

HOMILY PREACHED AT SJH 12 noon MASS WITH BAPTISMS 12th SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY WEEK 22 YEAR A 3 SEPTEMBER 2017

Welcoming Poppie, Archie and Freddie, into the family of the Church. Hope they will grow into the Christian faith as the years go by, but whatever direction their lives take, God loves them.

Sometimes Christians seem to suggest that believing in Jesus will solve all your problems. That is not true in any 'quick fix' sense. In today's gospel reading, Jesus is telling his disciples that suffering lies ahead for him, and they too must deny themselves and 'take up their cross' if they want to be his followers.

Trying to follow Jesus often means behaving differently from what society expects. S. Paul tells the Christians in Rome to be generous to those in need – parts of our media are quick to use the label scroungers. He says we should extend hospitality to strangers – think of the general aversion to people who are different in some way. He tells us to associate with the lowly, whereas we prefer 'respectable' people. He tells us not to avenge ourselves, yet punishment of the guilty is a desire that many people cherish, or at least they feel that retaliation is justified.

Christians should not be wishy-washy, but these examples show that we start from a different place from the common assumptions of society – and this doesn't make for an easy life. Why then should anyone want to follow Christ?

First of all, his call has a ring of truth. His own life, and death, demonstrated God's love for all of us, and our lives will be fulfilled if we offer him our love in response: love for him and love for others. And secondly, the Christian way is a joyful way, not in a superficial sense, but in a deep way of becoming the people we were created to be: sharing his life as we live in the world. As Jesus says, we will find our true lives if we stop concentrating on getting what we want. The church on earth is not perfect – we all have our faults – but at its best it is a community where God's love is found and shared. It tries to make the world a better place and all of us, whether baptised today or years ago, have a part to play. I hope the family and friends of the three children have a marvellous day today, but carry the promises about dying to sin and turning to Christ into the rest of their lives – as indeed we must all do.