

Sermon or homily notes

Education Sunday 2012

LEARNING AND SERVING

Lectionary Readings

Revised Common Lectionary	Roman Catholic Lectionary
First reading	
Isaiah 40.21-31	Job 7.1-3, 6-7
Psalm	
Psalm 147.1-11, 20c	Psalm 147.1-6
Second reading	
1 Corinthians 9.16-23	1 Corinthians 9.16-19, 22-23
Gospel	
Mark 1.29-39	Mark 1. 29-39

Ideas to inspire your own sermon or homily

Mark 1.33 'The whole town gathered at the door' is an amazing verse in scripture. Its content is not high in theology nor too deep to understand. Its simplicity means that (probably) few sermons have used this as the key verse. But it packs a message!

Where, and when, does a whole town gather these days? At times of national or local tragedy. In a protest maybe? Certainly in celebration of a local Olympian or football team. Or at a book signing in a shopping centre?

In this passage in Mark, they gathered for one reason. The man inside the house was prepared to serve. More than that, he was prepared to serve anybody and everybody.

We are living through times of falling church attendance when not many gather expectantly waiting at the church door these days. Is it because they do not see a church that is prepared to serve? Does this mean the church does not serve in their communities?

No, we do serve and we need to honour those from within our church, and those outside the doors of the church who serve within our communities.

Service can mean all sorts of things but its basic definition is that it is a task that someone else will do either for love or money. It is where you or I are grateful for something that we are not prepared to do ourselves! How many times (even within the church) has the phrase .. "I am not paid to do this" been heard? In stark contrast, Jesus healed and helped many even as the town gathered, pushed, shoved at the door, just as each person in the crowd of 5000 had plenty of fish and bread.

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Those who work in education serve like this. Many of us are glad they do because we would not want to face a class of children or youth every day during term time! Too often the "that's your job" has been said into the face of the teacher, the youth or children's worker.

Recently a Christian visitor was talking with the head teacher in an inner city primary school. The head teacher had been in a long discussion with a parent who was complaining about something that they felt the school was failing in. The implication was that it was the school's problem and fault. However, the simple reality was that the 'blaming' parent could not see that they also were responsible. Instead of offering to help, they saw the whole thing as the school's problem. On more than one occasion it has been reported that the only time a head teacher sees a Christian parent in their study is when they come to complain.

Too often we let others serve because it is a task we are not qualified to do, yet we knock those that do it! If you and I are able to read, write or think .. it is because teachers gave their time, skill and .. probably .. patience too!

Henry Brooks Adams (an American historian, 1838 - 1918) is quoted saying "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops."

Yet for all this, the teaching profession has never been at a more critical state. Maybe teaching has always been at a critical state, but in times of rioting youth or debates about a broken society, it is education and the role of the teacher that is cited as 'the answer'. Indeed, the teaching profession at times is the answer for all sorts of community ills.

And if this is the case, would it not be better if churches were to approach their local schools and colleges with one simple question: how can we help? Maybe we can't (won't) teach ourselves, but we can offer simple support in a variety of ways, offering to serve as a school governor, listening to readers, serving on the parents' association and many other ways.

So did Jesus moan and huff at the large crowd? No. He served everyone, anyone.

Mark 1:29-39

v31 So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up.

Jesus gave his personal time to one person.

Supporting those who serve in schools and education needs us to find out what they are coping with. Teachers should be honoured.

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v34 and Jesus healed many

The church, the indwelling Spirit and the capacity to help many.

Part of God's inner resourcing of his people is that we are all equipped to support others.

v35 Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

The church can pray for strength, heart and vision, and pray for others.

We can pray for teachers, local schools, governors and all others who serve in schools in our communities.

v38 Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else-to the nearby villages-so that I can preach there also"

The church must ask "where else can we serve"?

In what other ways can we serve the local education community?

v37 and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

The church must respond, move out beyond church doors and approach those that serve in our communities, asking "how can we help?".

There is a fundamental problem with the concept of service in society today. The 'servant' is 'beneath' those that serve. We don't like being treated like a doormat. Jesus not only served others in life, He served all in death. In doing so, he gained the very highest place of respect.

May we as Christians, value, honour, support and respect those who work in education, who serve in our wider communities, and lift them up both before God and before the whole 'town'. In doing so, the wider community will listen to our message more readily.

Scripture quotations are taken from the New International Version of the Bible.

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The Education Sunday 2012 theme was devised by an ecumenical steering group co-ordinated by Churches Together in England representing the following Christian denominations and organisations: the Association of Christian Teachers, the Baptist Union, the Catholic Church, the Church of England and the National Society, the Methodist Church, The Salvation Army, the Student Christian Movement and the United Reformed Church. The material in this resource was written and sourced by members of the Education Sunday steering group. All worship material in this publication may be freely copied for single-occasion use as part of Christian worship. Any organisations or individuals wishing to reproduce this material in any other circumstances should seek prior permission from the Education Sunday Steering Group, Churches Together in England, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH.



The Methodist Church

