

**Fr. Timothy Horner**

**VI Sunday of Easter Yr B 9 am Monks' Mass**

17 May 09

In late nineteenth century England, Queen Victoria had two leading statesmen alternating as Prime Minister: William Gladstone & Benjamin Disraeli.

GLADSTONE upright, high-minded, high-principled, morally earnest, classical scholar, a little stuffy, right up Queen Victoria's street, as one might have supposed.

DIZZY (no one would ever have dreamed of calling Gladstone GLADDY) flamboyant, dandy, a writer of somewhat romantic novels, a bit flippant, a brilliant debater: when accused of misleading the House of Commons, he retorted that what he had said was 'not an untruth but a terminological inexactitude'.

Which did Victoria like? "Mr Gladstone" she said, "always addresses me as though I were a public meeting", whereas Dizzy passed a bill in Parliament making her Empress of India and presented her, at least in the cartoons, with a special crown. She liked Dizzy. Why? **He treated her as a person**, Gladstone treated her as an institution.

What is the point of all this? It's part of what our Gospel is about. In our Gospel, Jesus calls us to **live on in his love, a highly personal relationship**. He goes on to say that we shall do so if we keep his commandments, just like him and his Father.

Note that keeping his commandments, though completely good in itself, is the means to the end, which is remaining in his love.

We need perhaps to connect what Jesus is saying here with what he had said to the Scribes and Pharisees, (Mt 23.23) "You who pay your tithe of mint and dill and cummin and have neglected the weightier matters of the Law: justice, mercy, good faith. You did ill to forget the weightier duties while you performed the others."

There is a real danger for the upright, the observant, (and by being here at Mass we show that we are at least trying to be that) of becoming immersed in rituals, rubrics, Communion in the hand, etc. Observance and attention to detail are goods, but they are

lesser goods, and there is a danger of losing sight of the fact that the Mass is not in the end about them. The Mass is about God and our personal relationship to him. Rituals and rubrics and so on are important, but as **means not ends**. It is so easy to regard Mass as an institution, when really it is more like a love-song to God. ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of your glory.’ Those are words one might sing to one’s beloved.

When we came in most of us took holy water to remind us of our Baptism. Were we grateful that God had made us his children at Baptism? I was, because I knew I was going to ask you that question, otherwise my truthful answer would be sometimes.

Do we regard the **readings** as God’s message to me today? In the **Preface** we hear: ‘We praise you with greater joy than ever at this Easter season.’ Do we? At **Holy Communion**, “The Body of Christ” and we reply AMEN, Yes indeed. Do we really mean it? Do we realize what the meaning really is? AND SO ON. We have been told all this often enough, and when we do it, it is a little act of **obedience**. Jesus tells us in the gospel, “if you keep my commandments, [obedience] you will remain in my love.” We monks take a vow of obedience; there is a lot of obedience in marriage. There is a lot of obedience in being the child of one’s parents. There is at least some obedience in being a parent. Obedience, if it is to be truly human, truly worthy of a rational man, woman or child, must be an act of love, it will increase our **personal relationship** with God. It is one of the surest ways of deepening our personal relationship with God.

