

HOMILY – OUR CHRISTIAN MISSION - 24 JANUARY 2016

What is it like to lose so much? To be exiled, away from your homeland and its supports, its memories, its spirituality?

Have you ever felt as though everything has been taken away from you, and then much later restored? Down into the depths of misery and later SOARING high.

The first Reading today is from the Book of Nehemiah. The exiled have returned home. It speaks of absolute JOY, of their REBIRTH, of their IDENTITY.

For the first few decades of my life, I felt this hole in me as an Australian, born here, from Irish ancestry, because we lived an enormous lie in our legal system.

We did not recognise legally, Aborigines being of the land.

We acted as though they weren't here prior to Captain Cook.

I remember when the High Court finally gave the Mabo Decision, how I rejoiced. It didn't solve all the issues, but I rejoiced because I felt I was home – home to truth as an Australian.

The First Reading today invites us in rejoice in the good news of truth and integrity and thanksgiving to God.

Luke's Gospel today brings us to our identity as Christians – our Mission.

In CHAPTERS 1 and 2 of Luke's Gospel, we learn about Jesus the adult by going back to his infancy.

We ask ourselves as adults – what influence has our childhood had on whom we are today, on being loved, on our sense of purpose, on our meaning in life?

In CHAPTER 3 of Luke's Gospel, we hear of John the Baptist preparing the way for Jesus, we hear of the baptism of Jesus, of his family line.

We ask ourselves as adults – who has prepared the way for us and how do we acknowledge them?

Jesus has been living his adult life when he has a key experience, aged around 30.

I ask myself - when did I know that my life, was not just about me, about my family and friends, but about others, and how I can use my gifts for others?

In CHAPTER 4 of Luke's Gospel, Jesus faces the temptations, before revealing through the Bible who he is, what is his mission, and living it.

We will reflect on the temptations during the Season of Lent.

Jesus shows his confidence to reveal to people in his home town, his mission, his life goals? He is willing to risk, to face challenges, to be courageous as his life unfolds.

I ask myself – do I feel the call of God, or promptings from God, to make a difference in the world, knowing that I will need to be open to surprises as I can't control everything around me.

I ask myself – have I let go of masks, to reveal who I truly am, to be open to feeling the pain of others and of our world?

I ask myself from today's Gospel – how has God anointed me?

I ask myself – what is the Good News of Jesus that I live daily?

I ask myself – what imprisons me, to what am I blind, what needs to be free within me?

I ask myself – in our world, who are the captives to be released, the blind to see, the oppressed to be set free?

One of the gifts of Jesus, is to be part of a community that asks all those questions.
No longer just me asking, but the faith community asking.
And so we ask - what are the sins that enslave us as a church?
For example - covering up, idolising appearance, sexual abuse, failure to recognise the giftedness of women in leadership, failure to be inclusive in our weekly liturgy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and culture?
And so we ask – what is the good news of Jesus that ENLIVENS us as church, that GRACES us, that FREES us, that ENABLES us to see the world and ACT JUSTLY?
We ask them of our nation as we remember Australia Day, January 26th on Tuesday.
We ask as we search for true RECONCILIATION as Australians.

Let us now turn to God in prayer for our families and friends, our parish family, our nation, our world.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Homily – Our Christian Mission – 24 January 2016]