

Link to a simple act of worship - <https://youtu.be/JBkFkZvTABY>

<sup>5</sup>Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, *Philippians 2:5*

There are a number of what I would call cult movies or TV series that have attracted a group of dedicated fans that go to the point of seeking to enter into the lives of their favourite characters. So, anyone taking a walk through Tollymore Forest Park outside Newcastle, County Down could well encounter a group dressed as Viking warriors on a ‘Game of Thrones’ tour. Such a group, dressed in the costume of a favourite character, is being guided around the various spots where particular scenes in the series will have been filmed. Or on the first night of the latest ‘Star Wars’ movie, you may well see dedicated ‘Star Wars’ followers moving around dressed as Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader or such like. They may look like Darth Vader wielding a light sabre, they may talk like Darth Vader – but Darth Vader they are not.

Believe it or not, all of this came to my mind as I read over the passage appointed to be read today from Paul’s Letter to the Philippians. This passage is often referred to as the ‘Christ Hymn’. Paul moves into the language of poetry as he speaks of Christ emptying himself in total love – for God, for mankind – letting go of status, of dignity, of life itself.

Paul calls his readers across all generations to be like Christ.

<sup>5</sup>Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

This is an imitation of Christ that goes beyond mere externals.

We are not talking here about Jesus look-alikes. And it is more than just doing and saying the things that Jesus did and said. That can just end up in a pious self-righteous legalism.

<sup>5</sup>Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

This is a matter of the heart. This is conversion; conversion of mind, of soul, of heart, of life. This is a matter of what I am, who I am in my life before God.

Paul encourages us:

be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. *Phil 2:2-5*

I often find myself reflecting on words of St Francis. ‘Preach the Gospel at all times – and if necessary, use words.’ This is about bringing Christ into all situations of life, into situations of darkness, of fear, of hopelessness. We are called to be people of hope in the time and place in which we live.

Hope is a very precious commodity at this particular time. The re-imposition of restrictions, as first Dublin and then Donegal moved to level 3, has been almost harder to take than the original lock-down. People embraced the earlier restrictions; there was a feeling that if we stick to this we will beat this thing. With the resurgence in infections, we find ourselves asking; ‘Oh no- what will it take to beat this thing?’ Our health workers, still exhausted by the original surge in infections, now find themselves bracing for another. There is a danger of society dividing, one sector blaming another. Different groups in the

economy, such as inner-city traders, pubs and restaurants, feeling that they are being asked to shoulder a disproportionate burden. There are people seeing their livelihoods disappear and all that that entails for personal and family security. Then of course there are those who are living alone, those who endured the period of cocooning, some at considerable cost to their mental and physical health; these are now looking anxiously at the coming darker winter months.

What is needed now, more so perhaps than at the beginning, is a sense of solidarity one with another. This is where I find the injunction of Paul to ‘<sup>5</sup>Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus’ strikes a chord with me at this particular time and place in which we find ourselves.

I referred earlier to those Darth Vader look-alikes you may see outside a Star Wars Film Premier, wielding their light sabres, talking in that Darth Vader voice. They may look and sound like Darth Vader but Darth Vader they are not. And so we are not talking about being Christ look-alikes; we are talking of bringing the light and presence of Christ into the world in which we live and work.

It may not fall to me to be working in a lab developing a vaccine. You and I may not be working in the front line services (though many in our Parish do) but we can offer those simple acts of solidarity with those who do – wash the hands, wear the mask, maintain social distance when we are out and about. Then there is the simple phone call, knock on the door, the word of encouragement to those who are struggling at the minute, the isolated, those

who are anxious for whatever reason, the lonely. The Prayer of St Francis, which I often refer to provides a lovely framework for these simple acts of solidarity as we seek to bring the light and presence of Christ into these dark and troubling times.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen