

Homily. Australia Day/3rd Sunday in Ord Time. Yr. C. 25/26 January 2025.

I read Thomas Harris' novel 'Conclave' when it came out back in 2016. I thought that it was a reasonable bit of entertaining fiction even if it verged sometimes on the far fetched side of the ledger. After watching the movie previews and hearing the thoughts of friends I went to see it last week at the Regal Cinema. It's a rare example of the movie being better than the book because of the stellar acting from several of the cast and its great cinematography and sets, though the storyline is still as imaginative as the original work; but, you know, it's a fictional movie after all.

Another thing the movie does better is make clearer the message of the story and it's this that I want to talk about here. Through all of the twists and turns of the plot the point ends up being that it's by cooperation, humble attentive listening and honesty, with ourselves and with others, that we move forward. Games of power and ambition, of money and secrets only serve to keep us where we are, embedding us in what we have rather than taking us to where we could and very much need to be.

This is precisely what St. Paul is saying in his letter when he describes us as all being differently gifted but needed to form here on Earth the Living Body of Christ. Everyone matters, everyone has something to offer and the Body needs all of us if it's going to function as it should, imaging Christ today. One-upmanship, seeking rank and pulling it, aiming to be special, superior and better than others isn't of the Holy Spirit, isn't the way of Christ at all and can only serve to divide the Body that must be united and one to fulfil it God ordained purpose.

Jesus went home to Nazareth, St. Luke says, going to the Synagogue as he always did. He was invited to read, choosing a section of Isaiah's work to begin his mission. It's a reading of hope based on service and sacrifice, not one of self-indulgence or glorification that Jesus proclaimed there. Healing, sight, liberty and good news for the poor and oppressed; these were the ways Jesus said he was working, the goals he was spending himself advancing. He told them that this was happening as he read the Word, making what he was saying come alive. There's no hint of Jesus out for himself in this, the opposite actually, for devoting himself to these ends and serving God's will would cost him not less than everything.

If we as the Church, the Body of Christ today, can get ourselves to grips with these messages then we'll be the light on the hill, live yeast in the dough and the seed growing into a tree in the garden of our land and society. Australia and its peoples, already so richly blessed, we can all agree, now faces fracturing and division, perhaps like never before. If we believe what we hear and read, teaching and practicing it with the help of Christ's Spirit, then our contribution will be powerful in moving all of us a forwards rather than bogging us down in a vicious cycle that can't end well for anyone.