

SUNDAY 23 OT YEAR C 2016.

Sanctuary. In the catholic encyclopedia this is described as a sacred place.

But it goes on to give further definitions:-

Shelter Sanctuary, for instance, that great catholic tradition where the church offers sanctuary, protection and safety for many persecuted and disadvantaged people.

A safe house for those who seek one.

One particular aspect of sanctuary, in these times, is the need to care for the safety of young people.

Under guidance of our Archbishop a safeguarding policy has been established, and we have appointed two safeguarding officers in this parish. Susan and Leisha.

Their role is to ensure the safety of all children entrusted to our care.

We seek your support at all times in helping them with this vital task.

Today marks the beginning of child protection week which is designed to emphasize and promote the importance of this program.

At first glance today's readings do not appear to have any relationship with this, but they do challenge us to true Christian discipleship, totally committed to the will of God. Putting God first in all aspects of our lives.

In Mark 12-33. We hear Jesus repeat the words of Moses. You must love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. And Jesus added another. you shall love your neighbor as yourself. So in putting God first we also have the responsibility of loving and protecting our neighbor, including our children.

Several other aspects of our gospel today.

Jesus tells us that if we are to be his disciples we must take up our cross and follow Him. This means that we should freely accept all the consequences of discipleship, which include difficulties, pain, even ridicule, just as we accept all of His help and blessings.

The two parables today illustrate that discipleship is not a One time decision, but involves an ongoing decision to persevere in the ministries that are integral to following Jesus.

When we first decide to follow Jesus, we know there will be a price to pay. Its only as life unfolds that we begin to understand the full cost.

There will be times of significant cost overruns for. The cost for Jesus was the cross of Calvary.

So today let us ponder upon what Jesus expects from us in relation to loving God, to loving our neighbor, especially our youth. And ask to Holy Spirit to be our helper and our guide.

This Sunday 4th September, in Rome, Mother Theresa of Calcutta is being canonized, that is her sainthood is recognized by the church.

We are all well aware of the selfless life she led, devoting herself to the welfare of the destitute people in her adopted country, India. Living out that commandment of Jesus to “love our neighbor as ourself”

But I wonder how many of us understand the spiritual agony she endured in what the church calls “ a dark night of the soul” where for 50 years she endured the absence of Jesus in her life, the same Jesus who had encouraged her so much in her earlier days.

The manner in which she endured this period of spiritual doubt and abandonment, without allowing it to affect her faith is an example to us all, and a mark of her sainthood. During those dark moments in our lives let us turn to St Theresa of Calcutta and seek her help and intercession