Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C) 2019

‘Alas for you when the world speaks well of you.’ This sentence put me in mind of Facebook and all those other social media platforms where people hope to get hundreds of ‘Likes’ for the things they post. (And if you don’t know what I’m talking about I hope you are able to stay for ever in your happy state of ignorance!) It is part of the constant longing for approval that we all (or at least, most of us) seek. But it is very distorting. It is a well discussed fact that people present the best and brightest side of their lives to the world hoping to give off a glow of prosperity and wellbeing. Which in turn give those who read these posts a feeling that their own lives are at best dull, and at worst an awful failure - this can sometimes have really serious results especially to very vulnerable people.

Though social media is a present day concern the attitudes that we find in it are as old as time. And these are what Jesus is speaking of in the Gospel. He is saying - don’t be taken in by what lies on the surface, and don’t place all your value on what will certainly pass away. He puts it very bluntly:-‘Alas for you who are rich: you are having your consolation now. Alas for you who have your fill now: you shall go hungry. Alas for you who laugh now: you shall mourn and weep.’ We should tremble, in our present age - for we know that we are relatively rich, we are certainly well fed. We are also given to distracting ourselves with fairly trivial entertainments.

But Jesus never condemns for the sake of it. He’s not like someone on Facebook ranting and raving with illogical arguments about something that has wound him up. He speaks to us in order to change us. So if we know ourselves to be rich and well fed then let us use our surplus for those who are poor and hungry. If we know ourselves to be wasting our time watching rubbish on television then let us find a better use for the limited time we have got.

Above all nothing lasts forever - except the deepest truths. The rewards for searching for truth are great - they are beautifully expressed in the first reading and psalm - in the image of a tree flourishing - looking vibrant and alive and bearing rich fruit. Making us authentic people - true to God, true to ourselves and presenting a true face to the world. We may not get as many ‘likes’ on Facebook in this life - but we’ll get an infinite number in the world to come!