



The Parish Churches of S Philip and S Augustine and S Matthew with S Mary the Virgin Newcastle

Homily for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (15th February) 2026

I have long felt that the best sorts of lawyers are those who respond to a predicament not by telling their clients what the outcome should be, but, rather, by asking what result is desired and then finding a path through the forest of statute and case law to the preferred destination. Of course, even the cleverest lawyers sometimes have to advise that what is wanted just cannot be achieved; but as often as not, where there's will there's a way.

Over the centuries, and not least in our own day, a similar philosophy has sometimes pervaded theological inquiry, in that the conclusion is determined first and then the arguments to reach that position are sought. However, theology is not law; and whilst law is developed to serve the human community, theology, ultimately should seek to understand how we serve our God.

Theology is, literally, God speak: talking about the divine. As such, its conclusions are pre-determined, since what emanates from the mind of God is not a truth, but the Truth: Truth that is not vulnerable to contexts and circumstances.

The challenge that we face in discerning this Truth is that it emerges in the eternal realms, which are not subject to the frailties of mortal human society. This fact impacts not just on the conclusions, but also on the thought processes and principles by which those conclusions are reached. Yet, of course, we are not left comfortless in the search for Truth.

In the first place, God reveals something of Himself in the creation around us: the beauty and harmony of the created order, imperfect as it is, discloses a glimpse of the divine mind. Many argue that there is also something called natural justice; though the content of that can be difficult to discern with any certainty; and often it seems to be seen through the prism of other perspectives.

Secondly, there is the remnant of the divine image in which we are made. This responds to God's philosophy when we encounter it, pulling us back towards the Author of our life and being. Again, however, it is interwoven with our human frailty and it is not always clear that we are responding to what we believe we are experiencing.

Never-the-less, it is that divine image, which enabled the Jews gradually to hear and discern to voice of God. Theirs' was a faltering journey towards Truth: often it was those outside the mainstream, who grasped it more clearly; until along came Jesus Christ, the Word of God, in Whom, as we were reflecting when last I was here, was and is the fullness of Truth.

Yet, still we struggle; we might be further along the path two thousand years later, but the mummery of self-will and probably the very finity of our intellect prevents us in this life, separated from the full glory of our Maker, prevents us from grasping that fullness of Truth on which we gaze at Mass and seek to serve.

All of this can seem very abstract - something for the rarefied corridors of a few who are interested in such things; but it has a very down-to-earth significance. There should not be a thought, a word or a deed, which is untouched by the Truth; rather it should shape everything we think and say and do. Whilst institutional process might reflect on the great dogmatic issues, shaping creeds and formulae to guide us; but, whilst these shared statements of Faith might take us some of the way, in the specifics of our daily lives we are the only theologians available: there is nobody to whom we can outsource the task of weighing the factors of our individual lives and finding the Truth, which will guide us to and along the Godly path.

It is for this reason that we should pray regularly and frequently: not just when we despair of what to do, but also when we think that we have got it sorted in our minds - just in case we have not. Not all prayer, of course, occurs within a church building; but here we have the Sacrament of Christ's Presence in Whom is the fullness of Truth; and maybe our very proximity to Him will help keep the worldly philosophies at bay.