

LUX EDMUNDI: APRIL, 2014

The First Reading for the Mass of Palm Sunday is taken from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, Chapter 50, verses 4-7. The opening verse (i.e., 50:4) of this pericope is variously translated. In the Jerusalem Bible version – that used in the Liturgy in English - it reads: “The Lord God has given me a disciple’s tongue” and, in the Revised Standard Version/Catholic Edition, “The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught”. The profession of teacher is very much a profession of the tongue. We speak a lot in the course of our work and, when we use technology in the class-room, we often do so, in effect, to have someone else speak to our students in our place and/or on our behalf.

What the Prophet celebrates here is the Lord who gifted him with a “disciple’s tongue”, “the tongue of those who are taught”. This is the tongue of one who first listens, a tongue guided by what the ear has heard, what the mind has digested, what the heart has appropriated. Thus, later in the same passage, the Prophet rejoices because “The Lord has opened my ear (*Is* 50:5)”. The Lord is his teacher. What the Prophet says comes, not from himself, but from God. Isaiah speaks God, as it were. His message comes from God and is addressed to the People of God, specifically to “the wearied”, those who walk in the valley of the shadow of death, who must bear the awful burden of a life that, for one reason or another, is, or seems, or feels, useless, meaningless, and so intolerable.

We must speak God to those in our care, who, young and all as they are, “labour and are heavy laden”, who are “wearied”. In one of his sermons, St. Augustine says that John the Baptist was the Voice but Christ was the Word. We, too, are voices but Christ is always the Word we must speak. Christ is our Master, our Rabbi, and is, besides, always the programme, the course, the syllabus, the lesson, that we teach. Him, however, we cannot teach if we ourselves have not learned him, listened to him, absorbed him, digested him, appropriated him, made him part of us, the core of us and the heart of us, the life within that surges up and out to sustain, raise up, support and guide the “wearied” until s/he is strengthened to walk alone in the Spirit, with Christ, towards the Father.

We teachers do really talk a lot. We must learn to listen too; to listen, first, last and always, to Christ, to hear that which the Father asks of us through him and to hear, too, that which the young people committed to our care require of us. We must listen to Christ in prayer and reflection, often, like Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice, our Holy Founder, before the Tabernacle, to the Lord who speaks to us best and most clearly in silence, internal and external. We must listen, too, to those in our care, to all who comprise the school community, most especially the young, “the least”, to hear whom, to heed whom, to serve whom, is to hear, heed and serve the Lord.

The Easter Triduum is upon us, the summit of the liturgical year, when, by the power of the Spirit and in an act of *anamnesis*, the Passion, Death and Resurrection of the Lord will be made present to us. As we join in the Last Supper, stand at the foot of the Cross, hear before the empty tomb the deliriously joyful shout of the women, “He is risen”, may we have the grace to remember that, whatever our function within the school or within the system, whatever our immediate task, our enduring and definitive duty is to speak to the “wearied” the Good News that, because Christ died, rose and will come again, “All shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well”.

“May the Light of Christ, rising in Glory, dispel the darkness of our minds and hearts”:

“Tá Mac na hÓighe slán”. Moladh go deo le Dia!