

Being Father's Day, I thought it is time to tell a joke. That is, if you are able to laugh.

This parish priest, after Masses, was about to lock the church. And then he saw 2 strangers in the narthex, or in the foyer of the church. They were looking at a photo on the wall. The priest went up to them and said: "You have been staring at these photos, can I help you?" And they said: "Well, father, who are these people on the photos?". And the priest said: "They are those young men who died in the service". The two strangers quietly whispered something to each other, and they decided to ask the priest: "Father, you said they died in the service. Which one? Was it the 10:30 service or the evening service?"

Gathering together as a community of believers, has been a tradition that we have come to accept as going to church on Sundays. Why is this important? Why should we gather in church at all? And in these days, anyway, in these days of lockdown, we don't even go to that building. So, does this practice really matter to us? And what is the point of all of this? Does our spirituality matter? And what is spirituality any way? We live in a culture that considers spirituality as something optional, an optional extra. So, when does this optional extra become an integral part of who we are, of who I am?

I want you to recollect your life before this lockdown. The things that we were running after. Our jobs; our errands; taking children to events; socialising; and going on holidays. Everything seems to have come to a grinding halt. So, what happened to all those things that we were busy with? Do we want to go back to them? When all of this is over, hopefully soon, do we want to go back to the same busyness, or sometimes madness?

Last weekend, last Sunday, we had this thing called "Dial Dispin", and I must say I was kept very busy. It was very nice talking to a lot of people, a lot of our parishioners. Some calls went for a long time, which was nice, but one particular call, one of the young dads from our parish community, he was talking about "the loss of his church". He said: "You know, when I was a young boy, my mum took me to church, and we went together as a family to church every Sunday. But when I became a father myself, on weekends I am busy. Busy taking my children from one sporting event to another. We spend a lot of money on this. But the drawback is that we stopped going to church as a family. And slowly, that practice became invalid, or forgotten, in our lives. And in these days of lockdown, we as a family realised that we need to return to the basics, which is family, and our faith. This lockdown has taught me, and my family, to spend time where it is needed. To spend time on the important things of life. Like family meals. Family prayer. Playing together as a family. And we have introduced a family story time, like, listening to each other's story. 'What was your day like?' "

And he said: "In the madness of the normal life, we never had this sacred time. This lockdown, in some way, has restored sacredness to our family, in our individual life. Sacredness." And I asked him this very cheeky question: "So, do you want to return to the

normalcy or normal life of your past, before lockdown? He replied: "I will now know how to prioritise".

Ezekiel, in the first reading, stands as a watchman, he says: "I am a watchman". Why is he a watchman? Because the people have forgotten, and now he needs to remind the people of God's goodness and their need to return to God who is their protector. "And I will stand as a watchman to remind you of God's goodness."

Perhaps this lockdown is like a watchman, telling us to return to our basics. To what matters. To what is a priority in our life. Is your family your priority? Is a sacredness, deep down, your priority? Is your spiritual life your priority? Is your relationship your priority? Is spending time with your loved ones, a priority? Is spending time with yourself, a priority? Is spending with God, a priority?

Perhaps, this lockdown is a blessing in disguise. I know we suffer a lot, but, maybe, just like the responsorial psalm, that invites us: "If today you hear God's call, if today you hear the voice of God, do not ignore".

Maybe, this is the time God is calling us to return to the centre of who we are. That's why, when Matthew invites his community, telling them, it's not just you who will have this direct relationship with God. But you need to be with a community. You need to know that God responds to you: "When 2 or 3 are gathered in my name, there I will be with them". Let us return to the basics. Let us return to the centre of our lives. Let us remember that God is God, who matters. And what ever God calls us into will be a community that forgives, loves and shares Christ's compassion. And may the Christ, who gave everything to us, now be present among us, and may we have the courage to prioritise and have God as our priority.