

## HOMILY FOR 'THE RAINBOWS' 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY MASS

### **COLOURS OF CREATION -**

An old Indian legend tells of the arguments that arose between the colours of nature at the birth of the world. Each urged its own superiority as follows: **Green** – everywhere: grass, leaves, trees: a sign of life and hope; **Blue** - sky and sea, water the basis of life: offering space and peace; **Orange & Yellow** – sun, moon, stars; daffodils and dandelions; laughter and warmth; **Red** – blood, poppies, roses: life, bravery, love; **Purple** – kings and chiefs: royalty, power, authority; **Indigo** – deep waters: a sign of the need for reflection, prayer, and inner calm.

A thunderclap was heard and rain came down in torrents. A voice came from heaven urging an end to such rivalries and the necessity of coming together: 'God loves and wants you all: come together so as to bring God's promises into reality'. And so the rainbow appeared.

### **RACES OF THE HUMAN FAMILY -**

**Black, White, Brown, Yellow, Red:**

God loves all peoples equally and invites us to enrich/serve each other with all we have to offer.

### **THE SPECTRUM OF HUMAN PERSONALITIES - THE NINE TYPES**

There is a very ancient (early Christian) description of common personal traits or types of personality. This analysis was adopted and further explored for centuries by [Muslim] Sufi mystics. It was rediscovered by Christian (Catholic) spiritual directors in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. It points to Nine basic kinds of personality. The Greek word for Nine is 'enneas' and this description is called the '**Enneagram**'.

The Enneagram shows how we are each born with a particular dominant character or personality. This has character or nature has both positive and negative sides: i.e. there are aspects or qualities about our personality that are *beneficial* to us and to others; and there are also traits that are *harmful* to ourselves and to others.

The harmful traits are a kind of *distortion* of our real or best self.

By the time we are seven years of age these traits or personalities - for good or ill! - are already well formed and in evidence!

Of course, it would be simplistic to reduce any one of us to just one type of personality. We all borrow certain characteristics or traits from other personality types. Thus someone who is predominantly a 'Five' can have aspects of a 'Seven', etc.

We can certainly all benefit from recognising our own dominant personality type, and those of others. We can find personal encouragement to know we are not alone, and we can understand each other better, and live and work together more easily.

It is actually easier to identify what is our main 'character' or personality by looking at our negative rather than our positive characteristics (e.g. we try to avoid failure/ strive for success; we try to avoid any show of weakness/ be strong for what is right; we avoid any likely conflict/ build up peace).

The good news is that once we have identified our typical attitude and behaviour we can begin to diminish the negative side and develop the positive. We are at the heart of our identity: the '0' before the '1-9': we are in control, 'we are the captain of our soul'.

So we can choose to become more brave, more generous, more sensitive, more determined, more confident, more attentive, more fun to be with, etc.

This can happen especially during our teenage years [often a time of 'trying on' various *persona*] when we are developing in many ways – and, of course, beyond them: during our whole lives!

We can choose to integrate the positive traits of other personalities into our own – to 'merge the colours of the spectrum'.

**Jesus** is the most integrated person we will meet: the Gospel stories show how he overcame every negative and developed every positive human demeanour and pattern of behaviour. He is the perfect person to help us grow into our best and most fulfilled self!

## **THE SPECTRUM OF HUMAN SEXUALITY**

**H, L, G, B, T, etc.**

We now understand through the studies of science and by listening attentively to one another that there is a range of sexual orientation within the human family.

Heterosexuality (H) is, of course, the most common and the easiest to explain - and to provide for in our relationships with each other.

But the plain fact is that a significant number of people have other dispositions and inclinations (L, G, B, T, etc).

Each of these orientations may be difficult for other people to understand but it has to be acknowledged that they were not freely chosen but were born with – they are innate. Moreover they have to be lived with in a way that makes sense and offers fulfilment to the individuals concerned.

In the Catholic Church a distinction has traditionally been made between someone having a particular orientation or disposition and the active *expression* of that disposition in a relationship.

Certainly the church nowadays calls unequivocally for respect for each and every human being regardless of the colour of their skin, the personality which characterises them, or their deep seated (sexual) inclinations.

In our schools, from primary level onwards, and in our youth associations, teachers and leaders are rightly committed to give whatever support is needed to help individuals recognise and accept their nature and to encourage respect for them and acceptance of them by their peers. Surely this is as it should be?

Likewise, in family life these days such matters are more openly discussed and, hopefully, young people are being helped at home to be honest with themselves and with others, and are accepted for who they are - son, daughter, brother, sister, parent – i.e. a person to be loved and supported.

We should surely pray for such to be the case, and also for the church at large to adopt a *posture* and a *language* that pays due respect to all its members - in practice as well as in principle.

These are important matters for all of us to address.

In the time of Noah, as Scripture puts it, the sign of the everlasting, all-embracing love between God and God's people was the *rainbow*.

In the Christian era that sign is the *Holy Eucharist*, which we celebrate especially on this Feast Day. It is a heavenly reassurance for us in our time, upon which we can daily gaze, which tells us (as the words of the familiar hymn put it): *All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place* -

*'Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,  
A place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.  
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of peace,  
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions,  
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place'*.

(Marty Haugen, *Laudate* Hymnal No. 458)