead.

So, as Jesus and His Disciples go on their way, the Disciples revert to using the wisdom of this world by arguing among themselves about which of them is going to be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven: but that's not the Lord's way.

His power is far greater than that which the world has at its command.

So the power the Lord has entrusted to His entire Church, and her Bishops, Priests, and Deacons in a particular way, is to be the last of all, and the servant of all.

Monday/tomorrow, Monsignor Philip Egan will be Ordained as our Bishop.

His God-given vocation, as our Bishop, is to shepherd us, after the image of Jesus, the Good Shepherd; to teach us about the things of God; to help us to become holy through feeding us on the Word, and Sacraments of the Lord.

Then we will step through the 'door of faith' into a new beginning for our Diocese.

But let's remember that, as we: "Take the first step in faith, you don't have to see the whole staircase. Just take the first step." Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr.

And, that it's: "A journey that lasts a lifetime; and it ends with the passage through death to eternal life." Pope Benedict XVI: Port Fidei; 1

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

Eph. 3: 20 – 21