



**30th Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year A)  
Cultural Diversity Mass 2020**

**Homily**

**By the Most Rev Bishop Don Sproxtton  
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

St Mary's Cathedral  
Saturday 24 October, 2020

Yesterday evening, as the sun was setting, our Jewish brothers and sisters would have gathered in their synagogues around Perth, and one of the first prayers they would have offered last night, is in fact words that we have heard in today's Gospel reading.

*Shema Israel*, "Listen, Israel". They come from the book of Deuteronomy. For the Jew, it is very much like a profession of faith. It is very active, because it involves listening – Listening to God in our lives each day.

If you've had the opportunity to visit the house of a practising Jew, you will see near the first door, a little capsule that is embedded into their wall. They will touch it as they enter and as they leave their house, and in that capsule is this very text. Reminding them that whatever is going to happen today, it would be part of that plan that God has for that person.

There's the invitation for that person to do their best or cooperate with God. As we sang in the psalm, 'Our God is our strength,' they believe as we believe, that the Lord is accompanying us in every event of our lives, in every situation of our lives, and in those situations, He will show Himself to be our strength.

Saint Paul was very taken by the response of those early Christian communities that surprised him, because of the way in which they had understood God's love. Because of that strength which they had felt each day in their lives, and that presence of the Lord in their lives. And the joy that they felt because they had come to know that God's love was supremely demonstrated in the death and the ascending of His Son, for us.

But the other part that we heard tonight about that famous saying of Jesus, 'Love your neighbours, as you love yourself,' comes from a different part of the Old Testament Scriptures, from Leviticus.

Jesus put these two commandments together, because as we learn – the rest of the law of God, hangs from them. This love that God has for us, is something that in our lives, maybe could take a long time for us to understand or appreciate.

Recently, in one of the talks that Pope Francis gave when he said, "Many times we hear people say and encourage us, to fix our gaze on God, on Christ, on Jesus." But he said in this talk, that the Father gazes at us with a joy, with a wonder, because we are creatures of God, just like every



other creature on this earth. However, we are unique, in the sense that we are so much like the God who created us.

God can see the potential in each of us. We are made in His image and likeness and with His working in our lives, with His strength – we can become what we are able to be. We can reach our potential. This then is the reason why we ourselves can come to the point of loving God. It starts by us learning to appreciate our place before God. Appreciating the way God which God see us, “He looks at us with eyes of love and mercy.”

I found this a beautiful message that Pope Francis was giving. Something that helps us to understand that we can, in fact, come to this love of God. But we begin by understanding who we are, what we are – not being afraid of what the Lord sees in our lives. He will see the good, and He will see the limitations, but not to be afraid of that.

Because He continues to look at us with eyes of mercy and love. There’s a beautiful movie I saw recently, based on a true story. It is about a Bishop who sent a priest to a Church, with the end goal of closing the Parish and merging it with a neighbouring parish community. This particular priest had been chosen to carry out the task, as he had a background in advertising and media.

However, when this priest arrived at the parish, he discovered that it was difficult to carry out this task, because there was a group of Korean refugees who had come to Myanmar and who had the support of the local community. So instead, the priest worked very hard to allow them to do the things they needed to do in order to establish their home here within this community, to find work and to provide for their families.

This story did show the power that a presence a newcomer has on a new community. It would have been wrong to shut the community down, because there was work to be done for the group of refugees, there was also work to be done for those more established, older parishioners in that community, because they started to become more welcoming of the newcomer. They ended up collaborating with the Korean refugees and the outcome of this movie was a good one.

The community also began to understand and appreciate each other’s food, cultures, religious traditions that they were bringing to the community.

There was a revival or recovering of something that is necessary to Christian living. This then meant that through working with their ‘neighbour’ working with these Korean refugees, that this parish became vibrant again.

Here in the Archdiocese of Perth, we are blessed to have so many parishes, who have parishioners from overseas and they are making profound contributions to their communities and sharing their traditions, cultures and food with the community.

This evening’s Mass is in a way, how we are giving thanks to the Lord for this change, that is and has occurred in our Catholic communities. We give thanks for the way in which, with each wave of migrant or refugees who joins our communities, how each of them brings each special gift. It is not always easy to break into these communities or to be able to contribute a gift, that you have to bring, and yet it is such an important thing that is done to enrich our communities. Your presence has in so many ways, enriches these communities.



The Catholic Church, above any other community, should be a place where everyone is welcomed, and a place that everyone can find their feet in our society.

I will end my homily by reflecting on this altar here in St Mary's Cathedral. You will notice that no matter where you stand or sit in this Cathedral, this altar is seen in its' full dimensions. Because it doesn't have a length and a width, it has eight equal sides. This means that no matter where you are, you can see this altar and be connected with this wonderful symbol of Christ. This means that we all have a place at the table no matter who we are.

We thank God then, for the invitation, and pray that all of us in our own turn, that we will welcome the newcomer in our communities. That there will be a place for the newcomer in God's church.