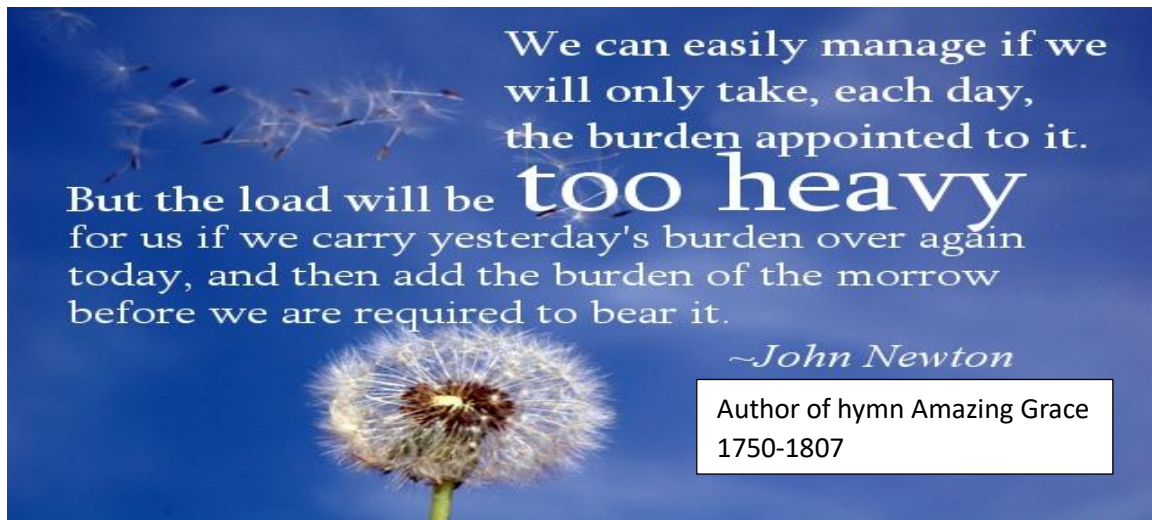


Scripture Reflection: November: Being in the Present and in the Presence



At the moment there seems to be a greater awareness of mental health and particularly the benefits of “living in the present” or “being present”. For the Christian this has been a central way of life since the beginning of the gospels and the very Early Church.

When Jesus calls his disciples each by name, to live and learn with him, sharing every moment of daily life for the whole of his ministry, they discovered what it was to live in the present with God and be in the *presence* of God. They did not really understand what it was until Pentecost happened though and the Holy Spirit revealed it fully to them.

The four November gospel readings reveal Jesus’ teaching method : unique for a teacher or rabbi of his time. It was a vocational, practical method where the disciples learned about God by being with God, day in and day out. They were fully present in his presence for those few years. It was more an apprenticeship

One of the November readings is about Jesus cleansing the Temple in Jerusalem and is really a parable in action. Its often misunderstood as Jesus just being in a bad temper, but reflecting deeper on the passage we may discover that Jesus is telling us that he is present with us today: our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

It is not that Jesus is only bothered about the sinful practices in the Jerusalem temple, but about how when we are in sin he will help us fight against it. Another of this month’s gospel readings is Jesus telling us that he is the life-giving bread that feeds us. In the Eucharist we are sustained and strengthened to fight evil and be with God. God will not abandon us. Just as he fed the Hebrews in the desert, he is sustaining us with his presence in the Sacraments.

The final reading is about the crucifixion. This must be the greatest of all teaching moments: this is God’s love in action. “Do not be afraid. Even death will not harm you. You are mine and precious in my sight”. Evil is overcome and God has prepared a place for us in the fulness of his presence.

Often, when we are at our weakest we know our need of God. We call upon him to strengthen us. The sick, elderly and poor have a special place with him as Jesus showed in his ministry. To pray is to rest a while in his presence often without words, just allowing ourselves to be at peace with him. St Therese of Lisieux calls being aware of God’s presence in the simplest ways of our lives “The Little Way”. This is the Christian way of living in the present: a healthy, mindful way.