

Reflection
11th Sunday of Ordinary Time
Feast of St Anthony of Padua

Readings:

1st: Ezekiel 17:22-24

2nd: 2 Corinthians 5:6-10

Gospel: Mark 4:26-34



Seminarian: Peter Doherty, Holy Spirit Seminary

Today, Fr Gerry has kindly invited us to speak on the topic of Vocations. While this is not a homily, it is a formative experience of speaking at Mass. I thank Fr Gerry and I thank all of you for giving me this formative opportunity as part of my own vocation discernment journey.

To have a vocation is simply to have a sense of a call to be our true and best self. All of us have a vocation story; a sense of responding to that which is beyond ourselves; a sense of responding to the presence of God in our lives. St Anthony of Padua is a good example of this for us in this parish; his journey from Portugal to Italy, from the Augustinians to the Franciscans, images for us the varied steps that many of us have taken in our own vocational story. All of today's readings touch on these two aspects of vocation discernment – both the variance of the steps, and the ever-present God who journeys with us in our lives.

The first reading speaks of a vocation being something that is fruitful, and which extends outwards from ourselves. A genuine vocation offers shelter and shade to others and is an example to others in how a genuine and authentic life might be lived. This is only possible by listening to others. For me, the Bracken Ridge parish has imaged this aspect of vocation by its embrace of the importance of listening to the voices of First Nations People and working towards reconciliation.

The second reading tells us that a true vocation offers a sense of propulsion to go beyond the reality of our circumstances; to look not simply to the horizon, but beyond the horizon. A true vocation is not limited by what we can see, but is fuelled by a sense of the faith of what we, in our time of dreaming, seek for what is yearned. This yearning, which comes from the wellspring of our hearts then overflows with a confidence that the place to where we are called is the place we long to be. For me, so many of you here in the Bracken Ridge parish have imaged this aspect of vocation; I have been humbled and honoured by so many of you to share and to learn of your stories in going beyond the horizons of your original homelands and to make your home now in Australia.

Finally, the Gospel reading today tells us that a true vocation begins small, like a seed. It tells us that often we are unaware of the how the contours of our lives impact upon the growth of our sense of a vocational call. In sharing the imagery of fruitfulness, shelter and shade from the first reading, the Gospel tells us that to live whatever is our own particular genuine and authentic vocational call is to participate in and live the universal baptismal vocational call that the Gospel calls the kingdom of God. For me, my experiences and time with you all here at the Bracken Ridge parish have imaged this. Before coming here, I was unsure as to how the contour of my life which brought me to Bracken Ridge might impact upon my sense of a vocational call to the ordained priesthood; but from your intentionality for reconciliation, from the happy participation of people from Iraq, India and around the world, and last but not least, your fraternal connection with my own Diocese of Rockhampton, you have enriched for me my sense of vocation. I hope in some small way, even just my presence here among you, I have enriched the sense of yours.