

Homily: Diocesan Education Mass – Lancaster Cathedral

6th October, 2017

(Phil. 3:8-14. Luke 9:57-52)



At first sight there does not seem to be a great deal in common with Saint Bruno, whose feast the Church celebrates today, and the busy, often demanding and changing world of education which brings us all together to St. Peter's cathedral this evening. Saint Bruno is now remembered as a lover of solitude and of the desert, a contemplative who sought Christ in silence. A gifted teacher who died in Calabria, Southern Italy, around the year 1000, he felt called like Mary in the gospel story 'to sit at Christ's feet and seek the one thing necessary.' I wonder what lesson we can learn from the life of someone such as Saint Bruno? What can he teach us whose vocation is to teach others?

Bruno loved being still and placed a high value on silence, just being alone with the Lord in prayer and in quiet. He came to realise that there is a part of us, what we might call our deeper self which requires silent listening to the deeper voice of God within us. What Saint Augustine of Hippo described as interiority. Saint Bruno discovered that there is more to life than the frenzy of outward activity and the pursuit of material comforts. The words of St. Paul in our first reading sum up perfectly the goal of St. Bruno's life, and indeed of the whole Christian life, *'All I want is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.'*

The often hectic round of school, the classroom and college life, the demands of the timetable, SATS, Ofsted and the like, not to speak of the vast world of social media, pose a real challenge to the values of silence, recollection and constant prayer which underpinned the life of St. Bruno. When we engage in the education of young people we are laying foundations for their future life and its success. Saint Bruno would add that an essential part of that should be education in silence and reflection where the human person, even at a young age, can encounter the Son of God. A wonderful sentence from the prophet Isaiah makes the point, *'Thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and trust shall be your strength"'* (Is. 30:15).

So as a new school year gets underway, with all that is predictable and all that we cannot foresee, let us take the opening prayer for this Mass of St. Bruno as a guiding light for each and for all of us. In that prayer which speaks of God calling Bruno to a life serving God in solitude, we ask the Lord that with the help of Saint Bruno's prayers we may remain faithful amid the changes of this world.

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Bishop of Lancaster

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