

Sunday 15 B

Today is our annual review. For this reason St Paul to Ephesians is very relevant. He spells out God's purpose. Whether we go along with him or not, he is inexorably building one huge family of the human race. We shall only see it completed on the final day. We go with him when we build community.

In the past we have been unbalanced in insisting on a personal obligation to attend Sunday Mass. Of course it is important. But the purpose is not only a personal meeting with Jesus, but also a meeting and sharing in building the community.

We friars saw it vividly in S Africa. In the townships mass was leisurely, turbulent, dancing and singing with gusto, mothers getting on with feeding their babies. Mass was fun. In the posh white churches however it was formal and dead. You tasted the difference yourselves when we had one Sunday mass for all in the garden, with a picnic. All important: no separate masses, in touch with nature, leisure to enjoy company.

Yesterday we saw a brilliant example of the sheer joy of just being in a buzzing community. Superbly organised it was a setting for enjoying each other. Aine Cathy and their many workers did us proud.

There was affirmation of everybody: the schools and their activities, the dancing of the special needs children. All the parish groups were somewhere represented. It was fun.

Thank you. You did much to put the making of community well into focus as our task.

Now we also heard Jesus sending out his apostles. To do what? Mark says "with authority over unclean spirits." Do not think of devils with horns and tails, or mediums and séances and that sort of bad spirit. Jesus had equipped them to deal with a very different kind of spirit: the spirits in each of our hearts.

They met such as: the Spirit of selfishness: me first

The Spirit of self-assertion: I'll get my way no matter the opposition.

sometimes disguised under pious descriptions of caring for others, especially my children

The Spirit of greed: I want to possess goods, money, praise, to be important, have power

The Spirit of exclusion: keep others out of my cosy group.

Jesus said: go into a home. If they cooperate, then stay there and build
Otherwise just abandon them. - They were to build community.

We have had many good examples of deliberate community building: cinema in the garden, International evening, mass in the garden and yesterday among them.

The same good work goes on quietly in the many groups that make up the effective parish.

Telco deserves special mention because they go out to the wider secular world – dealing with spirits good and bad – and building bridges with Muslims and other faiths.

Then there are all the casual meetings such as parents at school gate.

Our spirit is the Spirit of Positive Affirmation. We applaud what is good. When we meet with what is amiss, even thoroughly bad we do not grumble or get angry. We see it as an opportunity to proclaim the Good Spirit: of love. In spite of difficulty we persevere, and do it with joy.

That we have done this year and for that I thank you. It sets our agenda for the next stage of building our parish community