

Homily. 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. A. 15/16 February 2020.

35 years ago, beginning on 6th February, the Bjelke-Petersen Country Party sacked 1,100 Queensland electricity workers. The ensuing stand-off between the State Government and Electricity Union led to 15 days of power shedding and blackouts across Queensland, particularly here in the South East. My Ordination happened to be scheduled for the 15th February, plum in the middle of this crisis. I knew that my Ordination was going ahead come what may even if it was to be by candlelight and by serving cold cuts and salads only at the functions that were to follow.

Amazingly, calling in a few favours, the local Maryborough Parish Priest of the time was able to source several large generators, which meant that St. Mary's Church and Parish Hall were lights amidst the prevailing darkness. Mum and her friends in the Parish banded together to make sure that when the power did come on, even if only briefly, microwaves and ovens were used to full capacity so that cooked and hot food could be served to the many hundreds of guests over the course of the 3 days.

It was at a local hotel while celebrating my brothers 21st birthday by with candle and lanterns on the evening of February 21st that the conflict finally ended and power was restored. Naturally, the small crowd in the Hotel sent up a cheer as the electricity flowed once more along the wires. The downside of this was that the Government had prevailed leaving many power workers without a job and with a dark, uncertain future.

Last weekend we heard Jesus say that we are like a city built on a hilltop, which can't be hidden; a lamp aflame placed high on the lamp stand

pushing back the darkness, lighting up the entire house. We have His gift, the light and new law of beatitude and blessing to guide and inspire us. Now, we have to live, show and share Christ's light-gift in our lives.

With this in mind, Jesus turns to the most thorny commandments. He teaches us the true meaning of moral living, an inner disposition of mutual respect, truth and the honouring of God and others, these two being unbreakably intertwined. Oaths in God's name ought be unnecessary because we, like Him, should always speak the truth, with love for God and others. Murder, the deliberate and unlawful taking of life, is wrong. Killing of life, says Jesus, begins from within us, from our intentions. We have to learn to recognise such urges, curbing them quickly. Lastly, Jesus speaks about the coveting someone's spouse and of adultery. Lust and the desire to take another's life partner compromising their solemn vows begins inside of our minds and souls, causing conflict and deep hurt. Awareness of these desires within us alerts us that we have to change our focus to what we have, respecting choices people have taken.

This new law of Christ sets a gold standard that, if we're honest with ourselves, we know we can't attain without the grace of God working within us. This teaching pushes back towards the only light that never dims or gets cut off, compelling us to turn to the eternal light of the wisdom and mercy of God.

Moreover, this new Christian law with its Christ-like standards of inner wholeness and holiness means that we have to rely on the light of our fellow believers. The example, support and wisdom we offer to each other is essential if we're going to practice and live out the Lord's way today.

In 1985, after 16 long, hot and stressful days and nights, the power and lights eventually fired up again. Today, by trusting God's help and the example, witness and friendship of each other we can keep our faith lights on, a much better option than plunging deeper into uncertain darkness.