



Sermon on 14th Sunday after Trinity 2021 | Reverend Canon Stan Evans

**I pray that I may speak, and that you will hear,
in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Amen

Be strong, do not fear, here is your God. Isaiah 35: v4

How easy it is to be cast down and depressed if you sit and listen or watch world news - terrible conflicts, storms and floods, fire and atrocities.

Rosemary and I have just had a wonderful experience of being able to visit our families in Ireland, and also to meet old friends and enjoy so many dear people – all amazed that we had taken on such a journey.

There were a host of people to see with many links to us here in Lanzarote. It gave us an opportunity to thank many for their compassion and support. The Leddy family, who lost their dear son here two years ago, want to thank you all for remembering them and Mikey as we had lit an anniversary candle – their gift to us for our care was a generous gift to thank us for our compassion.



In a small rural church, which was part of my last parish, it gave me an opportunity to thank that group of folk for their compassion as they had collected and sent to us the supply of baby clothes which supported families with young children in Playa Blanca. Faith in action.

A visit to a Presentation Order in Kilkenny presented me with another opportunity to give thanks for a dear Sister in Christ, a sponsor of my Ordination, who was the Founder member of an organisation that has directed millions of euro to over 200 projects through the whole of Ireland, bringing love and compassion to those on the margins.

At a Eucharist in one of my former churches, I experienced incredible compassion from a 90-year-old widow with whom we left our family dog – and the compassion oozed from her for allowing her to have the dog as her life-long companion.

Then our final day in Ireland was ended with a visit to a dear friend who had lost his wife six years ago. His only concern – even though he was continuing chemo treatment for mouth cancer – was to offer us hospitality – kindness and compassion – as he prepared a wonderful meal for us.

It was a journey of mutual compassion. A moving experience.



Then we boarded the ferry at Rosslare heading for Bilbao, and in the bookshop on board I spotted a bestselling book – The Uninhabitable Earth – A story of the future – by David Wallace-Wells. ‘A must read. It’s not only for the grandchildren and the kids: it’s you. And it’s not only those in other countries: it’s you.

The book was a timely reminder of the happenings around our world – the Climate Kaleidoscope – with a chapter entitled The Church of Technology – highlighting the fact that climate change is already being solved, in the sense that a solution has been made inevitable by the speed of technological change.

It was a difficult and harsh read – haven’t finished it – as my distraction was the world news of the atrocities and disasters – particularly watching the scenes unfold in Afghanistan.

But then I accessed this morning’s readings as I tried to shift into a work mode – to be greeted by the scripture from Isaiah – ***Say to those who are of a fearful heart, Be strong, do not fear. Here is your God.***

As I watched the exit from Kabul of the ‘peacekeepers’ we could not have been more fearful for the women left behind.



Then I read the Epistle and the writer where the author urges his readers (and us) to be 'doers of the word, and not merely hearers of the Gospel, giving us an example of care for the orphans and widows.

In our Gospel we hear the story of the Gentile woman of Syrophenician origin – in a very difficult and threatening position. She is a gentile, a foreigner, a Greek speaker – and a woman. What right had she to invade their privacy? Could she not just accept life as it is?

In the time of Christ, cultured Greek speaking people, would have dismissed the woman as a gentile, a stranger, a foreigner, a Greek speaker and – wait for it – a WOMAN. Her religion, language, nationality and gender place her beyond their compassion. At first Christ appears to treat her with contempt; her dialogue with Christ must have sounded direct, aggressive in demanding healing and justice. And in demanding justice and healing for her daughter, she is, of course, demanding the same for herself too. This pushy woman forces herself onto the stage, addresses Christ in Messianic terms, and makes no demands for herself whatsoever, but pleads for the healing of her daughter.

Christ engages her face to face; he appreciates this encounter. She has already shown both her compassion and her faith.



The question now is – can the disciples also show proof of their compassion and faith?

On our return trip through Spain – in a small country town, with just the corner shop open for essentials on a Sunday morning – we were the strangers, the foreigner, not speaking the language. A queue waiting patiently for the hot crusty loaves that had been baked in a back corner of the shop to be distributed. Rosemary was suddenly engaged and invited to the front of the queue to be offered one of the first loaves. What incredible compassion to a stranger.

How do we respond to encounters like this? Are we Christ like?

Would we shun the visitor? Do we think we have some privileges that should not be shared with the outside or stranger?

This Gospel story questions at a personal, spiritual level too, when it comes to matters of faith.

I ask of myself:

How many times have I gone to God in prayer, and given up at what appears to be the first refusal?

The woman is rebuffed, but she is insistent. She refuses to accept what other people regarded as her fate and destiny.

The Revd Stan Evans

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ANGLICAN PARISH
ST. LAURENCE IN LANZAROTE

She receives the mercy and help she asks for, and because of her faith, her daughter is healed – healed instantly.

And in simple prayers we may find far more in the answer than we ever ask for.

I asked and prayed that I may speak to you in the name of the Lord.

The Lord has given us tongues, that we may know how to sustain the weary with a word. The Lord has given us a tongue to speak a word of encouragement to the insecure, a word of comfort to the suffering,

a word of hope to the hopeless, a word of wisdom to the questioning,

a word of grace to those who can't forgive themselves, a word of love to every beloved child of God.

A word of welcome to all.

Because this is how we show forth Christ.

Amen