

Homily. 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.C. 23/24 February 2019.

The much needed meeting presently taking place in Rome looking at abuse in our Church aims to further justice within the Catholic community. I hope and pray fervently with you, and especially with the victims of abuse be they children or vulnerable adults, that concrete and universal procedures will emerge from this special gathering helping victims and all of us to advance on the path of justice, promoting healing and a more thorough Christ-like living of our faith within our relationships. We must find a way together to heal what's broken, preventing such crimes from ever again enslaving us. My hope is that this initiative of Pope Francis is a milestone on this journey, a whole of Church step in the best direction.

As Pope John Paul II amongst many others has said, justice is what God wants from us as God's people. It is just, honest, transparent and kind relationships, respectful, caring and loving of each other in the image and example of Christ, that advance the reign of God in the world. It's these sort of relationships that enable us to be credible signs of and witnesses to God's Good-News in the world. We have the so called 'golden rule' heard in the gospel this weekend; treat others as you would like them to treat you. If this had been lived well in the past we wouldn't find ourselves in this crisis, this emergency as some are calling it, today. If this rule is better, more consistently understood and lived by all in our Church in the future, a lot pain and hurt can be avoided and much can come to pass.

Our prayers, planning and daily work for justice must be guided by what Jesus Christ said and did, always inspired by the power of His Living

Spirit at work in us and amongst us. Jesus says that our justice seeking and making, like that of David in the 1st reading, needs to be tempered by mercy; mercy towards those who are suffering and mercy towards all who struggle with the frailties of our shared humanity. The Lord asks us to give to those in need, loving our opponents and enemies, avoiding hasty condemnations and rash judgements of each other, while always seeking to forgive and pardon those who wrong us as we work for reconciliation.

Jesus ends His powerful and challenging teaching with a small but important coda, a tail with some sting in it. He says to us; Give and there will be gifts for you; a full measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be poured into your lap, because the amount you measure out to others is the amount you will be given back. We pray much the same thing ourselves in the Lord's Prayer when we say; forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. What we do, or fail to do for others in terms of our just and merciful living, is what we can expect for ourselves, certainly no less and likely little more.

In our Australian efforts now we have hopes for the Plenary Council upon which we have embarked. Taking up the words and images of St. Paul, we pray that our Plenary Journey will renew our 'earthly self' modelled as it is on the sinful, broken Adam, into the new person modelled on the Heavenly One, on Jesus Christ, for in Him we experience the fullness of God's justice, merciful kindness and grace filled generosity.

I now invite our Parish Plenary Council Team to speak to you for a couple of minutes about our upcoming and second Parish input session to be held on Saturday, the 2nd of March at the Parish Centre at Graceville.