

'FACING UP TO THE CHALLENGE' - HOMILY - 3 SEPTEMBER 2017

FATHER'S DAY

Today we celebrate **FATHER'S DAY**.

We pray for our Dads and Grandfathers
And those significant adults who have a fatherly influence in our lives.
It is a day of gratitude for many. A day of saying thanks.
And a day of remembering.
And for some, this day brings back terrible memories of abuse.

SEASON OF CREATION

Last Friday, September 1st, we began the **SEASON OF CREATION**
Which extends from Sept 1st until Oct 4th each year.
We pray for God's creation and **we commit**
To a deeper understanding for what it means to care for creation.

Year Three students gathered for Mass on Friday
And 2 children brought up a plant in the opening procession.
It is to be planted in the **Prayer Garden**, as a symbol of our caring for creation.

CHALLENGES

AND YET, WHAT ABOUT THE CHALLENGES IN LIFE?

Fr Hans Zollner SJ, from the Vatican, has been a guest in Brisbane this week.
His schedule included briefings, clergy workshops and on Saturday, a day with lay leaders.
As a Psychologist, Psycho-Therapist, Theologian and Priest,
He shared his experiences and challenges.
Having travelled to around 50 countries, and being a member of the
Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors,

Fr. Hans spoke about what is in common and what varies across the countries.
Always returning to the point "**Victims First**",
He shared that **when you listen to Survivors, you are changed.**
Fr Zollner spoke of other **safeguarding issues** that people raise with him
And the **Rights to Survival, Health, Education, Protection and Participation.**

In today's Gospel Matthew 16:21-27,
We see Jesus preparing the disciples for the challenges ahead.

The Gospel reads:

*"From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples
that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering
at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes,
and be killed, and on the third day be raised. "*

PETER

Peter doesn't want this to happen.
In this instance Peter represents us
when we don't want to **HEAR**,
when we don't want to **LISTEN**,
when we don't want to **FACE UP TO THE CHALLENGES** before us,
when we don't want to **PRAY ABOUT IT FIRST**.

In this instance he **represents every Christian who ignores the abuse of children and vulnerable adults** in families, parishes, church institutions, secular institutions, in schools, sports clubs, faith groups, childcare centres, in aged care facilities, hospitals, government programs, when at work or leisure.

WHAT DID JESUS SAY TO PETER?

The Gospel continues:

“And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, ‘God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.’ But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.’ “

SCANDAL

Very strong words.

Scandal (stumbling block) translates the Greek word in this passage.

Jesus calls Peter a **scandal**.

He calls Peter **Satan** in this instance.

No running away. No covering up. No protecting one's image or reputation.

No smugness. No trying to pretend it will go away.

No moving away from our mission.

Yet we know Peter did change later. Hope for us too.

In today's society - **no turning away from the challenge to confront evil**.

PREPARATION FOR FACING THE CHALLENGE

Jesus continues in the Gospel passage to **prepare the disciples to face an enormous challenge**.

“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves And take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, And those who lose their life for my sake will find it.’ “

HOW DO I DENY MYSELF?
HOW DO I TAKE UP MY CROSS AND FOLLOW JESUS?
HOW DO I LOSE MY LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF JESUS?

Big questions. Tempting to run away from them.

Yet every Sunday we hear God's Word
addressing some aspect of these questions.
Each of these questions is founded in the love of God for us.

PRAYER

Beginning on this Friday night there will be a time for prayer for
ourselves, our family and friends,
our church and our world.
Our mission.
Each Friday night 7pm-8pm here.

OUR FATHERS

This Father's Day, we ask the Dads of our community:
**IN YOUR LOVE FOR YOUR FAMILY AND FOR JESUS, WHAT WISDOM DO YOU SHARE ABOUT
THESE QUESTIONS?**
HOW DOES JESUS STRENGTHEN YOU TO FACE THE CHALLENGE OF CONFRONTING EVIL?

We thank God for deepening your love.
We thank you for your faith.
We thank you for sharing the Good News of Jesus.
We thank you for caring for creation.

We now invite the Dads and Grandfathers
And those with a fatherly influence in our lives to please stand.
We invite the community to pray over them and bless them.
(Prayer)

Amen.

Fr Gerry

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Facing up to the Challenge – 3 September 2017]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/090317.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook03092017>]