I'm very dedicated. When I came back from holiday, I went on the parish website and I read Father Tom O'Connor's sermon. Just so I'd know what it said. While I was on the holiday, the apartment we were in had a front window that went about two-thirds of the length of the altar step. And it just looked out onto the promenade and the sea, and it was marvellous, and it ended up a bit like a retreat because we did do our office and say prayers together, me and Father Simon. And of an evening, with evening prayer, we found ourselves sitting on this settee where we said prayer and just staring at the sea for an hour or two and watching the late waves lap the shore. It was so relaxing and I forgot how much I loved the sea and how peaceful and settling it is. And it became very prayerful.

But then when we offered mass last Sunday and Jesus said in the gospel to the disciples,
     "Put into the deep," I thought, no way, there's no way you'll get me out in the sea in a boat. In the deep. Tossing in waves.
     " I've decided I am not a pioneer. I want to get to heaven in slippers. [laughter]

And so I was a bit shocked, because Jesus was telling us then to take good risks, even if it meant a threat to our life. Good risks that form and shape and mould and destine our future of what we will become.

So when I looked at the readings this week, I thought,
     "This is more like it." Jeremiah makes it clear what you have to do : A curse on such and such a person, a blessing on another type of person. And of course, he's reflecting the long tradition from Moses who came down Mount Sinai with the law in his hand, and he said,

"Today, I offer you a blessing or a curse. I offer you life or death. Obey the Lord and His ways and you will be blessed and have life. Go your own way and ignore them, and you will be cursed and find death."

And I thought,
    "That's simple obedience to a set of instructions. I really like that." It's just rules, isn't it? I can do rules. You know, I mean, the Ten Commandments. You might have broken one or two of them, but you can recover from that. But in the main you can keep them, can't you? You can keep the law, and that's easier to do. I thought,
    "You know, this just reminded me of sat on this settee on holiday watching the waves," bringing peace and security.

But, Jesus upsets the apple cart a bit with this because, He in the Gospel seems to reflect the prophetic tradition. But he said it's more dynamic than that. So in His own day, He knew very well that if you were rich, if you have lots to eat and if you are partying and laughing, you are probably part of the oppressive organization that crushed the poor and labourers. You are probably living on the work and labour of others. Whereas the poor, and he wasn't praising destitution, the poor were people who had lost everything and suddenly found themselves having no hope but to rely on God. It changed their attitude towards faith, because they'd nothing else to cling to and that's where he said,
    "How happy are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God."
And those who are hungry, and those who weep and were suffering, he was saying,
    "They will be vindicated."

And that brings the internal dynamic to the law unto faith. A dynamic that asks us to judge ourselves to, ironically, to go into the deep, the deep of ourselves, the depth of ourselves. And we have to do that now and again. We have to look and see,
    "Am I part of an oppressive culture? Are my actions, behaviour, my spending, the things I do, is that at the cost of the welfare of others? Or

is my life given in a positive way so that I can actually help those in need?"

And so Jesus sort of puts a nuance on the blessing and the curse. In other words, if you are part of an oppressive culture, then you're in a dodgy position. But if you fight for justice and equity for all you are in the blessing zone. In other words, He doesn't remove the ethic element of justice and equality from faith and if we stand and work for that then we're part of the blessing.