

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 lay you to rest for a hundred bucks'. Well, we may be walking round half dead and not be fully aware of it.

In the gospel today we see Jesus wasting no time in getting down to some serious 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 is also important because our 'invisible' spiritual side is expressed through the visible i.e. the body. In that sense, body and soul are one. As the Roman poet Juvenal wrote '*Mens sana in corpore sano*' – *a healthy mind in a healthy body*.

Here, it's not about having a healthy body for its own sake which others can only envy, but how we can best use it for the good of our fellow man and woman. It is interesting to note from today's Gospel that as soon as Peter's mother-in-law was cured of fever she was 'up like a shot', waiting on Jesus and, like the unforgettable Mrs Doyle, insisting He and his friends have the proverbial 'cuppa' and I'm sure a mountain of sandwiches to boot. This was her way of showing gratitude and getting on with the job. Some people make a meal out of their illness because of all the attention they otherwise wouldn't get. I suppose there is a bit of the hypochondriac in all of us.

However, all healing of the body, as we know, is temporary. We are mortal beings and have ultimately to face up to the demise of our bodies and the end of our earthly existence. But what we did in the body will be central as to how we spend our eternity. Scripture tells us that '*all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ, and each of us will get what he deserves for the things he or she did in the body, good or bad*'. (2 Cor:9-10)

So what we see with our eyes, what we hear with our ears, what we do with our hands, the words from our mouths, the places our feet take us will all determine where our lives are taking us. These senses and faculties we can use for good or ill. If they are used to put love into action then we are fulfilling the very purpose of our existence.

Jesus drove out the demons. A demon could be described as any power which limits our freedom to love and be loved. Lent is round the corner and it's a time when we endeavour to restrain the inordinate desires of the body which hinder us from placing those same bodies at the service of love. Through prayer and fasting which are bodily spiritual exercises in themselves, we can remove the debris which blurs our vision of where our lives are taking us in this world.

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. We are part of His Body. Let us entrust ourselves more fully to Him.