

Memorial Mass for Canon Frank Mulvey

St. David's Cathedral

24th September 2014

Most Rev. George Stack

If you or I were told tomorrow that we could have anything we wanted in the world, whatever would make you happy, I wonder what our answer would be? Probably money to pay off the mortgage. Maybe enough to establish the children securely. Give up work. Get a decent car. Nice holidays. Good health. All the things people say when they win the lottery.

That is precisely the question God asked King Solomon three thousand years ago. "Ask whatever you would like me to give you" God says to the king. Solomon answers " Give me the wisdom and knowledge to act as leader of this people, for who could govern a people so great as yours?" God replies "Since you have not asked for riches, treasures, honour, the lives of your enemies, or even for a long life, therefore wisdom and knowledge are granted to you". No wonder we still talk about "the wisdom of Solomon" and treasure the nineteen chapters of the Bible which are called "The Book of Wisdom".

The first reading at Mass tonight is taken from that book. "The souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God". "God has put them to the test". "Their hope was rich with immortality". Don't these words describe the life and ministry of Canon Frank Mulvey? Sometimes we

think of the wisdom of God as a power that sorts things out and puts things in order in this world and in our confused lives. And it's tempting to think of order as something that works only in straight lines or in tidy patterns. Yet God writes straight with crooked lines. He invites us to see in the challenges and complexities of life opportunities to believe, to serve, to love, no matter what the cost, no matter who makes demands on us. That's what we call "loving our neighbour".

And this is how Canon Mulvey lived his life. With a real wisdom which was founded on the gift of hospitality which invited people in and gave them an unconditional welcome. They in turn gave him privileged access to their lives. That wisdom allowed Frank to welcome and wonder, allowed him to see good in others and a smile which reassured people of his own goodness – and theirs-even if they didn't always realise it.

That is why I chose Mary's great hymn of praise for the response to the reading. "My soul glorifies the Lord. My spirit rejoices in God my Saviour". True wisdom rejoices in God. Wisdom takes delights in people. It literally "wonders" at creation. "The Lord has done marvels for me. Holy is his name". Wisdom sees creation, and our place in it, as an expression of God's creativity and love. Our job is to see into the heart of creation, see into the hearts of people, and see there the spark of divinity, the spark of God's life no matter how often we distort and damage it by selfishness and sin. "There is more joy in heaven at finding the lost sheep than in the ninety others who were not lost".

Mary must have “wondered” in every sense of the word, when she saw her son suffer and die on the cross. Was this to be the price of her act of faith? “Be it done unto me according to thy word”. Why does God allow this to happen?

Tonight’s gospel tells of another mother who had to deal with the untimely death of a son, the widow of Nain. In raising her son from the dead, Jesus gave him back to his mother. “Everyone was filled with awe and wonder and praised God”. Once you have caught a glimpse of the love and mercy of God, once you have really experienced forgiveness, things can never be the same again. Where is God in the midst of human suffering? “Here” says Jesus with arms outstretched on the cross. The poet T.S. Eliot spoke about “The still point of the turning world”. The Carthusians say “ The cross stands still while the world turns”. The priest is called to reflect that “still point” to his people. At the centre of Frank Mulvey’s being there was a stillness, a calmness, a stability and security which wasn’t buffeted by dramas or crises, moods or mistakes.

The Book of Wisdom again:

They who trust in him will understand the truth,

Those who are faithful will live with him in love;

For grace and mercy await those whom he has chosen.

Trust. Faith. Understanding. Mercy. Forgiveness. Joy. These were the words of the preaching and teaching of Canon Mulvey. They were the living language of his life.