

HOMILY – CELEBRATING OUR LOVE OF GOD AND NEIGHBOUR – 24 APRIL 2016
5th Sunday Easter 24/4/2016

In preparing for children's BAPTISM in our parish,
PARENTS are invited to CELEBRATE the anniversary of their child's BAPTISM every year.

Parents are invited make a COMMITMENT to celebrate their own baptismal anniversary annually. The Godparents are invited to celebrate their own baptismal anniversaries too.

Some parents are surprised when they come along for preparation sessions.
Surprised that they are invited to a PARTY, even in a small way, every year.
They see that children need to see their parents and Godparents celebrating their faith journey on their anniversary.

On the baptismal candles are placed the name of the child and the child's baptismal date.
The parents are invited to place the baptismal candle somewhere at home, visible to the child. Once the children are old enough to read it, they too can remind their parents of the special day and the party to come.
The candle is lit, yearly, on birthday, baptismal anniversary, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and other special times. Lit while the family prays.

Parents are invited to display the baptismal certificate so that children can see it.
Not putting the candle and certificate in a drawer for safekeeping where they are never seen.

As a church community we renew our baptismal vows each year at Easter.
Parents are asked during preparation to reflect on what baptism means,
And during the baptismal ceremony, parents speak about it to all gathered in the church.

There are many aspects to our understanding of baptism, and one of them is LOVE.
In baptism we celebrate the love of God for us.

Today's Gospel JOHN 13: 31-35 calls us,
"little children".

Loved by God, we experience humility as we realise that we are little members of God's family.

Jesus tells us:

*"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another
Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."*

Do we expect Jesus to love each of us, both individually and as a faith community?
We do, because Jesus promises it.

There is a major TEMPTATION in life to treat everyone the same.
We are all equal, but not the same, as sometimes we are happy one moment and sad the next.

Jesus LOVES us where we are.
Jesus loves us and INVITES us to love more deeply.

Let us explore LOVE in action.

Today one of the major international issues is the way we treat REFUGEES and ASYLUM SEEKERS.

Many different cultures, expressions of faith, attitudes, fears of conflict, injuries - physical, emotional, spiritual and psychological.

What is the situation in which they find themselves?
WHAT DOES OUR BAPTISM HAVE TO DO WITH THEM?
HOW DO WE LOVE THEM AS JESUS LOVES US?
HOW DO WE LOVE HUMBLY?

As a parish, we respond in different ways to those in South Sudanese villages, in northern Iraq, in Blackall in Queensland, in our neighbourhood. Each way is different.

HOW WOULD WE SUPPORT REFUGEE FAMILIES IF THEY CAME TO LIVE HERE IN OUR PARISH?

There is the temptation to read, hear or see a news item on refugee families, and forget it, or think we know the answers.

IN WHAT WAYS WOULD JESUS CALL US TO LOVE THEM, all the time reminding us to be humble?

We would begin in prayer, and be guided by what Jesus shows us.

We would

- consult with people already in our parish from that country, if possible,
- listen to their stories
- find time for conversational English
- find time to go shopping or have a cuppa
- find time to be neighbours.

We would learn from them and others about THEIR

- cultures, values, nation's history,
- social customs, beliefs,
- concern for family and friends back home
- grieving, fears and traumas.
- occupations and hopes for work,
- educational needs,
- need for housing here,
- need for friendship,
- cooking,
- music
- way of loving and rearing their children,
- respect for family elders,
- need for privacy.

Being in BRISBANE we would learn about

- the settlement agency MDA that offers temporary housing, trauma counselling, case management and other services.
- our own St Vincent de Paul Society and what it offers refugees.
- other religious and community groups who have been assisting refugees in Brisbane for many years.
- our school system, about Centacare, and other parishes.

The list goes on.

NO QUICK FIXES.

BY BEING INVOLVED, WE WOULD LEARN AS WE JOURNEY WITH THEM.

HUMBLE ENOUGH TO KNOW THIS ENCOUNTER WOULD CHANGE US.

All the time remembering that through BAPTISM,
WE are CALLED TO LOVE OTHERS AS JESUS LOVES US,
TO WELCOME OTHERS because JESUS WELCOMES US.
Not to put our baptismal candle and certificate in a drawer,
But put them where we can see them and remind us
That our baptismal journey is to LIVED.

When we CELEBRATE our baptismal anniversaries each year, we celebrate our JOURNEY with Jesus and our neighbours, whoever God places before us.
We celebrate through God's grace, our own self-discovery, our giftedness, our LITTLENESS.
We celebrate our LOVE FOR GOD AND FOR OUR NEIGHBOUR.

Let us pray.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Homily – Celebrating Our Love of God and Neighbour - 24 April 2016]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/042416.cfm>]