

'JOHN THE BAPTIST TODAY' - HOMILY – 17 DECEMBER 2017

3rd Sunday Advent

JOHN'S GOSPEL 1:6-8, 19-28

AS WE PREPARE FOR CHRISTMAS, WHAT DOES TODAY'S GOSPEL REVEAL?

Let us slowly reflect on the Gospel.

Last week we reflected on pointing the way to Jesus.

Today we continue to seek God's Word.

MISSION, COMMISSION, NAMED

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John."

It was not a secret. God did not send a nameless committee.

He is sent by God. He has a mission. He is commissioned by God.

His name is John. He is not nameless.

God knows him and chooses him personally.

WITNESS, TESTIFY, LIGHT

"He came as a witness to testify to the light,"

THIS CHRISTMAS, HOW ARE WE A WITNESS TO JESUS?

THIS CHRISTMAS, HOW DO WE TESTIFY TO JESUS IN OUR LIVES?

In our words, our actions, our hospitality, our prayer for others.

Jesus is not a secret we keep to ourselves.

He is **LIGHT** to our world, to ourselves.

THIS CHRISTMAS, HOW WE REFLECT THE LIGHT OF JESUS AROUND US?

"so that all might believe through him."

SHARING THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS TO ALL

All [in Greek, *"pantes πάντες"*] Not some, not a few, not just my culture, not just my family.

Even though John would minister in one geographical area, and in one historical time, the mission was for ALL people.

We don't keep the Good News of Jesus to ourselves.

"He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light."

Not the Light.

Came to testify to the Light.

We are called, commissioned to **TESTIFY HUMBLY TO JESUS.**

ROYAL COMMISSION

(At 6pm Mass, an example was shared of someone who advocated in his life for the rights and safety of people with disabilities. The trauma and pain experienced. The presence of Jesus life-giving.)

Turning now to some of the points from Archbishop Coleridge's response, this weekend to the Royal Commission.

- “*For the Catholic community, it’s been a deep humiliation, and I can only hope that humiliation will give birth to humility in a Church which accepts vulnerability beyond any attempt at justification or rationalisation, a Church willing to listen and learn, especially from the survivors of abuse themselves.*”
- “*Sexual abuse of the young in Catholic institutions and its handling by Church leaders has been a colossal failure; and I can only express an acute sense of shame and apologise profoundly to all who have suffered. What has happened has done incalculable damage to those who were abused. It’s also shaken the Catholic Church in this country to the core. Everything possible must be done to heal the wound, to right the wrong and to ensure that the future is very different from the past. Now that the Royal Commission is over, it can’t just be back to business as usual.*”
- “*The Church has to commit to change – not only personal change as each of us learns to see and hear differently, but institutional change as well.*”
- “*We’ll also need cultural change – saying no to a Church that seeks its own protection and self-preservation at all costs, that turns in on itself rather than reach out to the wounded and distressed. This will also mean changes to incorporate greater transparency and accountability in the governance of the Church. I will establish one working-group to examine every aspect of governance in the Archdiocese and another to review how our current proactive policies fit in with the Royal Commission’s recommendations and what more the recommendations will require of us.*”

Archbishop Mark Coleridge’s statement – video and text - is available online and in church.

Returning to the Gospel today,
we pray for the membership of the two new Archdiocesan working groups.

TODAY'S GOSPEL SETS A MODEL

Publicly named.

Open.

Mission.

Commissioned.

Inclusive.

Humble.

The Light of Christ exposing the darkness.

Prayer with both groups centred on God's will.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Whether the working groups, or our parish community,
or our own preparation for Christmas, John continues to prepare the way.
John the Baptist testified,

“*Then they said to him,
'Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us.
What do you say about yourself?'*

He said,

*'I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
"Make straight the way of the Lord",
as the prophet Isaiah said.'*

HOW DO WE PREPARE THE WAY FOR A DEEPER RECEPTION OF JESUS IN OUR LIVES? HOW WILL WE PREPARE THE WAY DURING THESE NEXT FEW DAYS?

Never claiming to know all the answers.

Unworthy.

In the wilderness.

As John humbly points out:

*"John answered them,
'I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know,
the one who is coming after me;
I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.'
This took place in Bethany
across the Jordan where John was baptizing."*

AS WE GAZE ON OUR CHRISTMAS CRIB AND THE HUMILITY OF THE SCENE, HOW WILL ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS BE A HUMBLE EXPERIENCE BEFORE GOD?

AS WE PREPARE FOR CHRISTMAS, HOW DO WE HUMBLY POINT, NOT TO OURSELVES BUT TO JESUS?

Jesus the Light.

Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – John the Baptist Today - 17 December 2017]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/1201717.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/ParishFacebook17122017>]

[The Infant Christ & Saint John the Baptist Artist: Murillo, Bartolomé Esteban - 1670 Museo Nacional del Prado]

