



Third Sunday of Lent

Justice and mercy place the poor at the heart of the Church

Opening Prayer



Loving and gracious God,

Turn our hearts to yourself that we may recognise Jesus Christ in every person we encounter. Let the Holy Spirit animate the virtue of humility in us, to place the poor at the heart of the community of the Church in Broken Bay and live in righteousness as we embrace the value and dignity of all your children.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Introduction



“People are never problems. People have issues, carry burdens, endure suffering, but they are never problems. To view a person as a problem is to rob them of their human dignity. While there may be challenges in a person’s life, those challenges do not define the person. To see it any other way is to compromise the integrity of the person and to inhibit their right to freedom.” (Bishop Anthony’s Pastoral Letter, *Jesus Christ, our beginning and end*)

In this week’s Gospel, we see Jesus confronting an injustice of his time. Jesus’ heart for the poor could not stand by and be silent while people were being taken advantage of through the unjust Temple practices. Reflecting on Bishop Anthony’s priority of ‘Justice and Mercy’ allows us to recognise poverty in ourselves and in others in all its forms, and to be able to consider our own attitudes and behaviours as we seek to follow the example of Jesus.

Gospel Reading



Audio:

Week 3 Gospel Reading



John 2:13-25

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!”

His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.

Pause for reflection.

You are invited to share a thought, feeling or insight that is arising in you as you hear this Gospel text today. Simply listen to each person, with no comment at this stage.

Reflection – Fr David Ranson

Vicar General

Parish Priest, Our Lady of
Dolours Parish, Chatswood



There is a story about an American philosopher who went to Japan for a

conference on religion. He overheard another American delegate speaking to a Shinto priest. “We’ve now been to a good many of your ceremonies,” said the delegate, “and have seen quite a few of your shrines. But I don’t get your ideology; I don’t get your theology.” The Japanese paused as though in deep thought and then slowly shook his head. “We don’t have an ideology”, he said. “We don’t have a theology. We dance!”

Perhaps we have forgotten that Christianity, itself, began as a dance. There was no ideology, no comprehensive philosophy. Rather there was a series of extraordinary gestures in the life of Jesus which choreographed to tell a story. Jesus did not leave us with a document. Jesus left us with memories - memories of things he told, and memories of things he did - extraordinary memories through which his life remains present to us now. Through Jesus’ actions and gestures, God sings a song for us which leads us along in a new and different way from those around us. This song of the Father which Jesus dances is a different song to the one to which we are expected to dance along in the business of survival. The song that so easily overtakes our own hearts is one of competition, of control, of possessiveness - a song orchestrated by fear and anxiety. The song sung in Jesus, and by Jesus, however, is a song of resistance. The anthem of Jesus resists the melody by which we are ordinarily led. It refuses to buy into the logic that we can buy and sell the graciousness of

God. It undoes the illusion that God is ours to market.

With the song of resistance alive in his heart Jesus dances this day in the Temple in which the melody of the logic of commerce has drowned out all other sounds. It is a dance of anger, a dance of criticism, a dance of confrontation. It is a dance of sheer energy which sends the Temple into a spin. And it likewise sends the Temple of our own hearts into a spin to the extent that they too have been seduced by a logic of the market, by a “world where self-importance, personal success and a sense of unbridled freedom are billed as the highest ideals,” as Bishop Randazzo writes in his 2020 Pastoral Letter. The song of the Father is the song of attentiveness, compassion, service, fellowship and true worship in openness of spirit. This song is not a private affair. This song is about change: change here and now in this society. It is a song of criticism, a song of resistance to any force which marginalises and excludes. It is a song which puts the ‘poor’, those who are vulnerable, at the centre of our consideration and makes the hunger for justice and righteousness a priority of our life.

Lent is a time to listen again to the song by which we dance. To what melody are we dancing? Does our own dance of life confront the values around us which would make us less than who we are? Are our own lives ones of confrontation and resistance to a logic unknown by the Father’s

graciousness and gentleness? Or have we preferred to hum alone in the corner, tapping our fingers in the hope that nobody will notice us such that the world goes on unchanged by our presence in it? How disturbing is our dance? Does our own dance possess the passion of Jesus’ dance? Does Jesus dance at all in our hearts? Anything less is whistling in the dark.

Reflection Questions for Discussion:



- 1. Share and discuss your insights from listening to the Gospel text and the accompanying reflection.**
- 2. Jesus brings about change in the way that we go about things. How mindful are we that as disciples we are to be agents of change in our society?**
- 3. What are the main changes that we discern as needed in our world today so that the song of Jesus may be heard more clearly?**
- 4. How might we envisage contributing to bring about this change, so that the marginal and the vulnerable are not traduced by the logic of the marketplace?**

A Personal Story

Audio: Week 3 Personal Story – Ashleigh Donnelly



Ashleigh Donnelly offers us a personal reflection on the importance of justice and mercy in her life.

Ashleigh is a Social Worker and has worked at CatholicCare for four years with youth at risk and adults living with intellectual disabilities. Ashleigh is married to Justin and is a mum to Rosemary who was born in November 2020. They have recently moved into the Parish of St Patrick's East Gosford where they are blessed to be part of a vibrant and active parish community. In 2019 Ashleigh was appointed as a delegate on the

Vatican's International Youth Advisory Body following her involvement in the 2018 Synod on Youth. Ashleigh is a speaker and writer and is passionate about activating young people to make a difference in the world.

Listen to the testimony, and use the following questions to discuss:



1. What aspects of 'justice and mercy' in Ashleigh's life spoke to you most deeply?
2. How is this story inspiring you to more intentionally live out justice and mercy in your life?
3. How could your parish / school / agency / community give a greater focus to Bishop's priority to place the poor at the heart of the Church?

Response



What is your response to what you have heard and discussed during this session? What initiatives are you being called to action, both personally and communally? You are invited to share and discuss your response with another person.

**Lord, be the beginning and end
of all we do and say.
Prompt our actions with your grace,
and complete them with your all-powerful help.
Through Christ our Lord.
AMEN.**

