



## The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly

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### Homily at Mass 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C – 24 February 2019

“Before and After”. How often do we see these sorts of ads in the newspapers and on TV for weight loss programs and even hair loss and regrowth therapies? St Paul seems to present a similar sort of image today when he talks about us modelled on the earthly man – Adam – and made new in the heavenly man – Jesus Christ.

Love your enemies, pray for those who treat you badly. How does the earthly man hear and react to these ideals taught by Jesus in today’s Gospel? Built into all of us is a certain obduracy, a certain hardness of heart, a certain natural reaction to those who hurt us, injure us, insult us, and make our life difficult. We want to fight fire with fire, we want to gain the upper hand and even the score, we want to exact revenge, teach them a lesson, get our own back. This has been the way wars have been fought, and resentments kept bottled up even for generations. The old Adam, the original rebel against God, “the earthly man”, has stalked the earth for thousands of years. In a world like ours – often described as post-Christian, even godless – we can find that the earthly man has had a resurgence when people complain that a sentence imposed by a judge is not harsh enough, or when people try to take justice into their own hands and become vigilantes. We see this sometimes in examples of drive by shootings, honour killings, and the dark unforgiving world of the Mafia.

All of us are sons and daughters of the “earthly man”. We were all born with Original Sin – each of us still carries at least a hint of rebellion against God. Baptism of course breaks the hold that Original Sin has on us. Baptism makes us the children of God. Baptism gives us new birth, new life, freedom. In Baptism God sets our heart on Heaven and he brings us into a new family, his family the Church. But all of us know that we still limp along with the scars of the earthly man – we aspire to the high ideals of the Gospel, we want to be like Christ and walk his Gospel path, but we find it hard, we become discouraged, we fall, we sin. This struggle has a name – we call it concupiscence. The great St Augustine struggled with concupiscence all his life. He speaks about it as kindling we use to light a fire – a few twigs and a bit of paper, a flame- and a whoosh! The fire has already begun!

I sometimes think that on the day of our baptism God plants 3 seeds in us – seeds of faith, hope and love. Like a gardener, God then pours water on the seeds planted in good soil to trigger their growth. Our parents and teachers did well to encourage the growth of these seeds in us: teaching us to believe and trust in God, to love his Church, to see the goodness of our world and people around us, and to love God with all our heart and soul and to love others: our husband/wife, our children, our neighbours, the poor.

Because of Baptism, Confirmation, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the food of the Eucharist you and I help the seeds of faith, hope and love to grow and grow strong, for their roots too take firm hold in the good soil of our hearts, for them to bear good fruit in us. Our Lord’s teaching today sets the bar high: the way of life he outlines for us is the very path he walks for us. “Love your enemies ... pray for those who hurt you ... give to everyone who asks ... treat others as you would like them to treat you.” This is the way of the heavenly man. This is the way of Christ.