

HOMILY – DELIVER US, O GOD FROM OUR BONDAGE - 6 DECEMBER 2015

We hear in the Gospel about the wilderness where John the Baptist appears from. We hear in the psalm,

[“Deliver us, O God from our bondage as streams in dry land...”](#)

The earth is in BONDAGE- in drought – the people in drought sow in tears - but the promise is that they will sing when they reap. Today we remember the ‘gift of water’, which our parish knows and values, with a number of years supporting the Water Wells Project in South Sudan. We know that it is not just choosing a village, but it is all that goes with the village preparation - where they are going to grow their food, where they are going to have the well for cleanliness and ablutions - to drink, to be life-giving and how the village interacts with all this. It takes months. It is all a question of PREPARING for the project.

Last weekend we held our parish survey and filled in the survey forms. The one that you ‘ticked’ the most – 77% - was to explore how we may support a sister parish in a drought area of Queensland. Terry will ask our parish World Action Group (WAG) to coordinate both projects in South Sudan and a sister parish in a drought area.

Does that mean, for example, monetary support?

Does it mean, maybe, having children from the bush come down to our parish and taking them to the beach? What is it going to mean? We will follow up early next year. But is it not just lack of water that is ‘the bondage’ – what is the bondage that people suffer in drought or when they haven’t got a water supply - in a Queensland drought or in South Sudan?

What is the BONDAGE in our life where Jesus promises to free us, whatever that bondage is? The Gospel of Luke highlights in today’s Gospel passage, imposed leaders who are occupying their country and making their decisions for them, instead of empowering them. The powers were with the Roman emperor and the governors, who were telling them what they could be or what they could do, according to Roman rules instead of their own. And Jesus offers to free them from Their BONDAGE– to make the path straight.

What bondage are we asking God to take away from us? And only each of us – individually - can answer that.

What are we asking Jesus to take away, which holds us in bondage this Advent?

More than that, it is a very positive message in the Gospel – how are we preparing the way of the Lord, in expressing the love of Jesus more fully in our community, in our families, among our friends and for the needs of the world?

What is our prayer, individually, to God and, as a parish community- as we prepare for Christmas?

- to Prepare to SEE and TOUCH God’s love more fully around us.”

We know, as of yesterday, that a draft agreement has been developed at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Paris.

In the Christmas Crib we have Pope Francis encyclical letter, 'Laudato Si' – On Care for Our Common Home.

Last week world leaders and delegates, scientists public servants and negotiators arrived in Paris and are trying to work out – as a human family – how do we move together to protect our Mother Earth, so that we are not trapped in BONDAGE, but we are 'PREPARING' for a better world.

How do we do that, with countries working for their own national interests?
How do we as a human family come together? And how do we pray for our world leaders?

You know sometimes things seem to be across the mountains - the mountains behind us here – they seem to be away from us and they don't make any sense to us. For example, we all have our own ideas on refugees.

Could I just give you a different dimension on that?

We have one family in our parish community here, and through being related through marriage, they have lost seven members drowned in the Aegean Sea last month – three adults and four children – Stephen and Silvana as parents, their children Angie and Mark (Mark's body has not been recovered). Silvana's sister Samah died with her two children, Haneen and Marvin. They got to Turkey, struggling there and decided to go on to Greece with a group of other people - and they all drowned. Their funeral was only this week in northern Iraq, in their Syriac Catholic church - we remember them. It is not just statistics, but it is PEOPLE and this time it affects our community. We have a family here in our community who are in mourning. Fr Gerry points to our front wall with a Pope Francis photograph embracing a refugee, placed there for the 'Year of Mercy'.

Whatever are the world issues – what are our own individual issues, that we are asking God now, to FREE us from that bondage? Help us to PREPARE even more fully for Jesus who is present in our midst – to be more open to Him and to be more open to love people, to seek more direction from Jesus as to what we do in life.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Homily – Deliver Us From Bondage – 6 December 2015]