

'TEMPTED TO BE TOXIC' – HOMILY – 5 MARCH 2017

In Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7 we hear the story of God creating us.

We could eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden,

But not the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden.

Adam and Eve were tempted to eat it and did so.

And found out the consequences of their sin.

Many accounts in the Old Testament tell of the temptations and sins of Israel, including the sin of idolatry.

St Paul reminds us in the Second Reading (Romans 5:12-19)

That there has been sin ever since the first person on earth.

But **there is hope. Through Jesus, many are made righteous.**

BLACK BEAN TREE – MORETON BAY CHESTNUT

Here in Brisbane, let us ponder one of the native trees and its lessons.

The fruit of the Black Bean Tree or Moreton Bay Chestnut is now on the trees.

Some of the green pods have fallen and their colour turned brown.

The nuts are tempting.

But they are very poisonous. No one eats them.

LOCAL ABORIGINAL CULTURE - AN IMPORTANT LESSON

Yet in local Aboriginal culture, there is an important lesson.

Not to be tempted by appearance.

Not to be tempted by impatience.

Not to be tempted by thinking we can do whatever we want (POWER).

The need to consult with the local wisdom about how to prepare it safely.

The need to be patient.

The need to be thorough in what we do.

There is a way of eating it safely.

The process can't be rushed. It needs to be done thoroughly.

Yet to prepare it properly, to eat it safely,

One needs to ask local Indigenous people who know and who have prepared it themselves.

They can share their expertise about pounding it.

The time roasting it. And soaking it. A process.

How long do you roast it?

How long do you soak it? Not just minutes or hours. How many days?

Is there something else to add or not?

Aboriginal children were taught not to eat it raw.

There is local knowledge, process, time for preparation, consistency, awareness of dangers, education.

Standing under this particular tree and seeing its produce,

I think of today's Gospel about the temptations in the wilderness,

And the temptation not to be thorough in child safety policies and procedures.

CHILD SAFETY AND PROTECTION

To provide a secure environment for our children, we need local knowledge, best practice, education, sound preparation.

We can be tempted to do it half-heartedly, rushed, prepared while distracted, and ignoring best practice, inconsistent.

And end up poisoning our children and the children's environment.

Like the preparation for this bush tucker, we need to be thorough.

We can't surrender to the temptation to delay,

Or to leave out necessary steps, or take shortcuts,

Or omit education of ourselves about the poison.

THE THREE TEMPTATIONS HAVE BEEN CALLED A SUMMARY OF ALL TEMPTATIONS WE FACE

Whereas Israel failed time and time again,

Jesus does not fail.

Jesus overcomes the temptations and gives us hope.

We can be tempted in other ways too.

Let us examine the Gospel – Matthew 4:1-11.

Jesus does not misuse his status.

Jesus does not abuse by his power.

THE 1ST TEMPTATION

"If you are the Son of God, command these stones to turn into bread"

Jesus responds by quoting:

***"One does not live by bread alone,
But by every word that comes from the mouth of God"***

THE 2ND TEMPTATION: ON THE PINNACLE OF THE TEMPLE

"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down ..."

Jesus responds by quoting:

"Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

THE 3RD TEMPTATION: ON A VERY HIGH MOUNTAIN

"All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me"

Jesus responds by saying:

"Away with you Satan"

And by quoting:

"Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him"

Giving into the temptation of eating even part of a raw nut of the Moreton Bay Chestnut

Would make us vomit from the **toxic substance** within,

Give us a severe gastric attack,

Make us feel terrible **or even worse**.

Giving into the temptation of sin in our world

Gives us a world of injustice, intolerance, indifference,

Inequality, manipulation of power and hatred.

It leads to idolatry, worshipping something, or someone, or myself, ourselves.

Sin is toxic.

IN THESE FORTY DAYS OF LENT

We take the time to reflect,

To dialogue with God, to repent and cleanse,

To pray, to renew, to put God first once again.

1. To live by the Word of God,
2. Not to test God.
3. To worship God alone.

Like the local Aboriginal custom to pound, to roast and to soak the black bean nuts thoroughly,

We too take the time and the steps this Lent to cleanse and renew

Our intentions, our service of God and our neighbour.

To listen to the Word of God.

To love God deeply (thoroughly).

Not just choosing a neighbour, who gives us what we want in return,

But to love our neighbour unreservedly (thoroughly).

Pope Francis in his Lenten Letter "["THE WORD IS A GIFT. OTHER PERSONS ARE A GIFT"](#)

Speaks of the 40 days of Lent in the following manner:

"Lent is a favourable season for deepening our spiritual life through the means of sanctification offered us by the Church: fasting, prayer and almsgiving. At the basis of everything is the word of God, which during this season we are invited to hear and ponder more deeply."

"Dear friends, Lent is the favourable season for renewing our encounter with Christ, living in his word, in the sacraments and in our neighbour. The Lord, who overcame the deceptions of the Tempter during the forty days in the desert, shows us the path we must take. May the Holy Spirit lead us on a true journey of conversion, so that we can rediscover the gift of God's word, be purified of the sin that blinds us, and serve Christ present in our brothers and sisters in need."

Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Tempted to be Toxic – 5 March 2017]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/030517.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook05032017>]

Other References:

Pope Francis Lenten Message 2017 <http://bit.ly/PopeFrancisLentenMessage2017>

Black Bean Tree (*Castanospermum australe*) <http://bit.ly/BlackBeanTree>