

Triune GOD of Loving Communion and Life
Wednesday 9 March

Dear brother and sisters, it is such a joy for us to be able to take up again our Lent Station Masses, which we had to halt two years ago in mid-stream after celebrating only two of our nine Stations in Lent 2020 before the Covid Pandemic took hold and the lockdown came into effect. We did not imagine then that it would be a full two years before we could be together again in the encouragement of these evenings. We continue to pray that the worst of this Pandemic is now behind us and that we can return to some serene normality in our lives and parishes.

As each of us begins our Lent pilgrimage of personal renewal in our faith and discipleship our Station Masses, in which gather as cluster parishes with our local Catholic schools, remind us that we also make this journey together as GOD's People in the Diocese of Paisley.

Our Station Masses allow me your Bishop, along with you and our clergy and religious, to enter into this season of penance, and I know some of you have, in the past, made travelling to all our Station Masses, your own Lenten penance.

As well as being an occasion of penance, our Station Masses also allow me, as your Bishop, to nourish you with the good food of preaching and teaching, just as Jonah's preaching brought the people of Nineveh to salvation and the LORD's teaching introduced his followers into the infinite goodness of GOD.

I have chosen to dedicate this year's Station Masses teaching on the Creed in order to help us reflect upon and understand a little more deeply the Profession of Faith which we recite at each Sunday. In this short prayer we declare the essential whole of what we believe as Catholics and followers of Jesus. So it is a good thing for us to think a little about what we mean by those words.

This evening we will think about what we mean when we say: *I believe in One GOD, the Father Almighty.* We go on to profess that we also: *believe in One LORD Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from, Light from Light, God*

true God from true God. And finally we profess to: believe in the Holy Spirit, the LORD, the giver of life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified.

In this way we profess our faith in One GOD; that is to say that GOD is one in nature but that He is in Persons: GOD the Father; GOD the Son and GOD the Holy Spirit. Not three gods but one; not one Person but three; that is a Trinity, or a Triune GOD, Who lives from all eternity in Loving Communion. While our Jewish and Muslim brethren believe in One GOD it is only we, as Christians who profess this One GOD is Three Person, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. .

The great miracle of our faith, of course, is that this Almighty and Eternal GOD makes it possible not only for us mere mortals to know Him but to enter into the very heart and fullness of His Divine Life and Communion in personal friendship.

But Jesus, in His preaching, teaches us that we enter into knowledge and friendship with Him not so much by reading and study as by repentance and the confession of our sins and conversion of heart. That is why, in its simple essence, the Gospel calls us to repent and believe the Good News. It is only through repentant hearts and minds that authentic belief can be born in us and we can come to embrace GOD as He is, Our LORD and Saviour.

So Lent, as a season of repentance, is a precious time for getting to the heart of our personal relationship with GOD in faith and grace. And getting to know GOD is a personal task and not something we can cling onto as part of the crowd of believers.

In today's Gospel, we hear that *the crowds* that followed Jesus *got even bigger*. But, far from being impressed by their number, Jesus saw it as a cause for concern. He was concerned that when we live our faith as no more than part of a crowd we easily pick up wrong ideas that the multitude has about GOD. Like many, we begin to turn to Him only for signs, when we are in some dire need, expecting Him to give us what we need.

Of course the LORD does want us to turn to Him in all our needs and wants to provide for us all that is essential to our wellbeing and happiness in this life. Yet faith and discipleship

are more than that, and Jesus reminds us that authentic faith is born when we recognise ourselves as sinners needing to be saved by GOD's mercy.

The people of Nineveh are still the great biblical example of truly repentant and authentic faith. When Jonah was sent by GOD to warn them of the destructive path they were on, they responded by *believing in GOD*. They *proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least*. The King decreed everyone was *to renounce his evil behaviour and the wicked things he had done and call on God with all their might*. They are testimony to the blessings that come from preaching repentance and how it leads to new belief.

Not only did they believe in GOD but they immediately hoped in Him as a GOD of mercy and soon discovered Him to be a GOD Who preferred their salvation to their destruction. *Who knows if God will not change his mind and relent so that we do not perish?* And as their repentance taught them to hope, so the GOD of Israel proved to be a GOD of salvation. *God saw their efforts to renounce their evil behaviour, and God relented: he did not inflict on them the disaster which he had threatened.*

And still, the GOD Who reveals Himself to us in Our LORD Jesus is *even greater* than the GOD of Mercy the people of Nineveh experienced. His wisdom is *even greater* than the Queen of Sheba travelled the ends of the earth to hear from the lips of Solomon.

Jesus reveals to us a GOD Who is not just one, but three times merciful and wise. He is a GOD Who has lived from all eternity as a family; Father, Son and Holy Spirit in a living communion of life and love in which each Divine Person offers the total gift of Himself to the loving communion of the Whole. And it is out of this love that GOD, Who created humanity to share His glory, now calls out to us in a mercy that forgives and frees us from sin, raises us up to be born again to new life, and even draws us into the heart of His beloved communion as His sons and daughters, to know and see Him, Our GOD, as He truly is.

So, let us take up our Lenten repentance in the joy of knowing at its end is the prize of perfect communion with our Triune GOD, a GOD not just infinite, almighty and eternal, but a tender GOD of mercy and salvation.

