

12th Sunday (A)

- We often read in the papers how a whistleblower has exposed something corrupt in an organization, or a certain event, grief, or tragedy exposes hidden or suppressed feelings of people for one another.
- To unveil is to discover something hidden, to bring it to light, to remove the veil & reveal.
- COVID-19, among its many connotations, is a silent revealer of many realities that often remain hidden in the everyday life of economic, political, social & cultural systems in which we are immersed in one way or another.
- It has exposed xenophobic, nationalist & racist policies & attitudes that at best have been dormant, or more usually controlled & suppressed.
- Hidden fears & anxieties that have already been there, lying in wait, are heightened & people either begin to act out of fear, blaming others for what they fear, or they courageously protest against what has been exposed as being unjust & discriminatory, as is the case with the racial protests being held around the globe.
- Fears are being exposed & the question is how do we live & respond to those fears – when things are unveiled do we violently retaliate, or do we do our part to change what is wrong?
- Jesus consolingly says in the gospel – “do not be afraid” – consistent with the promise that he is with us in our fears to direct the right course of action.
- I think that we can safely say that our modern Australian culture is not overly laden with gospel values.
- I think that we can safely say that it is largely a culture of individualism as opposed to community, of self-interest as opposed to common good, of looking out for one's self or one's own, as opposed to concern & caring for others, of competition as opposed to cooperation, of profit as opposed to service, of consumerism as opposed to need, of material possession, of money & things, as opposed to spiritual, personal worth, of immediate gratification as opposed to social & ecological responsibility, of advancement & success & winning & getting to the top as opposed to ethical, moral behaviour.
- If this is really the kind of culture in which we live & work & have our being must we not very seriously ask ourselves: Is it possible to be a Christian without being, by that very fact, counter-cultural? Is it possible to be a Christian & to be comfortable in our modern Australian society?
- Or must a Christian necessarily be critical, prophetically critical, & in the fullest sense of the word a Christ-like sign of contradiction; a sign, as the prophet Simeon said of Jesus, that will be opposed: truly, a sword in the side of society.

- Is it possible for us to be Christian without in some way suffering precisely because we are Christian? Today's liturgy tells us that it is not possible.
- In every age people of faith are called to courageous proclamation because faith is not something to be lived in secret.
- There comes a time when we are confronted with a decision to stand up & be counted, to declare where we stand in terms of our faith.
- Jesus speaks in terms of revealing what is hidden, & giving full voice to what is otherwise whispered in the dark. It is a powerful reminder of the saying about evil growing when good people do & say nothing.
- For followers of Christ, there should never be a silent majority when it comes to the proclamation of his message.
- Today's liturgy tells us that if we are called by Christ & really respond to the call, then that means that we will suffer, that we will suffer precisely because, & to the extent that, we are really Christian.
- I am reminded of the six Jesuits who were murdered in El Salvador in 1989 because they spoke out against injustice in their society & acknowledged Jesus in the light of his gospel values.
- Or of the Australian Josephite nun, Irene McCormack who was killed with 4 men in a village in Peru for their Christian pastoral care of the villagers in 1991. Did the Jesuits & Irene have fear for their lives?
- I imagine so...we all would, but try as they might, these terrorists could not kill their souls...they could not kill their spirits.
- In fact the spirits of Irene McCormack & the 6 Jesuits as well as the thousands who have been killed in various parts of the world in our own time for their faithfully living out the gospel demands continues to be honoured in El Salvador & Peru & everywhere else where they lived their faith with integrity, & they continue to inspire - God continues to bring good out of these evil acts.
- The question that Scripture puts to us over & over, & is putting to us again today, is one that literally measures the genuineness of our Christianity.
- The question is not, are you ready for martyrdom?
- Actually, it is a much simpler question: Have you ever even gotten into a little bit of trouble yet - in the name of Jesus?
- So what are you & I afraid of? What are our fears? Are they about our relationships...about our family...about money or possessions...about our future...about our coping? Or are we afraid of those who threaten our integrity...our spirituality...our values...our identity...our soul?
- To integrate our lives into Jesus has the effect of taking away soul-destructive fear. It doesn't mean we won't have worries or problems to deal with, but for our soul we need have no fear.
- In your time of quiet prayer, may you hear Jesus say to you "do not be afraid".