



Fifth Sunday of Lent

A united message reflecting the voice of the bishop at the service of his people

Opening Prayer



God our Father,

In this season of Lent, pour out on us your abundant graces of love and mercy and show us a new way of living the Gospel. Fill the community of the Church in Broken Bay with the Holy Spirit, renewing us in our unity, as many parts of one body. Help us to move towards the joy of Easter as the unified Body of Christ.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Introduction



“While we make a special effort during Lent to repent and believe in the Gospel, for the Catholic Christian, each day brings opportunities for the Spirit to change our minds and hearts, to guide us on the way and to bring us to a radically new way of living the Good News of Jesus Christ.” (Bishop Anthony’s Pastoral Letter, *Jesus Christ, our beginning and end*)

Jesus prayed earnestly for unity amongst His disciples. Our unity is

grounded in our common faith in Jesus Christ and membership of the faith community, the Body of Christ. In this week’s Gospel Jesus speaks about drawing all people to Himself. We are united in Him, despite all our many differences, in the common radical love that the Gospel calls us to.

Gospel Reading



Audio:
Week 5 Gospel Reading



John 12: 20-33

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say - ‘Father, save me from

this hour? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

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 – Tomasz Juszczak

Director,
Evangelisation Broken Bay



We are living in a world that is divided in many respects, but perhaps most notably in ideology. Those on both the left and right side of the spectrum are seemingly becoming more radical in their beliefs and practice. At times, it almost looks as though humanity has lost its common grounding. This Sunday’s Gospel is also just as, if not

more, radical. Radical, however, in its call to unity rather than division.

From the outset, the Gospel speaks of the “Greeks” who come to ask Jesus a question. Already this implies that Jesus’ answer is for all, rather than simply God’s chosen people, Israel. At the end of the Gospel, Jesus gives us the answer to how humanity will be truly united; “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” The first thing we see is that true unity comes through Christ Himself. We also understand that the way that Christ will unite “all people” to Himself, will be through His death on the cross, resurrection and ascension into heaven.

What is it about the cross that is so powerful? How exactly will we as humanity be able to unite through what is essentially our Saviour’s death on an instrument of torture? Quite simply, the answer is love. Christ’s death is the most radical and the greatest example of love that the world has ever witnessed. Bishop Anthony states “the cross is God’s work of love and mercy, bringing us to conversion.” This is what this Sunday’s Gospel calls us to most clearly. A radical conversion to love.

What does this look like? Well, it doesn’t look easy. Christ challenges us to radical love in this Gospel by calling us to die to self, “hate” our lives, follow Him and serve Him. Doesn’t exactly sound like a piece of cake does it? But neither is it too complicated. Jesus simply wants us

to love Him and love others. Bishop Anthony tells us that we need to find opportunities to be guided “to a radically new way of living the Good News of Jesus Christ.” This doesn’t always mean we need to look for the most impressive ways to become a martyr. It means we simply need to look at how we can die to self in small ways. To make a habit of choosing to serve others over our own interests. Perhaps we can help out at home a little more without being asked? Maybe we can give up watching the footy to spend more quality time with our family or with God in prayer. We might even choose to spend less money shopping and give that money to those in need instead. Whatever it is, putting Christ and others first in small ways is how we start to live out this radical call to conversion; this radical call to love.

Finally, this call to love is how true unity in our world will manifest. Bishop Anthony reminds us that “Love and harmony are signs of unity in the community of the Church.” True unity in our world can only come through Christ. The more we follow and serve Christ, the more we open ourselves to Christ’s love and the more that His love manifests in us. It’s our right and duty now to look to the cross for inspiration. We need to bring this message of Good News to the world so that all will be drawn to Him, and it is in Him that we will find true unity.

Reflection Questions for Discussion:



1. **Share and discuss your insights from listening to the Gospel text and the accompanying reflection.**
2. **Our unity comes from Christ and our shared faith in him. Do you feel a sense of unity with your brothers and sisters in Christ? In what ways?**
3. **In what ways are you living out the Gospel? Is there an area of your life in which you are being called to greater love?**
4. **How is Christ’s death an example to us of love?**

A Personal Story



Audio:
Week 5 Personal Story –
Linda and Andrew Hearne



Linda and Andrew Hearne offer us a personal reflection on the importance of unity in their lives.

Linda and Andrew Hearne are parishioners at Lindfield-Killara Parish. Linda is the Director at a day care centre, and Andrew is a Regional Catholic School Operations Coordinator. They have three children aged 8, 9 and 12.

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



1. What aspects of ‘unity’ in Linda and Andrew’s lives spoke to you most deeply?
2. How could your parish / school / agency / community focus more on unity?
3. How is this story inspiring you to more intentionally live this radical conversion to the Gospel?

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.**

