



Homily at the Academic Mass 2022 Christ the King, Bromborough ~ 6th July 2022

The Gospel vividly recounts an incident on the border between Galilee and Samaria. We recognise something familiar to our recent experience as we see Christ Himself observing public health measures prescribed by the Law of Moses. He sends ten lepers to the priests so their healing may be officially recognised. We can presume they each observed those health regulations established long before to prevent the spread of contagious disease. Yet, one alone returns to give thanks at the feet of Jesus – and he an outsider to the faith of Israel. It is this man who comes to know a still greater healing as Jesus tells him: “Rise and go on your way, your faith has made you well”.ⁱ

The Academic Mass each year is a moment of such thanksgiving for us. We come to give thanks for the work and witness of our 111 schools and colleges and for those who serve their life and mission with a sense of Christian vocation. Three years ago, gathered in Greater Manchester for this celebration, we could scarcely have imagined the global crisis we were about to face. The first pandemic in more than a century, that would see education disrupted and extraordinary public health measures implemented in our school communities.

Yet, this evening we now return unhesitatingly to give thanks for all that was achieved and been sustained during those troubled years. A time which may have marked the beginning of some of your careers and for others the end of their long years of service in Catholic Education. We can all say this evening that the mission of our schools and their Christian family life did not falter or fade during this time of crisis. This was due to your commitment. Echoing the words of the Gospel, it is our faith that makes us well and enables us to rise above all difficulties to continue trustingly on our way.

I think it is fair to say, our schools have lived for two centuries in a state of continuous crisis. Sometimes a crisis arising from lack of finance and resources; at other moments facing persecution, subtle or overt; or struggling to establish a right relationship with public authorities; or living through the disruption and upheaval of social change and global wars. Our schools have weathered every crisis. Yet, each chapter of their brave story depended on the same commitment of teachers, who often worked in the most challenging conditions with an unfailing sense of Christian vocation. If we ever lacked teachers with a sense of vocation, we could never sustain this great educational enterprise and the faith and values it stands for.

This crisis of vocation has, of course, been ever-present since the Gospel was first preached. The Church and the world depend on each generation being ready to rise in faith to their Christian calling. This has always been true of our Catholic schools. They have depended on each new generation of teachers being committed to their mission. As we give thanks to God for all that has been accomplished in Catholic Education across almost two centuries in Shrewsbury Diocese; and especially during the past two years of crisis, let us pray for all who will continue this mission. May we be able to continue to give thanks for the work and witness of our schools in all generations to come.

ⁱ Lk. 17: 19