

Killaloe Diocese – Notes from Talk & Discussion on 22 May 2024
Speaker – F Pat Hogan, PP Moyross, Limerick Diocese

Points from the talk: Some of us see the poor and the marginalised as “others”, said Fr Pat, and once we do that it is easier to justifying distancing ourselves from “them”, thereby setting up a form of apartheid. We resent this naming of our position – but Fr Pat encouraged us to look at ourselves, and try to see both ourselves and those others in our lives as God sees us all. After the Resurrection, when Jesus met the disciples on the beach, he asked Peter three times “Do you love me?”, and in this exchange Peter came to see himself as never before, he saw himself through Jesus’ eyes, God’s eyes. There was no reprimand for his having denied Jesus three times on the last occasion they were in the same place together. Peter felt Jesus’ compassion for him, and this changed him. Jesus has the same compassion for us; our task is to become aware of this and let it change us.

Fr Pat told us he had lived for some years among very poor people – he called them “great people”, and noted for us that very many of them had simply become disconnected from the mainstream of the rest of us. He noted that surveys had concluded that about 40% of prisoners needed psychiatric treatment rather than imprisonment; in another case half of the men in one prison came from only four parishes out of up to 20 parishes.

We may not be able to solves or resolve all or even most of the problems of the poor people - but we do need to make connections with and for them; how we **are** with them can be enough to start to help change come about. We need to make the effort to see above the rim of the saucer in which we live! When we turn to the scriptures, we see that Jesus actually gives us no choice in this matter

Points from our sharing and discussion:

- Fr Pat’s point “You either deal with your trauma or you transmit” was felt to be very profound
- Knowing what you see rather than seeing what you know. You shouldn’t let your vision be confined and be able to lift yourself above the rim of the saucer to see the world
- Fr Pat’s presentation had resonances with the talk on first night on young people – we should be shepherds not engineers and walk with people
- It is to easy to judge everything from our own perspective rather than trying to look from the other person’s perspective
- People in poor areas have to work 10 times harder to overcome obstacles and to achieve what is normal for the rest of society
- Is their apartheid all of us and do we want to remain comfortable and ignore the poor and difficult sections of society?
- In the modern world we have become very private and insular and relate only to family and friends rather than society as a whole
- Having a cup of tea after Mass with the church goers, as they do in some other countries, is a way to stay connected with the community

- Self-awareness is important and this can help us be less judgemental of other people
- People thought that Fr Pat's points lined with the first talk on connecting with our youth – an emphasis on our need for self-awareness as a starting place, and working for authenticity in any relationship.
- Reference also made to being non-judgmental and having the approach of a shepherd rather than a critical judge.
- We are called to recognise the different forms of poverty and the different sources – for example, bad state or local authority policy; and especially the stigma of people having to live in certain areas from which they may never get good employment.
- One person told the story of the man sentenced to life imprisonment who spent many of his prison years helping others to achieve a better and more fulfilled life, thereby giving the rest of us an example against judgment leading to condemnation by “us”.