

INTRODUCTION

Our Mass Commentator introduced today's special intention, saying,

"Today our parish celebrates Child Protection Sunday... with the theme, "See Me, Hear Me".

We are invited to reflect on the importance of the safety of children within our community.

We also bring to prayer those who have been abused within the Church, families, and other institutions.

(Light the remembrance candle on the altar)...

As we light our candle of remembrance,

We remember those who have suffered spiritual trauma as a result of church members actions...

With a listening heart, a heart that sees and hears,

We are called to hear the voice of our children

and the story of victims reaching out for support and healing.

Please stand and join in our gathering hymn, *We Are Called*".

Our parish Child Protection Officers, Lisa at 6pm Mass and Clare at 7.30am and 9 am Masses addressed our community again on issues of child protection. Thank you to Clare and Lisa.

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL – PARISH APOLOGY

This coming Monday, I invite our Parish Pastoral Council to discern once more on our community response.

I invite our parish leaders to assist our community in [PREPARING A PARISH APOLOGY](#).

IN SINCERITY, WHAT DO WE APOLOGISE FOR IN THE ACTIONS, INDIFFERENCE, IGNORANCE AND WORDS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN OUR REGION?

IN CHURCH ABUSE, TREATMENT OF INDIGENOUS, SILENCE ON ISSUES OF JUSTICE, SILENCE WHEN OTHERS FACE DISCRIMINATION?

HOW DO WE CONFRONT EVIL IN OUR WORLD?

HOW DO WE STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH SURVIVORS?

WHAT SHOULD WE ADD TO OUR CURRENT CHILD SAFETY PROTOCOLS, POLICY, TRAINING SESSIONS, CODE OF ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR, BLUE CARD CHECKS, NATIONAL POLICE CHECKS, AS SPECIFIED BY THE ARCHDIOCESE, AND SUPERVISION?

Our [REMEMBRANCE CANDLE](#) on the altar reminds us at every Mass of our call to protect children and vulnerable adults, to remember that Jesus calls us to reach out in love and solidarity with those abused and ignored by Church. And their spiritual trauma. We still have a long way to go.

TODAY'S GOSPEL - MATTHEW 21:33-43.

The landowner is God.

The People - including Israel - are the vineyard.

The tenants are the religious leadership.

The servants are the prophets and those sent by God.

The son is Jesus.

We can visualise Jesus telling this parable.

He is in the Temple. The chief priests and elders have challenged his authority.

He responded with a question to them.

He tells them a parable of the two sons and the vineyard - in last week's Gospel.

Then he follows on with this parable of the wicked tenants.

Verse 45 says,

"When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them."

The tenants in the parable behave terribly.

"But the tenants seized his slaves, and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way.

Finally, he sent his son to them...

So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.'

Though it is nearly 2,000 years ago since Jesus was killed, rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, we continue to follow the Risen Christ as his followers.

We are never alone.

We always have the Holy Spirit with us as our Advocate,

And the sacred promise of Jesus

"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:20

We too carry the cross, as followers, as disciples, as people in love with Jesus.

This weekend we have heard from Clare and Lisa,

that child protection is the responsibility of the whole community.

We all have a responsibility, we all have oversight.

We don't leave it only to the roles of our Child Safety Officers,

or our Parish Priest, or Parish Council.

IRAQ

At 9am Mass today, we have Fr Douglas Bazi concelebrating.

He is a servant who was sent into the vineyard in his native land of Iraq.

Yesterday he spoke at a Conference about his experience several years ago.

He was beaten and tortured over nine days.

Beaten with a hammer by terrorists in Iraq.

I've heard from others and read his story over the years.

Yesterday I listened as he told his story personally in front of us. I could find no words.

It was like hearing it for the first time, in a different way.

The story told by a survivor.

And the betrayal of trust by neighbours,

who did not protect the persecuted in their villages and cities in Iraq.

Today near the end of our Eucharist, on this Child Safety Sunday, he will share about the safety of children in Iraq.

ABUSE

Yet it is not just about terrorism in Iraq.

We know terrible stories of people suffering sexual abuse in churches and in families and in institutions in Australia.

The terrible criminal acts by perpetrators in the church and in society and in family, and the cover-ups by irresponsible authorities. Reminding us of today's Gospel.

SPIRITUAL TRAUMA

In addition to protection policies and procedures,

We need to understand the spiritual trauma people have suffered.

- We need to see Jesus in them.
- We need to hear Jesus in them.
- We need to remember how Jesus reached out to the abused and marginalised.

Looking for Jesus today, we find him in solidarity with the abused and marginalised.

As Church, as followers of Jesus, we need to be where Jesus is.

A spirituality, a presence in solidarity.

Seeing and hearing Fr Bazi yesterday on Iraq was powerful.

The persecution of Christians and other minorities by terrorism was frightening.

So many neighbours betrayed the minorities and severely damaged any trust.

Seeing and hearing people sexually abused by the Church in Australia can show the deep hurt and spiritual trauma and sense of being betrayed.

Again any trust is severely damaged.

Let us see and hear.

Let us commit as a whole community to safety for our children and vulnerable adults.

Let us commit to journeying together.

In Solidarity we pray.

Fr Gerry

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Abuse in Australia and Iraq – 8 October 2017]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/100817.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook08102017>]



Image: 'Parable of the Wicked Tenants'