

19 B

There is a legend told about Abraham in the near East. According to the legend, one day a very hungry man came to him and begged for food. Abraham rather hesitantly welcomed him but sat him down for the meal. But when Abraham heard him say a pagan blessing over the food, he jumped up, and ordered the man from his table, and from his house. Almost immediately, God spoke to Abraham. 'Abraham, Abraham! I've been supplying that poor man with food every day for the past eighty years and you couldn't allow him eat in peace on one occasion.

Jesus had room at His table for all who sought him. As a result certain people started complaining about the type of people he fraternised with. For instance when he sought the company of Zachaeus, who was a tax collector of dubious reputation, the Jewish leaders were none too pleased. He's gone to stay at a 'sinners' house', they said.

The Mass, our love-feast with Jesus, is the place of forging closer friendships not just with Him but also with each other. Jesus doesn't want us to be at permanent loggerheads with anyone when we come together for Mass. St Paul advises us today not to hold grudges or lose our temper or raise our voices to anyone or allow any sort of spitefulness. Just before we receive Jesus in Holy Communion at Mass we ask God 'to forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us'.

The same applies on the global stage. Powerful western democracies are often blind to the firmly held Christian beliefs of other cultures which are not modelled on their own. For instance on TV recently the president of America disagreed with certain elements of African culture which did not fit in with his own post-modern world view. The gap between the Catholic faith which has stood the test of time and the shifting sands of secularism seem to me to be getting wider and wider. The Pope talks a lot today about the new evangelisation but the

question we have to ask is: Are we, as catholic Christians, serious about re-evangelising the world or is the secular world going to evangelise us first - if we're not careful.

Even Christians in our world are divided on a grand scale. Some churches give the impression that their interpretation of Christianity is the only genuine one whereas those not of their persuasion would scarcely be seen as Christian at all. It's like the 'saved versus the 'unsaved', whereas God wants all people to be saved. Salvation is not the prerogative of a few chosen souls. It's open to everyone. As it says in last Sunday's gospel, when referring to the Eucharist, 'he doesn't send **anyone** away hungry when they genuinely seek Him.

Jesus, the Bread of Life, is the answer to all our family and global divisions. When we receive Him worthily at Mass He will expand our horizons and bring nearer the day when everyone will find a place round His Eucharistic table on Earth in preparation for the banquet of Eternal Life in Heaven.