

SOME POINTS FOR A HOMILY AND/OR SPEAKER ON CHILD PROTECTION SUNDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2014

Feast of the Triumph of the Cross

LIVING AS CHURCH TODAY

The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. Perhaps a better title would be 'The Triumph of the Crucified', for his was a triumph of love over the betrayal and rejection that culminated in the cross. In the garden of Gethsemani Jesus committed himself to continue carrying out the mission given him by God. Faced with what must have looked like failure, he resolved to continue, come what may, to proclaim the truth that God is love: to continue to eat with sinners and to draw people into God's embrace, even if, to do so, he had to break across the religious expectations of his contemporaries. He said once that his mission was to set us free to live to the full (John 10:10). He was not going to let the threat of death deter him from that: 'Father, not my will but yours be done'(Matthew 26:39). The obstinacy of the civil and religious leaders, and the fickleness of the crowd, saw him condemned to death.

Jesus knew that love in the real world must include forgiveness, for we are not innocent. From the cross we hear him pray: 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do'(Luke 23:34). This forgiveness was for his own followers as well. Three times he asked Peter 'Do you love me?'(John 21:17), in this way giving him the opportunity to declare his love. Jesus' forgiveness was needed by Peter. It was important, too, to Jesus, for it freed Peter up to carry on Jesus' mission of love: 'Feed my sheep'.

Jesus confided the leadership of the church to a forgiven sinner. It is ever thus. Jesus promised he would be present among his followers till the end of time. He is still eating with sinners as we gather here at the Eucharist. The sinfulness of the Church is more than the sum total of the, as it were, private faults and failings, even crimes, of her members. Our personal sins affect the institution itself. Because we love the church, because we know the church to be the People of God, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, we are tempted to defend the church, when we should be naming the ways in which we and the church has sinned, acknowledging the sin and seeking forgiveness from those we have hurt. It is the message we are to defend, not the messenger.

While continuing to seek forgiveness we must find the courage to carry on the church's mission. Repentant, and more humble, we are to remember that in and through the sinful members of a sinful church the risen Christ continues to reach out in compassionate love to all, especially to the poor and the rejected. We need to name and acknowledge our sin, and seek forgiveness from those we have hurt. The strength to do this comes, as it came to Peter, from the continued love of the risen Christ. This love is assured, not only because we need it, but in order that the church will continue to reveal God as love and continue the mission of Jesus to embrace the world that God so loves (see John 3:16).

What do we learn from reflecting on this pain?

Do we every really learn? Or do we just gain some small new insight as we become aware of our own pain or we walk with someone in their pain of illness, loss of trust, financial loss, emotional loss, the effects of drought, abuse, loss of a son or daughter, disclosure of sexual abuse or

Does it take a crisis, a cross, a Royal Commission to help us to learn? Do events from our childhood sometimes hold us back because they are so emotionally powerful?

Is it natural to want to move on to more positive areas? To move towards Resurrection? Is this the meaning of the Triumph of the Cross?

Does war and terrorism move us to take measures (sometimes very reactive) to protect people and also open us to accept refugees?

Does drought and global warming move us to begin to change some lifestyle practices in the use of water, energy and fuel?

Do increasing living costs move us to be more careful of ourselves and more aware of reaching out to those worse off than ourselves?

Does it happen that some loss or some crisis in our lives can lead us back to prayer and to God?

Is this the Triumph of the Cross?

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The theme of Child Protection Week is ‘Protecting Children is Everybody’s business-Play your Part’

Each person in every Catholic Church community is asked to play their part in making our church a safe community for all by working to prevent abuse.

Our aim is to ensure that all communities and organisations within the church are safe and enriching environments for people of all ages, with special concern for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

What can each of us do?

- Be aware of and abide by Parish/Diocesan policies and procedures that aim to make our church a safe place for all
- Respect the dignity of each child, young person and adult in the community
- Be aware of the possibilities of abuse, not overly suspicious
- Trust our instincts, avoid gossip and consult with appropriate persons if you have any concerns about the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child, young person or vulnerable adult in our community
- Be open to acquiring a deeper understanding of the harm caused by abuse
- Undertake willingly the checks required by State and Church agencies
- Abide by Codes of Conduct and follow conscientiously Risk Assessment procedures
- Give of our time and offer to help
- Don't leave everything to Father
- Make a personal commitment to ensuring that our church is a safe community for all