

WE CAN BE DEVASTATED YET WE CAN FIND HOPE & NEW LIFE
33rd Sunday Ordinary Time Year C, 17th November 2019

THIS SUNDAY'S REFLECTION HAS TWO PARTS:

1. with Queensland debates at present on life and death issues
2. and through the Gospel reading on the destruction of the Temple

LIFE AND DEATH

We look at caring for the gift of life that God has given us.

We support dignity of life and palliative care, and we oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide, as some are suggesting in Queensland at present.

Later we shall reflect on today's Gospel and the Temple.

There are [three](#) resources available in Catholic parishes across the Archdiocese this weekend.

1. ["For the Common Good – Love is Stronger Than Death"](#)
2. ["Facts you may not know about palliative care"](#)
3. ["The facts you may not know about euthanasia and assisted suicide around the world"](#)

These resources are on our church seats and available online at the hyperlinks above.

LOVE IS STRONGER THAN DEATH

In Archbishop Coleridge's pastoral letter *"For the Common Good – Love is Stronger Than Death"* he says

"For example, the Catholic tradition affirms that:

- a person can voluntarily stop treatment for a terminal illness that is judged to be overly burdensome or disproportionate.
- pain and suffering can be relieved, even if the medication intentionally administered for this purpose could have the foreseeable effect of hastening death.
- a person, together with their families and loved ones, should discuss their wishes in terms of care and their desire for potential life-prolonging interventions should they become incompetent, and can document this in the form of an advanced care plan.

None of the above constitute so called 'voluntary assisted dying', physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia"

FOR THE
COMMON GOOD
– LOVE IS STRONGER
THAN DEATH



"Euthanasia puts an end not merely to a person's life, but to the profound meaning and intimacy that can arise from it, even at the very end."

"Let us not make the mistake of thinking that we are respecting freedom when we provide the means for someone to kill themselves, or of thinking that we are being loving and compassionate when we intentionally and actively haste a person's death. We respect freedom when we are sure that our social structures and laws don't make anyone feel that they or society would be better off if they were dead. We are compassionate when we ensure that our society and its laws leave no one feeling that their life is not worth living or that they are under some subtle obligation to end their lives."

THE 2nd AND 3rd RESOURCES AND MEDICAL FACTS

“Facts you may not know about palliative care”

For example, ‘the [Australian and New Zealand Society for Palliative Medicine](#) and the [Australian Medical Association](#) oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide’.

“The facts you may not know about euthanasia and assisted suicide around the world”

For example, ‘107 of the World Medical Association’s 109 constituent National Medical Associations oppose euthanasia and assisted suicide’

For example, footnote 14 on insurance company pressure on a person in California and another in Oregon.

HOMILY

We can reflect about our difficulties in life, past, present and future possible challenges.

What about destruction and devastation?

Have we ever been so, so desolated and devastated as in the context of today’s Gospel text?

To understand the depth of this utter devastation, we need to spend some time first appreciating the Second Temple in Jewish history, and how important the Temple was in the life of Jesus and in the lives of the early Christian disciples.

THE TEMPLE HISTORY - SETTING THE SCENE

Let us set the scene in Jerusalem. The First Temple was destroyed in 587 BC.

We know it as Solomon’s Temple. The people are scattered and exiled.

We know this as The Babylonian Exile of 587-539 BC.

After much prayer, some of the Exiled were allowed to return home in 539 BC.

They built a new, smaller Second Temple in Jerusalem.

The Temple once more was the centre of their faith, identity, unity, and culture. They gave glory to God.

Then in the next century, around 458-445 BC, more Exiles returned.

This became a time of religious and social reform.

In the time between the Old Testament and the ministry of Jesus, Herod had expanded the precinct of the Temple dramatically.

By the time Jesus is ministering as an adult, the Second Jerusalem Temple is impressive.

And the work continues on it over the next few years.



Second Jerusalem Temple - model

THE TEMPLE & GOSPEL OF LUKE & ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles – with the same author relating part one and part two – tell about episodes in the temple.

Again let see why the Temple is so important.

Jesus was taken as a baby to the Temple for the customary purification. Luke 2: 22f

- The Holy Spirit guided a righteous and devout man, Simeon as he came into the Temple and held baby Jesus in his arms and praised God. Luke 2:27-28
- In Luke 2:37-38 Anna, a prophet, we are told
“never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.”

Already we have a sense of wonder about Jesus in the Temple.

- When Jesus is 12 years old, he is in the temple and we hear in *Luke 2:46-47* he is,
“sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.”
- Then in Luke’s Gospel, after his adult ministry in Galilee, we have an extended road journey to Jerusalem and to the Temple. Jesus told a parable about two men who went up to the temple to pray. *Luke 18:10*
- When he arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus entered the Temple to pray and began clearing it. *Luke 19:45*
- We are told in Luke 19:47 that Jesus was teaching regularly in the Temple.
“Every day he was teaching in the temple and at night he would go out and spend the night on the Mount of Olives, as it was called.

And all the people would get up early in the morning to listen to him in the temple.” *Luke 21:37-38*
- After Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples,
“were continually in the temple blessing God.” *Luke 24:53*
- After the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we are told,
“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home...” *ACTS 2:46*
- After the apostles were arrested and put in prison, an angel opened the door during the night, brought them out and told them,
“Go, stand in the temple and tell the whole message about this life.” *ACTS 5:20*
- *“When they heard this, they entered the temple at day-break and went on with their teaching”* *ACTS 5:21*
- *“And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease to teach and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah”.* *ACTS 5:42*

Appreciating the Temple’s enormous significance for the Jewish people, and

- the Revelation of Jesus in the temple,
 - the Teaching of Jesus in the Temple,
 - the Christian Disciples in the Temple,
- today’s Gospel shocks and stuns.

“When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God”, he said, “As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”

Luke 21:5-6

- not just superficial damage,
- not just major damage,
- but **utter devastation** – not one stone left upon another.

DEVASTATION IS NOT THE END OF THE WORLD

Jesus preached in the early 30s AD, His prediction will eventuate in 70AD when the Roman army destroys the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem.

And in the 80s or 90s AD, when the Gospel of Luke is written, It will once again highlight this shocking prediction by Jesus.

And yet devastation is not the end of the world.

The Temple pointed to the glory of God.

The Temple was not God. We learn that Jesus is the Temple.

We learn that Jesus points the way to the Father.

How do we face utter devastation in our lives, only to discover that there is hope and love and life?

We are called to love, to accompany people, to support our neighbour. God gives us the meaning that gives our lives purpose.

We are called to endure together.

Jesus said, *“By your endurance you will gain your souls.”* LK 21:19

The word ‘Endurance’ for the Greek *hupomone ὑπομονή* implies steadfastness in faith that overcomes trials and overcomes what we feel as devastation at the time.

Let us pause and pray for those facing incredible hardships anywhere and for the gift of a loving, uplifting relationship with Jesus.

Let us pray.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings:

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/111719.cfm>]

