

'HUMBLY POINTING THE WAY TO JESUS' - HOMILY – 10 DECEMBER 2017

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday Advent

### THOSE IN OUR LIVES WHO POINT THE WAY TO JESUS.

This weekend we ponder those who point the way to Jesus.

The Gospel of Mark 1:1-8 reveals John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus.

### IN OUR OWN LIVES, HOW DO WE POINT THE WAY TO JESUS?

### WHO ARE THOSE WHO HAVE POINTED OUR WAY TO JESUS?

They might be family, friends,

parish members, neighbours,

people in the public life, people we hear about or notice.

People living today or recently or in the past.

In recent parish funerals,

the words of remembrance, tributes and eulogies

have contained pointers to connecting people to Jesus.

For example,

- in listening to **Maria's story** and the hardships she survived in her homeland from invading Nazis and Communists, before migrating to Australia
- in listening to tributes to **Abdullah** and his faith as he lived in Aleppo, Syria and as a refugee coming to Australia, wanting to give back to God by helping others
- in listening to **Ann's story**, and how she and her husband worked so well together in helping others
- in listening to **Faith's story** and how she lived out her faith daily
- in listening to **Noela's story** and **others** who have lived out their faith daily

And the people who live each day loving God and neighbour.

Let us turn to a celebrity and some of his experience.

### MATTHEW HAYDEN

The Catholic Leader this weekend has an interview with Matthew Hayden, a well-known former Australian Test opening bat in cricket.

He shares about the times

- when you realise faith is like *"your best friend"*
- seeing firsthand *"what Christ was trying to say through the beatitudes"*
- encouraging people to *"find those anchors in your life"*

Some quotes from Matthew Hayden's interview:

*"... You know, its divorces, fatalities, financial crises, you know, times where your faith actually means something to you because it's like your best friend, faith, in a lot of ways.*

*"I see firsthand what Christ was trying to say through the beatitudes"*

*"The boys reckon I only started to cross myself when I started to play for Australia. No, but it wasn't just that, you know, like, for example, a routine that myself and Justin Langer have because he had always taken the first ball,*

*He'd actually mark the centre line. |  
And then when I came up the other end, I'd mark the crease line,  
Which formed a cross, +  
Both of us Catholics,  
Both of us had a strong emphasis to spirituality and Catholicism,  
And it was just a little routine that we got ourselves into.  
You know, I think it's those little things,  
And this what I've always encouraged people, to find those anchors in your life."*

## THE GOSPEL

Today's Gospel begins with -

*"The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.\*"*

For a Christian community in the 60s AD,

- around three decades after the death, resurrection, ascension of Jesus –
- under the occupying army of the Roman Empire –
- and around the time of the revolt by Jewish people against the Roman system -

Mark takes the Christian community back to the beginning of the **"GOOD NEWS"**.

The **GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST** - *Christos* - the anointed one, the Messiah

The **SON of GOD**.

## ADVENT INVITATION TO RETURN TO THE BEGINNINGS

This Advent, as we prepare for Christmas in 2017,

we are invited to return to the beginning of the GOOD NEWS of JESUS CHRIST.

The Gospel continues with composite Old Testament quotes  
and a special reference to the Old Testament prophet ISAIAH.

*"As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,  
'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;  
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
'Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight' "*

## HOW DO WE PREPARE THE WAY?

### HOW DO WE LIVE OUR LIVES AS MESSENGERS OF JESUS?

Sometimes we might feel that we are in the wilderness, calling out to prepare the way.

## JOHN THE BAPTIST

This striking figure is now related in **three** parts

1. the beginning of his mission,  
*"proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins",*  
and the response of people seeking him, being baptised and confessing
2. the image of prophet Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8 is suggested by the way John is dressed,  
and the wilderness is implied by the food he eats

3. stressing that John, humbly, is but a messenger, preparing the way for the One who will baptise with the Holy Spirit

As we review our own lives as individual disciples of Jesus,  
and as a community of disciples (church),

### **ARE WE TRULY HUMBLE AS MESSENGERS?**

The Gospel continues:

*“John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness,  
proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.  
And people from the whole Judean countryside  
and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him,  
and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.  
Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist,  
and he ate locusts and wild honey.  
He proclaimed, ‘The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me;  
I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals.  
I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.’”*

### MODEL OF CHURCH

Again a question from last Sunday’s letter –

### **WHAT IS OUR MODEL OF CHURCH?**

**An institution protecting its image and power,** hiding behind its walls,  
caught up in competition and political favours,  
privilege and status and cover-ups,  
**boasting about its achievements?**

OR

**A humble community of believers,**  
simple messengers pointing the way to Jesus  
by the way we live and the choices we make,  
admitting our mistakes, and acting justly to bring restitution,  
celebrating goodness in the lives of people we meet,  
living simply as we live out God’s invitation in baptism,  
appreciating and responding to the gift of God’s Word to the world,  
celebrating the gift of Eucharist,  
living simply as we live in solidarity with the neglected, isolated and poor,  
open to the way of healing, forgiveness, justice and peace in Jesus,  
**humble witnesses to God’s love and the Good News of Jesus Christ?**

### THIS ADVENT

### **WHAT IS OUR MODEL OF CHURCH THIS ADVENT?**

Today’s Gospel in this season of **ADVENT** highlights the role  
Of being a messenger to Jesus,  
Of pointing the way to Jesus,

Of preparing the way to Jesus,  
Of going back to the beginning,  
Of taking the time to reflect on the pattern of God's presence in our lives  
And in our faith communities by word and symbol  
- By the examples of Isaiah mentioned and Elijah symbolised -

In a world carried away with commercialism and Christmas buying,  
Let us return to the **beginning and purpose of Christmas.**  
**Let us invite children and adults to point simply and humbly to Jesus Our Saviour**  
as we prepare for Christmas.

Fr Gerry

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Humbly Pointing the Way to Jesus - 10 December 2017]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/1201017.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook10122017>]

[Painting: St. John the Baptist by Titian 1542]

