

Homily for St Pio Mass in Tempo;

There are two gifts that God has given us which if misused damage us greatly, and damage one another. The misuse or abuse of these gifts cause a haemorrhage in a family, or in a community. God is impatient with such a misuse. The first and most important gift which God has given us is the Heart. With the gift of the Heart we receive the capacity to relate and form friendships with one another. Jesus came among us to help us relate with one another. And relationships can be difficult. It is an area in life in which we often fail. We need to grow consciously in our capacity to relate.

Jesus made this gift central in the the sacrament of Baptism, when we become brothers and sisters with him, and with one another. Without the gift of the “Heart” we would be mere robots. We would cease to be human, and we would cease to have free will for through free will we make a conscious decision to relate with God, and with one another. We make a decision when we relate; we make a decision if we refuse to relate. The gift of the heart, and the gift of free will go together like the proverbial horse and carriage. The important word in relationships is decision.

So the “Heart” is central in our lives because our relationships are central in our lives. It is no wonder that when Jesus speaks of the Heart he always

talks about love and forgiveness. He says through the Prophet Ezek: 36: 24--28: "A new heart I will give you, and anew spirit I will put within you, and I will take out of your flesh the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and be careful to observe my ordinances". With the heart we can love one another, and we can forgive one another for without love and forgiveness we cannot be his disciple. St Pio whom we celebrate today was a saint of the heart, and his mission in life was to bring people together in love and harmony. He spent his life in healing the heart, and in healing relationships. This is the mission of Jesus and it is his mission also. So when we ask St Pio to heal us, we are asking him to heal our relationships with one another. This is always our starting point. "We cannot love God if we fail to love one another, and we cannot love God if we refuse to forgive one another".

He says that we are to love one another with our whole Heart. We are to love our neighbour as ourselves. This is a very awesome statement for here we touch the foundation stone on which a christian builds his life. Jesus expands on this in the gospel for he tells us that we can acquire "Hardness of Heart", a disease he says which is a sin against the Holy Spirit. "Anyone who says I love God and hates his brother is a liar, since a man who does not love his brother whom he can see cannot love the God whom he has never seen" And as we already know we cannot be his

disciple without the Holy Spirit who continually works within us bring us together. We are to develop our capacity to relate with our neighbour. We shrivel up; we wither; and we become less than we should be if we fail to develop the heart.

And Jesus gives us a barometer which helps us monitor the health of our heart. That barometer is love, joy, peace. The opposite is anger, resentment, disharmony, animosity, and grudges. And as we know there is much anger in our society. If we can't manage our anger, or our animosity, we have a broken heart, and we need the healing which only God can give. Healing begins in the heart.

The second gift which God has given us is the gift of Speech. It is through the gift of speech that we initiate our relationships. Without the gift of speech we are imprisoned in some way. This is why those who cannot speak use sign language, and enter into deep relationships with others. God compensates them, for their lack of speech while we look on in admiration. However for the majority the gift of speech is an important way of creating relationships. Jesus says of himself: "I am the way the truth and the life". If we are to imitate him we must tell the truth in our relationships. We cannot use God's gift to deceive, to mislead, or to misdirect another person. Jesus is the way, and he follows the way of the truth. Christians

therefore always speak to one another, even when someone does wrong. We may hate the wrong, but we must love the person for Jesus still loves that person. We must do the same.

We are to use our gift of speech to create relationships, and friendship in keeping with God's plan and design. So we ask St Pio to soften our hearts if we fail to speak to a brother or sister, and to soften our heart if we fail to tell the truth to a brother or sister. St Pio was very frank with those in confession who failed to tell the truth, or failed to live the truth.

Jesus tells us that he came so that we could have life and have it to the full. He died on the cross so that we could have life and have it to the full. St Pio received the five wounds of Jesus so that we could have life and have it to the full. On many occasions he healed people from spiritual and physical illnesses. In other words he brought them back into relationship with their family and friends. He helped have a more full life. So tonight we ask St Pio to give us that fullness of life promised by Jesus-- a fullness that comes through our relations with God, and with one another.

So we pray: "St Pio, teach us we pray, humility of heart so that we may be counted among the little ones of the Gospel. Help us to pray continually. Help us to acquire "the eyes of faith", so that we can see Jesus in

the poor and suffering, and in our brothers and sisters. Help us to say “Sorry” when we fail, and to realise that we are on a journey back to our father in heaven”