

Homily. 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.C. 26/27 January 2019.

Debates about the date chosen for Australia Day aside for the moment, and there will have to be a serious debate about it sometime, hopefully a respectful and constructive one, we come once again to celebrate our nation, its peoples and cultures. This celebration, remembering and giving thanks is in and of itself valuable, for whatever our issues and challenges we are without a doubt a very blessed people. The more we appreciate our gifts and benefits, the more deeply we grasp how privileged we are, the more likely it is that we will respect all that we have and each other.

At Nazara, which is St. Luke's name for Nazareth, in His own home town Synagogue and in front of His own friends and neighbours, Jesus chose to inaugurate His public mission. Reading from the scroll of Isaiah He made the Prophet's hopeful words His own. As a nation has a constitution, so there it was that Jesus announced His aims. He was filled with God's Spirit and sent out to bring Good-News to the poor, freedom to captives, sight to the blind and uplift to the downtrodden, proclaiming God's year of favour. What's more, He told them all that what they were hearing, what He was saying, was happening even as they listened.

Some 400 years before this the people who'd returned from their decades long exile in Babylon had gathered before the Jerusalem Temple, which was then in the process of being re-built from its ruins. At that crucial moment in history, as they were becoming once more the people of God, they'd listened to the reading of God's Law, assenting to what they'd heard. This assembly of the people, led by Ezra and Nehemiah joyfully

marked a new start for the people and nation of Israel. A similar happy renewal, but in a more radical all embracing way, was happening in the Nazareth Synagogue the day that Jesus spoke to His townsfolk. We know where all of this would end up, but at that time they didn't. Their reactions and choices, however, accurately reflect those that we are now making.

Are we going to work hard preserving our unity and many blessings, or are we going to apathetically allow division to triumph while lazily frittering away our many privileges? Will we try to involve people of every race, creed and way of life in progressing our country, or settle for the easy seeming but bitter course of racism, bigotry and prejudice? Will we strive to keep our minds and hearts open in welcome learning new things each day, or close up shop mentally and emotionally under the false belief that we've got it right and those who think differently must be wrong? Are we, as a country, a Church and Parish, one body made up of many parts with everyone sharing the one Spirit, or have we come to the decision that some parts and people are wanted and valued while others are not?

After some 82 years this is the last weekend that we'll have the Presentation Sisters living, working and worshipping with us. Their departure is a sadness for our entire Parish of Corinda Graceville. They are moving onwards, and by doing so they remind us that we must, too. On behalf of all I thank all of the Sisters for their fidelity and dedication across the decades. As they come now to leave us behind we hold on to the enduring graces of their years of teaching, prayer and example.

These blessings, amongst other witnesses received, helps us to live what we've heard, celebrated and received here, Christ's word and His Body and Blood as the Living Body of Jesus Christ in this place and time.

May Almighty God bless Cyprian, Marion, Annette and all of their Sisters in religion as they are led to new ministries and ways of living. On this weekend may God see fit to bless all of us, Australians, Christians and Catholics, helping us in choosing the good way of unity and respect. This is the way that Jesus announced, offering Himself up to give us, a way that is truly Good-News for the poor, freedom for the downtrodden, God's year of favour for all, so much needed by us in these challenging times.