

'GOD OPENS NEW HORIZONS': HOMILY TO NORTH EAST DEANERY YOUTH – 28 JULY 2018

Do you ever wonder, when you are really looking forward to something, it is so important to you, you are looking for a new adventure and you think you are doing it for all the right reasons and then...it just falls apart?

I recall when I was a young priest at St. Flannan's, Zillmere many years ago. And I had volunteered to go to another country, to work in a refugee camp, teaching English.

The volunteering was to be for six weeks and, as I only had four weeks leave, I had to get special permission to have an extra two weeks leave. There was a lot of rigmarole to get the extra two weeks. A couple of months before I was due to go, there was an attempted coup by the military in the country, I was to travel to.

The people there, organizing the English language volunteers, decided it was not safe to travel there and they called it off. I was so disappointed, I was shattered because I had my heart set on it.

After dwelling upon it and a bit of disappointment for a while, I said to God,

"Show me the way forward."

For some of the time I would have been in that country, instead I ended up in Papua New Guinea and an introduction to various cultures within PNG, including a brief visit to the pastoral institute in the PNG Highlands. I had never expected this. So, from one disappointment and handing it over to God, God leads us somewhere else.

I went to five dioceses in PNG and ended up in a place called Aitape on the northern coastland of PNG. When I got to Aitape, I found that there were people working in various jobs as teachers, as nurses, farmers, workmen and women, fishing communities and people working with their hands and people working on the plantations.

I asked them,

"What is the centre of your community?"

What they told me was, that at the centre of their community was a little community of sisters - the Sisters of Saint Clare (followers of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi).

The people in Aitape said to me, that this is the **HEART** of our community, because they pray all day for the rest of us and we are joyful for what we do – of course, sometimes things go wrong – but at the very heart of our community is a group praying for us.

Part of that joy, of being alive in our faith, is asking others to pray for us – to accompany us.

It is very special to have people praying for you.

In a moment we will ask God's blessing on each of you.

Last Sunday afternoon we had Sr. Maeve Heaney, a theologian from ACU, lead a group of 40 of us to reflect on prayer.

I wrote down three things Sr. Maeve said,

1. *“God always works this way: to reach everyone or to reach many, God calls a few”* and she gave some examples.
2. And we all know we are made in God’s image and likeness. The second point Sr. Maeve made was that, *“we are made in God’s image and likeness of a SENSITIVE God.”*

God is a **SENSITIVE GOD** and He feels our joys and our pains, our celebrations and our challenges.

The third point I wrote down was,

3. *“Our faith and the way we live it, is a SHARED ministry, WITH GOD...”*

It is shared with God.

None of what we do is just for ourselves – Jesus calls us to share with God.

Fr Gerry

[Readings: 1st Reading: Isaiah 43:1-7; Responsorial Psalm:100; Gospel: John 15:9-17]



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