

Pentecost 12

1 Kings 2: 10-12; 3: 3-14 Psalm 111 Eph 5: 11 – 21 **John 6: 51-58**

Sages through the ages have agreed, people like Julian of Norwich, Desmond Tutu, Leunig, Richard Rohr, Joan Chittister and oh yes, of course, Jesus: Religion at its best is meant to be simple. There may be great depths and many nuances, but it should be something everyone can understand and follow.

As followers of Jesus, we like to emphasise that Jesus came to make (some of) the mysteries of God known to us. We highlight relationship with God as the critical issue, rather than observing rules and rituals, which, say those sages, is the worst form of the practice of religion.

Because the rituals, idioms, and imagery of our faith are from a long-gone time and culture their historical and cultural nuances require explanation and interpretation. Consequently, I imagine that you have heard many a sermon on John Ch 6, which the Gospel readings have been following, today being the penultimate of five.

The lion's share of the chapter is called the *Bread of Life Discourse* (v. 22-58), given at the synagogue in Capernaum (v. 59), Jesus' hometown as an adult (Matt 4:13). It follows the stories of the feeding of the five thousand (v. 1-15) and walking on water (v. 16-21) as I mentioned previously.

The complexities and philosophy of how we participate in the "flesh and blood of Jesus" have caused argument and confusion through the centuries amongst followers of Jesus. Ironically, that is the last thing Jesus would have wanted!

In the short space of today's Gospel reading Jesus calls himself bread 5 times, and talks about his flesh 6 times.

This not literal language, Jesus is speaking the language of devotion; of our lives being bound up with his.

This is the heart of our faith: Relationship, close friendship with Jesus, being a follower of his way – which is what “disciple” means.

Last Sunday I concluded by saying that as followers of The Way, we are Keepers of the Story and practitioners of the Good News of God’s love. And that we don’t have to look very far to find someone who desperately wants and/or needs what we have. I quoted William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury during WWII years allegedly said:

"The Church is the only organisation that does not exist for itself, but for those who live outside of it." – William Temple

The previous Sunday, talking about the story of Bathsheba and David and Psalm 51, I said: “The challenge for us is how to share the merciful forgiveness and love at the heart of God that the Psalmist says, is the antidote to the kind of hopeless despair and self-disgust expressed in Psalm 51.”

So that is what I want to share with you today, that I have been reading about, that the recent Diocesan Council meeting focussed on, that is at the heart of our forthcoming SVM.

Powerpoint follows ...

References

Enduringword.com: David Guzik

Workingpreacher.com: Brian Peterson

Sacredspace.ie

Sermonwriter.com

Eating with the Bridegroom, John Shea, 2005, Liturgical Press

Sunday and Holy Day Liturgies, Cycle B, Flor McCarthy SDB, 1984, Dominican Publications

Faith and Belief in Australia, A national study on religion, spirituality and worldview trends, 2017, mccrindle

Future of the Church in Australia, 2020, mccrindle