

'DO WE RECOGNIZE THE REMARKABLE HAND OF GOD BEFORE US?' – HOMILY - 6th May 2018

Sixth Sunday of Easter - Year B

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

Imagine all of us were invited to go into our prayer chapel.

Imagine there is a wonderful party there and that those there will be truly blessed.

Most of us could not fit into the room.

Most would miss out.

A church that seats 400.

A prayer chapel that accommodates eight.

The vast majority of us will miss out.

WE ARE ALL INVITED | GOD DOES NOT HAVE FAVOURITES

Today's First Reading from Act of the Apostles

opens up the small room into the wider church space.

This morning we would have room to celebrate. Not just 8 people.

In this incredible biblical story today,

instead of only Jewish Christians being the ones invited,

we all are invited. There is room for each of us.

From all our different cultures of the world.

God does not have favourites.

UNDERSTANDING THE DRAMATIC TURNING POINT

Let us understand this dramatic turning point in the church's history.

This event had a major impact on the whole church and on ourselves today.

It was confirmed at the council of Jerusalem, recorded several chapters later.

Let us see why.

EARLIER IN CHAPTER 10, WE DISCOVER THAT:

- Cornelius is a centurion of the Italian Cohort. He is a Gentile, not a Jew.
- He lives in Caesarea.
- He is a devout person, charitable, and prays constantly to God.
- He receives a vision of an angel who invites him to send for Simon Peter in Joppa.
- He sends three people to Joppa to find him.
- As they are journeying, Peter in Joppa receives a vision, which puzzles him.
- The three delegates of Cornelius arrive.
- Still upstairs, the Spirit says to Peter,
"Look, three men are searching for you. Now get up, go down, and go with them without hesitation; for I have sent them."
- Peter greets them, hears their story and provides hospitality for them.
- The following day they travel to Caesarea with some Christians from Joppa.
- Cornelius invites his relatives and close friends to be present.
- The dialogue is between Peter and Cornelius, but both have invited others.

IN TODAY'S READING THREE SELECTIONS FROM THE PASSAGE IN ACTS OF THE APOSTLES:

1. *"On Peter's arrival Cornelius met him, and falling at his feet, worshipped him. But Peter made him get up, saying, 'Stand up; I am only a mortal.'*

It is unlawful for a Jew to mix with Gentile.

So Peter has already broken Jewish religious law by travelling up to see Cornelius.

And he tells Cornelius that God has shown him not to reject Gentiles.

Cornelius explains his vision and his openness to do what God commands.

Peter does not stand on status or pomp or privilege or favouritism.

He does not want Cornelius bowing or kneeling before him or worshipping him.

Peter reveals this dramatic change with the words:

2. *"Then Peter began to speak to them: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. "*

Remarkable.

Yet an even more remarkable moment happens.

God again shows the initiative. The Holy Spirit acts.

3. *"While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, 'Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?' So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.'"*

IF ONLY WE COULD APPRECIATE - WHERE GOD IS LEADING US TODAY?

The remarkable ways of God.

Cornelius acted, following God's invitation and revelation.

Peter acted, following God's invitation and revelation.

They both followed God's direction and the world changed.

The remarkable happened.

WHERE IS GOD CALLING US TODAY INTO A CHANGE OF THINKING?

DO WE HAVE THE COURAGE TO FOLLOW? TO ACT?

INTO THE REMARKABLE AND SURPRISING?

[PAUSE]

GOSPEL OF JOHN 15:9-17

The Second Part of the Homily is a brief reflection on today's Gospel.

BEING IN LOVE WITH GOD

Being in a loving relationship with God.

Remaining in God's love.

Living the commandments of God.

God's desire for us – that God's joy will be within us. To the full.

The Gospel says:

***“As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love.
If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love,
just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.
I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you,
and that your joy may be complete.”***

A COMMUNITY of LOVE

Not only tolerating each other.

Not only respecting each other.

But loving each other.

And willing to sacrifice ourselves for each other.

The Gospel says:

***“This is my commandment,
that you love one another as I have loved you.
No one has greater love than this,
to lay down one's life for one's friends.”***

FRIENDS OF GOD

Loving God and God's commandments changes us.

Dramatically.

Truly loved. We become Friends of God.

Truly trusted as friends. Truly loyal as friends. Truly caring as friends.

The Gospel says:

***“You are my friends if you do what I command you.
I do not call you servants any longer,
because the servant does not know what the master is doing;
but I have called you friends,
because I have made known to you everything
that I have heard from my Father. “***

GOD CHOOSES, GOD COMMISSIONS

We are Chosen. It is not our initiative.

We are Missioned, we are Commissioned.

To Bear Fruit in the world.

Let us name some of the fruit that we bear.

Let us name some of the fruit we still need to bear.

(Pause)

The Gospel says:

*“You did not choose me but I chose you.
And I appointed you to go and bear fruit,
fruit that will last,
so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name.
I am giving you these commands
so that you may love one another.”*

There is so much to take in from both Readings today.

Let us take the time during this week

to ponder the remarkable initiatives of God in our lives.

Let us pray.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://usccb.org/bible/readings/050618.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook06052018>]

After today’s homily, there is a [PASTOR’S ADDRESS](#) at all Masses

- Fr Gerry introduces the 3 revised documents on Child and Vulnerable Adults Safety in our Archdiocese. Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults:
‘Prevention and Protection Policy’.
‘Implementation and Accountability Strategies’.
‘Support Document’.
- He speaks of increased categories of ministry for Blue Cards, Training, National Police Checks.
- He explains the procedures now required of every priest in ministry.
- He speaks of the dangers of sexual predators who seek ways and openings to groom people in institutions in Australia.
- He speaks of vulnerable adults and the increased need for national police checks in Australia and in ministries in the church.
He speaks of the Volunteers document to be given to parish volunteers.
- Fr Gerry indicates that he will take a proposal to Monday’s Parish Finance Council for a new casual parish position to implement the revised and more expansive protections and policies, and explains how that could be funded.
- This role would also assist our parish Child Safety Officers, Clare and Lisa.
- Fr Gerry calls for a moment’s silence to pray about what will be involved.