



# The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly

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## Homily at Mass 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time – 23 February 2020

At Mass each Sunday we recite the long Profession of Faith – we call it the Nicene Creed. This Creed is a development of the much shorter Apostles Creed. Tradition suggests that the Apostles contributed a sentence each to this Creed, which seems to be based on the promises we make at Baptism. The long form of the Creed comes to us from 2 Church Councils held at Nicea in modern Turkey in 325 and a later Council held at modern Istanbul, then called Constantinople, in 381.

The skeleton of the Creed is the Sign of the Cross. We profess faith in God our Father and Creator. We profess faith in the mystery of Jesus Christ – Son of God, Son of Mary, our crucified and risen Lord; we look forward to his return at the end of time. We profess faith in the Holy Spirit – the divine breath of God who animates the Church and her mission in every age. And we profess faith in the Church. You and I believe in and belong to “one holy catholic and apostolic Church”. This is the Church founded by Christ on the rock of Peter. This is the Church which is the People of God. This is the Church which proclaims Christ and his Gospel. This is the Church where God is living with his people and active and alive in his sacraments.

The Church is “one” in Christ. The Church is catholic – universal, the holy people of God embraces all people of every race and culture. We see this as we look around the church now. The Church is apostolic – founded on the Twelve whom Jesus chose and commissioned to bring his Gospel to the ends of the earth. The Church’s mission is apostolic – active, alive, missionary, tireless, joy filled even in our difficult times.

And the Church is “holy”. Holy – what does that mean? Do you and I make the Church holy? The answer is both “yes” and “no”. We all know how much each of us struggles with being faithful to God. Sin creeps in so easily. And sin is the enemy of holiness. The source of our personal holiness and the holiness of the Church is of course Christ Jesus – he alone he is the all-holy. In one or two of his letters St Paul speaks of Christ as the bridegroom of his bride the Church. Christ loves the Church. Even on the Cross Christ poured out his life for her, when blood and water flowed from his side. The soldier opened a fountain of mercy when he opened our Lord’s side, revealing his heart. From there flowed the holy Sacraments – Holy Baptism which brings us into the family of the Church, and the Holy Eucharist – God’s gift, and the presence of Christ, which you and I offer, adore and receive in Holy Communion.

Today the Word of God calls each of us: “be holy for I am holy”. “Be perfect just as your Father in Heaven is perfect”. Jesus raises the bar very high just in time for the beginning of Lent next Wednesday when we come to the Church and receive the sign of ashes on our forehead. Together we set out on a 6 week journey, a long climb to the top of the holy mountain of Easter. “We take Lent seriously in our house” a Lutheran pastor told me during the week. What thoughts do you and I have for Lent this year?

“Be holy” God says. Our everyday word for this is “saint”. There are saints from every walk of life – popes, priests and bishops, religious sisters and brothers, parents, young children. Pope John Paul II often said: “Our age needs saints!” To be a saint calls for heroism, generosity, courage and buckets of faith and charity. And the nourishment we need to be a saint is found just where we are now – attuned to the Word of God, embraced in God’s Family, fed by God in the Eucharist.

To be a saint means to be a friend of God. Friendship grows in conversation as well as silence. Our word for this is prayer.

“Be perfect as God is perfect” Jesus says. The perfection he calls us to is not to live mistake free, but to have a heart open to others, a heart of mercy, a heart of companion, a heart that responds to God’s friendship and the needs of others.