

5B

On one of the San Francisco streets there is a funeral parlour with some beige curtains covering the window. In front of the curtains there is a sign which reads: 'Why walk around half dead when we can bury you for ninety eight bucks'. Well, we are walking round half dead if we have shut our eyes to what is harming us spiritually.

In the gospel today we see Jesus wasting no time but getting fully involved in the ministry of healing. The reference to 'casting out devils' would seem to suggest that the majority of his healing was in the spiritual domain. But physical healing was also on his agenda.

Here, we're not thinking about having a healthy body for its own sake which others can only envy, but how we can best use it to help others. It is interesting to note from today's Gospel that as soon as Peter's mother-in-law was cured of fever she immediately set about making the proverbial 'cuppa' for Jesus and his friends. This was her way of showing gratitude and getting on with the job. Some people hesitate to move on and seem to like being ill because of all the attention they get. Hypochondriacs are a bit like that. You have to feel sorry for them.

However, it would be useful to keep at the back of our minds that all healing of the body is temporary. We are mortal beings and have ultimately to face the reality of Death. Jesus warns us not to worry too much about that which brings down the body. We know there is a spiritual dimension to each person which survives death and Jesus tells us to concentrate on that more than anything else.

I believe that a person's incapacity to love is at the root of all spiritual disorder. When love is in short supply, it is not long before other forces fill the void. Jesus drove out the demons.

Metaphorically speaking they could be described as any power which takes away our freedom to love others. But there is a way to remedy this situation. We see in the gospel today Jesus finding strength through prayer. That's where we'll find it as well. Prayer is a journey into love. It is there that we get our spiritual batters recharged as it were and also discover what is blocking us from making spiritual progress. Our whole self, our whole person, body and soul, can be at the service of love. That how we become spiritually mature.

The apostles said to Jesus 'everyone is looking for you'. Well, we don't have to go very far to find Him. He is right here with us in this Mass. Through earnest prayer we can experience the healing power of His love. Let us not let that help go a-begging.