

# Installation as Archbishop of Hobart

## Homily

17<sup>th</sup> September 2013

To the person of faith the Sacred Scriptures speak to our life. They are the living Word of God and cut deeply into the depths of our being. A particular text or passage can reveal the pattern of grace within our life. It can give meaning or bring clarity to our experiences. It can reveal the shape of the path we are taking.

In my walk of faith I have found that I have drawn to focus more and more upon my relationship with Jesus Christ. Of the various ways in which this can be depicted St Paul's expression – "for me to live is Christ" – increasingly captures my sense of being a Christian.

Another phrase, this time from St John, has expressed for me the gift that Christ has brought to my life. In the opening chapter of his Gospel (in John 1: 17) the beloved disciple says that Jesus came bringing grace and truth. These two words express my personal experience. My personal faith is the fruit of the action of grace. I have come to know the love of God for me and become conscious of the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit in my life. The grace that converted my heart has led then to the enlightenment of my mind. I have come to know the truth. These two descriptors of living in Christ have become my episcopal motto – Gracia et Veritas, Grace and Truth.

Living in Christ has been for me a source of great freedom and joy. The Christian life has meant for me a life full of hope and confidence. With this experience firmly grounded within me, my ministry as priest and now as bishop has focussed on helping others to discover what I have discovered. The Catholic faith is a great treasure. I long that all may know what I have come to know.

St Paul, in the second reading tonight, describes his self-understanding as an apostle in these words, "For it is not ourselves that we are preaching, but Christ Jesus as the Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus"

sake". St Paul's life and ministry was poured out in his passion to proclaim the Christ who so powerfully intervened in his life on the road to Damascus. He saw his life as one of witnessing to the saving power of Jesus which broke in upon his life and radically changed the entire orientation of his being. His life was shaped by the offering of himself in service of others, in the cause of the Gospel.

As I come here to Tasmania to take up the charge entrusted to me by Pope Francis, I come with the simple desire and firm intention to proclaim Jesus Christ and to offer my life in service to all Tasmanians.

In addressing the Catholic people of Tasmania on the occasion of the announcement of my role as Archbishop I made reference to a phrase of Blessed John Paul II as he addressed the Church at the commencement of the new millennium. He urged all members of the Church to "start afresh from Christ". As the Church entered the third Christian millennium, the Pope urged us to return to the source of our faith, to refocus ourselves upon our relationship with Jesus Christ. He wanted the Church to move forward in the next phase of human history in Christ, with Christ and for Christ.

This I propose tonight to the particular Church here in Tasmania – the Archdiocese of Hobart - let us all centre ourselves afresh on Christ. Let us draw close to him. Let us listen to him with hearts which long to hear his voice. Let us seek his mind and his will for us. Let us implore him to stay with us and guide us and make what we do fruitful. Without him we can do nothing. Without his presence and grace our efforts will not amount to anything lasting. However, in him all things are possible; great things are possible.

This is the invitation I make to all members of the Church in Tasmania: let us together start afresh from Christ.

In speaking about the place of Christ in our personal lives and in the life of the community of the Church, we cannot understand him and his work in us and in the community without going to calvary: hence the choice of the Gospel this evening.

St John's account of the crucifixion is particular because he was there. Indeed he says, "this is the evidence of one who saw it – trustworthy evidence and he knows he speaks the truth". What was it that he so strongly protests that he witnessed. It was the piercing of the heart of Jesus, and what occurred as his sacred heart was pierced: there flowed out blood and water.

This moment, this experience, had a profound effect on St John. He would return to this in his other writings. In his first letter St John says that Jesus came "by water and blood" (1 Jn 5:5). These were the great witnesses to his purpose and mission, St John says. The blood and the water flowing from the heart of Jesus were the defining witness to what occurred on Calvary. They explain the meaning of Calvary; they reveal the purpose of the death of Christ.

The blood was the blood of sacrifice. The last drops of blood drained from the dead body of Jesus as his heart was pierced. His sacrifice was total and complete. The death of Jesus was not just the sad finish to the life of a good man. It was not just a cruel act of political expediency. It was the sacrifice of his life that Jesus was prepared to offer for the sake of achieving a complete reconciliation between God and man. In this sacrifice the sin of humanity was atoned for and the penalty for sin – death – was abolished.

We declare in the third acclamation of faith at Mass: Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free. Yes, Jesus has set us free from sin, and free from everlasting death.

Once the last drops of blood flowed, St John saw water now trickling from the heart of Jesus. This revealed that there would be waters of new life released upon mankind. It was the sign that the death of Jesus would release the power of the Holy Spirit, which would be manifested particularly at Pentecost. Those who embrace the cross will experience the new life of the Spirit.

This is the Gospel. This is the testimony of the Christian Scriptures. This is the proclamation of the Church to the world. This is the power of God to save. This is the means of personal transformation and the path to eternal life.

May the Church in Tasmania be renewed under the power of the Gospel.

Amen.

Archbishop Julian Porteous

Wednesday, 11 September 2013