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18th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 31st July 2022.

Dear Parishioner,

I sometimes say to myself, as do some of my generation, *'God be with the days when the news came to us through the national newspapers, as well as the local papers and Radio Eireann.'* Now, there are many other sources of news and ways of bringing it to us. I am conscious that many *'Dear Parishioner'* readers will be depending on the traditional ways of getting the news but with the addition of local radio stations, like Radio Kerry. When I go to my computer, I find at least once a week and, sometime, much more often, reports from the *'Pro-Life Campaign'*. **In this past week, there were two such reports which made for sad reading.**

The first report had the heading **'Stephen Donnelly admits he ignored Garda advice and instead took guidance from radical pro-abortion group on introduction of exclusion zones.'** The report states that *'The Government exclusion zone proposal has nothing to do with public safety and everything to do with singling out a particular category of people, namely those who oppose abortion and criminalising the expression of their views.....It is part of a worrying trend in suppressing freedom of expression and basic civil liberties. Recently, in France, an ad showing happy children with 'Down Syndrome' was banned and deemed inappropriate on the grounds that it was likely to disturb women who had abortions. Where do we draw the line as a society!*

The second report that caught my eye was about two interviews done by Sarah McInerney on RTE 1, evening radio programme – Drivetime. The report stated that on the Wednesday evening programme, the presenter interviewed Senator Rónán Mullen about the decision mentioned above. It said, **'Before Senator Mullen was introduced on the programme, Sarah McInerney interviewed "pro-abortion campaigner. Dr. Mary Favier. Dr. Favier was given a soft interview, with no challenging questions in keeping with how RTE treats abortion supporters.....It is a well-established ploy of pro-abortion campaigners, ever since 2018 not to engage in on-air debates with pro-life representatives, as many of these same activists talk about the issue as settled and beyond debate.'** (Fr. Denis O'Mahony)

What Did You Hear Me Say?

Often, We Think We Are Listening – But Are We Really Hearing What Others Are Saying?

Have you ever wondered why people, who take part in the same conversation or attend the same meeting, give opposing and sometimes contradictory accounts of what happened? There is a simple explanation. People focus on different, though equally accurate, sets of information. Maybe you left a dinner party under the illusion that everyone present was up to date with your family news. Two days later a friend, who was with you at the party, phoned you to ask why she was left out of the loop. Everyone, except her, seemed to know all about your good news. She felt bad about being left out and you felt puzzled as to how she missed out. As children, most of us were taught that God gave us two ears and one mouth so that we would listen twice as much as we speak. **There is a widespread perception that there are just two elements to good communication: talking and listening. In reality there are three: talking, listening and hearing.**

People wrongly believe that hearing is a skill that develops naturally. Rather, it is a learned skill that is poorly understood. You can listen to every word in a sentence, yet miss the intended message because of a failure to pick up a change in the tone of voice. **To hear what is meant, not what is said, you want to listen to the words' meaning, hear the vocal variety, respond to the body language and intuit the emotional response.** People can only respond to what they think you mean, which may be an accurate or an inaccurate reflection of your intended meaning. If a teenage friend says *"Have you a minute?"* in a cheery tone of voice, it will have a very different connotation compared to a parent saying *"Have you a minute?"* in a sombre tone of voice. This highlights how identical words, spoken with different cadences, can communicate two very different messages. **If the tone of voice is altered, the meaning of the words is changed. You can understand now why, though two people can say exactly the same thing, one person's words sound pleasant and the same words from the other communicate the nonverbal message: You're in trouble.**

What's The News? During the first Covid lockdown one of my daughters suggested that the only way we were going to see each other was on Zoom. So, every Sunday evening, in our four different homes, the

Points to Ponder (Intercom July/August 2022)

computers go on the tables and we chat over dinner. As you can imagine, there are frequent interruptions to our conversations as dinner, dessert and coffee are served. Usually, a computer is muted when dishes are taken away or if there are background noises that could sound intrusive. A chorus of “Mute” will quickly remind anyone who forgets. My four daughters and I have a family chat group on WhatsApp. Almost every Monday, one or more of the girls will have a question about something they know they missed when their computer was on mute. One Monday morning my youngest daughter texted “*What’s your news mum?*” She had three replies from her sisters. “*Maybe that she’s writing an article for Engineers magazine.*” “*Wasn’t it that she’s not going for coffee with her new editor?*” “I thought it was the lunch on Thursday with her friend Liz. I am sad there will be no coffee.”

Those texts would probably have been forgotten if two people on the same day hadn’t asked me “*Where do you get your ideas from?*” One person was due to give a speech in his Toastmaster club and couldn’t think of a topic. He told me he was planning a holiday, starting in Spain, going on to Brussels and ending in Paris. “*Talk about your travel plans,*” I said. “*Your life is full of topics.*” “*Give me an example of how you get your ideas,*” the other person asked. “*From life,*” I replied and shared this insight from our family texts. Each daughter focused on a different, though equally accurate piece of information. Two communicated that they listened to the word messages and only one indicated that she heard the total communication. She responded empathetically to what was said and what was not said. The sentence – “*I am sad there will be no coffee*” – only makes sense in the context of tuning in to the whole communication. The non-verbal communication that she heard was that I felt sad that the editor could not meet for coffee. When we listen to words, we also tune in to the tone of voice, observe body language and eye contact, and respond emotionally. To check if people hear what you mean, not just what you say, try asking “*What did you hear me say?*” You may be in for a few surprises.

(Carmel Wynne Reality July/August 2022)

When we show up, act boldly and practise the best ways to be wrong, we fail forward. No matter where we end up, we’ve grown from where we began. **(Stacey Abrams, Reality Magazine, July/August 2022.)**

Today’s Gospel is a call to remember who we really are. It is a reminder that we are part of a community that lives in a radically different way. Its members have listened to the call of Christ the King who invites them to transform this world through a radical solidarity with all others by giving their own lives, and everything they have and are, for their brothers and sisters. This community was to be a model for the world. . **The world is not simply a glorified kingdom of disembodied spirits contemplating God’s self but rather a new heaven and a new earth embracing the transfiguration of the cosmos as well as the transformation of humanity** This approach sees the world as God’s creation, the universe as God’s sanctuary and puts an emphasis on rationality, connectedness and reciprocity. In practical terms, we cannot abandon humanity but rather involve ourselves in projects like the promotion of goodness, the struggle for justice and peace, and the care of the earth. Pope Francis reminds us that holiness is the most attractive face of the Church. He spoke in Croke Park during his Irish visit: *‘The Church is the family of God’s children – a family in which we rejoice with those who are rejoicing, and weep with those who grieve or feel knocked down by life. A family in which we care for everyone, for God our Father has made all of us his children in Baptism.’* Such a society would be truly rich. If all we think of is number one we are not going to add up to very much. **(John Scally)**

Seeing Your Life through the Lens of the Gospel (John Byrne)

1. *‘One’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions’*, said Jesus. What have you found by experience to be more important in life than possessions? What brought this home to you?
2. *‘Be on your guard against all kinds of greed’*. Perhaps you have seen how greed can lead to trouble in public life, in family life, and in the personal life of individuals. **What has helped you to guard against greed? What benefits have you experienced when you were less greedy?**
3. The message of the parable could be summed up in saying *‘If you want to give God a laugh, tell him your plans’*. Life takes many twists and turns we do not anticipate. When have you found that you had to change your plans because of unexpected circumstances? What has helped you to be flexible and resourceful at such times? **(Intercom July/August 2022)**

