



2nd Sunday of Easter (Year C)

Homily

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Archbishop of Perth**

**Sunday 28 April, 2019
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

In the opening prayer of this morning's Mass, we prayed these words:

God of everlasting mercy, increase we pray the grace you have bestowed ... that all may grasp and rightly understand in what font they have been washed, by whose Spirit they have been reborn, by whose blood they have been redeemed.

This is a beautiful affirmation of the faith which we are celebrating as we gather on this second Sunday of Easter which is, thanks to the inspiration of Saint John Paul II, also the Feast of Divine Mercy. Those of you who know the image of Divine Mercy, a copy of which is in our Sacred Heart Chapel here in the Cathedral, will remember that the red and white rays which come from the heart of Christ represent the gifts of Baptism and the Eucharist. It is these two precious sacraments, together with the sacrament of Confirmation, which are the foundation and the ongoing source of the grace which makes us Christians, disciples of Christ, and therefore people who are sent out to share the gifts of faith we have received with others, who are in so much need of this gift.

The power of these sacraments of grace was brought home to me last Saturday night when a number of adults were baptised, some others were received into full communion with us in the Catholic faith, and all of them together with a small group of others, were confirmed and admitted to Holy Communion. The joy on their faces reminded me, in a sense sadly, of how easily those of us who received the gift of faith as infants take that faith for granted and forget what a precious gift it is. It is why the prayer of today's Mass impresses me so much: it is an invitation to all of us to rediscover just how blessed we are to have this wonderful gift of faith and belong to Christ's Church.

Tragically the beauty of this gift can be, and has often been, badly disfigured by the ways in which so many Christians, so many of us, have failed and still fail to live up to the high ideals which our faith holds out before us. These ideals represent, in a way, the dream God has for us. They are the divine recipe for a life lived in integrity, in generosity, and in harmony with God's plan in calling us into life in the first place.

We find this dream illustrated very powerfully in today's readings, and especially in the first reading and in the Gospel.



In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles we are presented with a picture of the disciples, gathered around Peter, with people flocking to them from everywhere, bringing their sick in the hope that contact with these followers of Jesus would bring healing and wholeness into the lives of their loved ones, just as contact with Jesus himself had brought such healing to so many. And of course, as the Acts of the Apostles makes clear, this is exactly what happened. What Jesus did the disciples did, not on their own behalf, but in His name and through His power: he was present among the people again, healing them just as he had done during his life. In meeting the disciples, people were meeting Jesus. It is meant to be the same today

This morning's Gospel makes this clear. The disciples on that first Easter night were huddled together in fear, but Jesus, appearing to them in his risen glory, told them not to be afraid but to be strong and courageous, for he was sending them out just as the Father had sent him out. They were to continue his mission, to continue his presence among his people, to continue to make the love and mercy of the Father known.

When we say "they", of course, we really mean "we", because it was in their role as the first members of the community of Jesus which we call the Church that they were sent out by Jesus. And we, the Church of today, are similarly sent out are to continue the Lord's presence among his people, by making the love and mercy of the Father known in our time and our place, just as Jesus did.

It can be a daunting thing to realize that Jesus seeks to be present in his world in and through us: it is an awful, or should we say awesome, responsibility. It is almost as if the Lord is saying to us: *"I will be present among my people but I need you to let me do so, for this is why I created my Church and this is why I have called you into my Church. You must be my voice; you must be the bearer of my love and compassion; you must let my truth shine through all you say and all you do."*

As members of the Lord's Church, we bear this responsibility. At times it will be a privilege in which we will rejoice; at other times it will seem more like an enormous challenge, from which we might be tempted to run away.

We are perhaps facing such a time now, when our society is presented with so many challenges, and the traditional Christian response is judged by many to no longer make any sense or have any relevance. This is certainly true regarding a fundamental belief of our Christian faith: that the Lord is the giver of the gift of life and that our task is to honour and cherish that gift. The current efforts to legalize euthanasia here in Western Australia will test us in our readiness, or otherwise, to let the Lord speak through us and allow his voice, his truth, to be heard.

Euthanasia, or voluntary assisted dying, is just one of many issues which confront our society at this time. In the end they are all questions which pose the more fundamental question of who we are, who God is, and what the nature of the relationship between ourselves and God is meant to be. As Christians we look to the Lord Jesus for the answers to these questions, and we look to the Church, his gift to us, for guidance as we grapple with them. And so, once again, we are invited to ask ourselves: when Jesus says *"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life"*, am I prepared to take him at his word, no matter what this might then demand of me, even if it means, as he promised it would, that some people might abuse me, and persecute me and speak all



kinds of calumny against me? *“Rejoice and be glad when this happens”,* Jesus would say, *“for your reward will be great in heaven”.*

Today, right across the archdiocese, we are all being asked to consider what we can do to defend the dignity of human life and respect it as God’s precious gift to us to be lived for as long as God chooses to give it to us and then to be surrendered to God when he calls us home to him. Like the first disciples Jesus sends us today just as he himself was sent by his Father. May we have the courage and the wisdom to follow his way, proclaim his truth and live with fidelity the life he has given us.