

MICHELLE MORAN Q & A AT ADORE

The following is an edited selection of Questions and Answers from the ADoRE Zoom session on 25th February 2023

Question

One of the things that stood out to me was where you said that Jesus always walks close to those who are walking in the wrong direction. And we've got a number of people in our family, as I'm sure everyone has, who are definitely walking in the wrong direction. And we've a tendency, I think, to try and take control and do the Lord's work for ourselves. But I think what you're saying is just stand back and let the Lord do it. So, I mean, how would you say that we should approach a family member? We are praying hard. We try and get them to see the errors of their ways and everything, but not much progress. Have you any suggestions about how we should let the Lord take control?

Michelle

Thank you for that question. I know that that's an area that a lot of us really struggle with because, when you love somebody, you don't want to see them going in the wrong direction. You want to be the one who gives the instructions to get them on the right path. But I think sometimes our own pain can actually be a blockage. Now I'm not saying, therefore, don't feel pain for those who are on the wrong path, but I think to know that the Lord is close to them is an important thing. Because we can imagine that they've abandoned the Lord, which they may well have done, but the Lord never abandons or forsakes His people. I heard a friend once who was talking about his own son who was living a desperate life, caught up in all kinds of addictions. And he says, "I put my son into the Lord's hands every day. And I say, my son is preparing his testimony."

And I thought, wow, that was such a wonderful thing to say because, in that sense, there's the surrendering into the Lord's hands, but there's also that hope, even in a very, very desperate situation. He said, "in faith, I'm saying my son is preparing his testimony." So, just do that, but also recognize that we're co-workers with the Lord. So, if the Lord gives us an opening to say something, to do something, any little action, then of course, we'll respond as the Lord leads. But you know, maybe not to be thinking "it's all dependent upon me - I have to try and fix this situation." Because there are many things that only the Lord can fix.

Alastair

I think probably it's the wrong sort of approach to take, thinking we have to "teach them the error of their ways" because I don't think people respond to that. I think they respond to our witness and our love: the love that we experience from Jesus. And if we can talk to them about how we have grown in our journey, then that is probably a better witness than telling them they're doing things wrong.

Question

it's very hard when somebody you love is kind of denying everything and, you know, throwing God out with the bath water. So you feel you can't say anything because you're squashed straight away.

Michelle

Thank you. And I think that that's where we need each other, when we're in a place where the battle's strong and people are trying to put us down, we need other disciples to just help us to come back up, you know? And I think that's why days like today are so important, otherwise we can get ground down, can't we?

MICHELLE MORAN Q & A AT ADORE

Question

My question springs out of an amalgamation of Father Gareth's homily this morning and your talk. We've been in a black hole in our parish for the last 24 years. We've got a new parish priest who is despairing about the state of the parish. But any mention of the Holy Spirit or anything charismatic and he goes rigid and clenches his fists. You've obviously had a lot of dealings with the clergy so I wanted to ask some advice on how to encourage him and how to help him because he really is despairing, though he has definitely got faith. Anything you have to say gratefully received.

Michelle

Well, I'd say two things here. First of all, I think what we've been through the last few years has really been a challenge for many of us and many of our priests. You know, they went through all that challenge personally. We could never even imagine that our parishes would close, and they went through all that personally, and now they have to face the fact that the pandemic has changed everything. It's changed the way in which we gather in our parish communities and priests can often feel very alone and very isolated.

In conversation with quite a lot of priests these days, sometimes I feel that it's not so much the parish that needs the injection, but to work with the priest, first of all, because as leaders, they do need that encouragement. So I'm just encouraging you to be an encouragement to him and just to let him know that you are there for him, if that's the right way to put it.

I think when it comes to things like the Holy Spirit, charismatic, I think we must choose our language, just like we do in the world. When I'm trying to make connections with people, I'm not moving in straight away and saying, you need Jesus. I mean, they do, but that's not going to be my opening line. So I think sometimes with our priests, certain language has certain connotations. In fact, we were talking about this last week when I was in the United States, that a lot of priests have an image of charismatic that maybe they think they don't like, but actually they don't know what they don't like because they've only got an image.

So just choose your language there and ask him, "Father, what do you think we can do to help build up the parish?" You know, see what he has to say about that, rather than saying, "I know what we need to build up the parish. We need the Holy Spirit." Not that you do that at all, but just try drawing out of him things that then you can maybe build on and take some steps on.

Question

That was partly my question as well, and I'll phrase it slightly differently. I go to two parishes for different reasons and the priest at this second church knows I have a charismatic persuasion, as he calls it. But I had to go to the Latin Mass at lunchtime because it was the only Mass I could get to. So as I left, on the doorstep he just said, "Oh, lovely to see you. I know this isn't your persuasion, but if you came to these more often, it would deepen your spirituality."

Everything I'd been feeling just sank and I've been angry and irritated about that ever since. And I don't know how to challenge him about it because he knows a certain amount about my spirituality, but I thought, Latin mass is not the answer to my spirituality, but I don't know how to address him the next time. So any words of wisdom you have, I'd welcome.

MICHELLE MORAN Q & A AT ADORE

Michelle

It's interesting, isn't it? I mean, my first response to that is, do you need to challenge him? Is it one of those situations? I always think here of, you know, red card and yellow card. I think yellow card is a bit of a warning, but play on, you know, so that's always my check on things. Even though I can be offended by something, I can be annoyed, I can be angry about things, if I catch myself in time, I'll say to myself, "is this a play on or is it a red card?" Now that's a bit of a discernment thing, and if you think it's a red card, then think about how you're going to approach that.

Just to be able to say to him, "you know, Father, what you shared the other day wasn't very helpful because..." And then that will just help him to get another perspective. He may not agree with it, but it's just giving him another perspective.

Question

One of the things particularly we can take from what you shared, and that is the message of restoration by Jesus. And I think particularly listening to some of the people who've talked about problems with priests and that a lot of priests feel, post Covid, it's going back to the way things were, but from what you've said, the idea of restoration is not about that. It's about transformation and going forwards and perhaps that is what we need to ponder and reflect on. It's how can we encourage our priests to go forward and understand that restoration is not about going back, but it's about journeying forwards in faith.

Michelle

I really do think we're living in a new season. I know we've been saying this for quite a few years, but I think we're seeing the opening out of the new season now. Just picking up on what you said, I think it's absolutely true that the Lord's doing a work and it's a work of transformation. So looking back is important, but not so we go backwards; but actually so we can move forward, but in a new way and just to be looking for signs of the new season. To be celebrating that and to be preparing ourselves because I think the Lord is preparing us for the harvest.