

Homily for Parishes in the Western Region without clergy

Bishop Cam Venables – Sunday 22nd September 2019, Pentecost 15

Readings: **Jeremiah 8:18 – 9:1**

Psalm 79:1-9

1Timothy 2:1-10

Luke 16:1-13

Each week we bring ourselves on a Sunday to worship, and many things have happened in our life, or in the life of the world, since we were last there! In some ways these things partly shape what we bring to God as we sing and pray, listen to readings from the Bible, and - if there is opportunity – break bread with others. So, as you look back over the last seven days - what are some of the things that have been happening for you?

As I look back over the last week there has been a recurring theme of people gathering! Last weekend I was in Central Victoria at a national conference on ministry in rural and remote Australia. It was inspiring to meet with people from sixteen Dioceses who are working in these contexts, and I'm thankful for the opportunity we had to learn from another. I also have a strong sense that new friendships developed which will lead to new collaborations so... watch this space!

Then, last Friday more than three hundred thousand people across Australia gathered, in different places, to express the view to political leadership that climate change needs to be taken more seriously. To express the view that projects yielding economic benefits to this generation, often have environmental costs that will cripple future generations. More than one hundred thousand people marched in Melbourne. More than thirty thousand in Brisbane, and more than five hundred in Toowoomba.

It was a tough time to organise a Climate Change event in Toowoomba because this weekend is the seventieth Carnival of Flowers and there's a huge amount of community activity in this. People have gathered from many places for the Carnival, and yesterday (Saturday) more than eighty thousand people lined the streets to watch the parade. On Thursday I was in old clothes at Bunnings to get some paint for a float in the parade, when a person in front of me turned around and said, 'You were in Rockhampton weren't you?' Pretty surprised I admitted that I had certainly lived in Rocky, and he explained that he and his wife come every year to the Carnival of Flowers and that his children and my children had gone to the same school.

Each of these events have been occasions for people to gather, and at each there was much to be thankful for.

In the New Testament reading this week Paul wrote to Timothy about the importance of thanksgiving in a letter. As you listened to the verses, or read them, I wonder what stood out for you? Let me offer the first two verses again: *'First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity...'* (1Tim 2:1-2).

We may be tempted to think that there's nothing surprising in this encouragement for Timothy, and by implication each of us, to pray. But, there are two words that make this encouragement

confronting, for we are urged to pray... for everyone! And, we are urged to give thanks... for everyone!

The two words 'for everyone' challenge the very human inclination we often have towards self-interest, and tribal bias. We are encouraged to pray for everyone, because... God loves everyone!

So, in that gathering of Anglican leadership last weekend I have been challenged to give thanks for all those who came, not just the ones who interpret Scripture the way I do! And, I have been encouraged to pray for God's blessing on all in the life of the Church, not just those who belong to the theological or denominational tribe I belong to!

And, for those large gatherings of people asking that politicians consider more seriously the scientific explanation for climate change there is the challenge to not only be thankful for those who have gathered in solidarity, but also those who disagree: particularly the politicians, policy makers, and leaders of industry. And, for those same politicians, policy makers, and leaders of industry... there is the challenge to be thankful for those who have gathered to protest. For each to pray for God's blessing on the other, and through this affirm somehow a common humanity.

There is something profound in Paul's teaching to Timothy that we should, pray for everyone, God's blessing. Give thanks for everyone... not just those we find easy to like and love.

In a media environment that is often quick to polarise those who are good, and those who are not; those who are in, and those who are out; those who are foolish and those who are wise... it's radical to suggest that we are all God's children! But, isn't that what Jesus did, time and time again: tax-collectors, lepers, adulterers, Samaritans, women, the crippled, the lame... all God's children?

In God's grace, let us respond to the challenge this week and each pray for everyone; particularly those that we think less of because of their politics, or theology, or ability to rub us up the wrong way... for we are all God's children.

Let's pray...

God of life and love, we give thanks for the reminder that we should pray for your blessing on all people. We ask for the guidance and inspiration of your Spirit as we try this week to do this. We ask particularly that you remind us to pray for those against whom we have some prejudice or hard feeling; and we pray in the name of the one we call. Prince of Peace. Amen.