

Sermon 2023 09 03 Text

As a result of an extended period of ill health, holiday leave and other events I have not preached since the second last Sunday of June.

It seems only fair therefore that I should offer you two sermons today.

SERMON ONE

Followers of social media will already be aware of why the collect for the election of a new Archbishop for this Diocese has been omitted from our service today.

For those who do not, I can tell you that on Friday, Bishop Cameron, as Administrator of the Diocese, issued an Ad Clerum advising the Right Reverend Jeremy Greaves, currently Bishop for the Northern Region of our Diocese has been elected as the next Archbishop of Brisbane.

Bishop Jeremy is in his mid-50's, married, and his children are just completing their secondary education.

Bishop Jeremy will be installed as Archbishop of Brisbane on Saturday the 16th of December at 10.30am.

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Some people have been and will continue to ask why it has taken the Archbishop Election Committee (of which I am a member) from early February until to now to elect a replacement for Archbishop Philip Aspinall.

To begin with the position description seems very simple since it contains only 3 criteria.

The person must be someone who is over 30 years of age.

The person must already be an Anglican priest.

And, this is the really hard one, they must be the person called by God to the position.

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The Committee does not accept applications for the position.

In February, Bishop Cameron invited the submission of names of people seen by others as called by God to this position.

The response was a list of over 300 names from within this Diocese, from within Australia and from overseas.

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The committee then had to pay due reverence to God by prayerfully wading through this list to discern one person called by God.

Some were obviously unsuitable, too inexperienced, too weird, or too old.

Under the Canons of the Diocese all clergy must retire at the age of 70, so someone older than their very early 60's would not have time to settle into the role before mandatory retirement. And there are many of us who have no intention of continuing in full time ministry until they are anywhere near 70.

And some whose names were suggested, asked not to be considered since they had no feeling of calling to the position.

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Each person on the short list was interviewed by various members of the Committee for a whole day.

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And then last Saturday we met to pray, review and vote.

To vote was a highly emotional thing. Many of us had tears as we came to vote. Some people may think that is a bit wimpy. But we had travelled a journey for seven months. We had completely immersed ourselves into the task and into the surrounding and indwelling spirit of God. And in that moment of voting we had to express our understanding of God's will for all the people of this Diocese and for the whole church of God. And all that emotional and spiritual energy was focussed on this one moment and this one outcome.

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I will not pretend that it was a moment of blinding light, but it was a powerful time as every member of the house of laity and then every member of the house of clergy voted for the same name.

Loving God,
bless Jeremy, now called to be Archbishop of Brisbane;
fill him with your truth, and clothe him with holiness,
that he may preach your word, and care for your people;
Give him compassion and wisdom,
Sustain him with your Spirit and inspire him with vision.
We ask in the name of the one who calls,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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SERMON TWO

Today we hold our thanksgiving to God for all those Christian Missionaries who chose to remain with the people entrusted to their care in the face of the brutality of the invading Japanese Imperial Forces in Papua New Guinea in WWII.

We particularly remember those members of the Anglican Church who offered up their lives and were killed. And we hold dear the sacrifice of the Reverend John Barge who had served in this Parish.

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People naturally associate martyrdom with death for a noble cause.

However, a dictionary definition also allows for suffering as a sign of martyrdom.

Within the church we remember and reflect on those acts of martyrdom which are explosive and earth shattering.

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But I have a problem with big picture martyrdom. I do not want to sell the deaths or the suffering of people for their faith short, but I think that we need to remember that small picture sacrifice and suffering are integral and necessary parts of the day to day life of our journey of faith.

Big martyrdom is an explosion of sacrificial faith that cascades down through the centuries as extreme examples to lead us into hope and faith.

But it is the small explosions of sacrificial faith which sustain and enliven the life of the church.

People who sit in reception to answer phone calls and greet visitors who are often in great distress or utterly abusive.

People who tend the gardens and put the bins out so rubbish is collected.

People who pay the bills or are involved in any sort of administration.

People who set up different parts of the church and make it ready for worship.

People who rehearse, practice and sing to enhance our singing or to cover our fear that if we sang too loudly people would be offended.

People who greet and those who say goodbye.

People who assist in worship or take the essence of our worship out into the community for others.

And, to cover my back, people whose sacrifice is so necessary, that it is often unseen, unnoticed and not mentioned.

People who take the time to grow their faith.

Sometimes I find it really hard to cope with the endless sea of paperwork that has little to do with ministry, with unreasonable expectations of time and capacity, with abuse, with all the competing demands of things that need to be done now.

On those days when it is hard to face the world, when it is hard to find love and grace because you are too tired or you have too much to do, the knowledge that other people are making a sacrifice of time and other activity to pray for you, to pray for me, and the generosity of those and other acts, is a thought that sustains and lifts us into a state where we can proclaim the good news with intensity and power.

We remember the sacrifice, the martyrdom of the Christ on the cross – a life give for hope and salvation.

We remember the sacrifice, the martyrdom of those who died proclaiming by word and deed the good news of Christ during time of war.

And we remember those smaller sacrifices, those small martyrdom – a giving up of a fraction of time which may not change the life of everyone in the world, but how it can change the life of one person. And if one is changed, then all are changed.

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