

Fr Ray Sanchez - HOMILY DATED 6.10.2018

It is good to be with you as we begin this time of mission in the parish. This is the fourth mission that I have conducted at the parish, and I'm afraid it's the last as I only have four mission programs, and so after this one all of my material is used up!

It is good to be with you and share this time of mission. I always like to begin a mission by preaching at the parish the weekend before because that gives those of you who haven't met me before a time to look me over and it also gives me an opportunity to explain to you what you can expect from this week of mission.

A mission is, in effect, a retreat. Starting tomorrow night you are invited to have a week of retreat in your parish, and what the name suggests is to take a step back from the business of our lives. To take time to step back, and to be with God and to reflect on what is happening in my life, what is happening in the Church and society, and where is God in all of this.

This fourth series in the parish mission has a very specific focus to it, and that is dealing with this time of transition. We are living at a time when things are changing so rapidly and so constantly that choices don't even feel like choices anymore, but rather reactions to a constantly changing situation.

More than just change, I believe that we are living in a time of transition where all of the institutions that we have taken for granted as necessary to society are all up for question. They have all, in one way or another, let us down. In the first reading today, for example, we read how God presents to us the ideal model of the relationship of marriage between a man and a woman but already at the time of Jesus when the Gospel was written, he is confronting the reality of marriage breakdown and divorce.

Today, marriage breakdown and divorce is at an all-time high and in Australia, we have even questioned, what marriage is all about with the admission of same sex marriage. Marriage was an institution we took for granted would never change, however in our lifetime we have experienced change.

Also, not only have we been shocked by a challenge to the way we keep our vows in marriage, but in our Church, even more scandalous, has been the failure of priests keep their vows as priests. Of course I'm talking about the sex abuse scandal in our Church. We've also seen the failure of the institution to deal with that with compassion and in a helpful way. We've seen that

bishops have been more concerned with defending their decisions, defending the sacredness of priesthood and defending the reputation of the church, rather than defending the victims - the little children, whom in the Gospel today we see Jesus wanting to protect and to bless.

This mission is going to try to deal with some of that challenge that we've experienced. This is really only a symptom of a greater disease because our society has experienced that breakdown in confidence in our institutions.

People have lost confidence in their politicians who seem much more interested in attacking each other than in offering us any kind of real leadership in this time of transition.

Also, with the Royal Commission, another institution we took for granted as being necessary for the stability of our society, the big banks, have also been shown to be corrupt and exploitative of us, the people who seek their service.

This mission gives us a chance to reflect on what this all means. How do we deal with this? Where is God in all of this?

So, your mission, which begins tomorrow night at the parish, will begin with, how do we deal with change? As human beings we don't like change, we like things to stay permanent that gives us a sense of security. So, how do we deal with change and where do we find God in it? We have a perception of reality, and unfortunately we take our perception as reality so that when our perceptions are challenged suddenly we feel that reality has changed on us.

That's what we are going to look at. Where is God's invitation in the experience of change?

On Monday, we will look at Pope Francis, who offers us a way through this time of transition. His message is, instead of relying on black and white laws and rules for stability what we need to rely on is mercy and compassion. That has to be our anchor point. We will look at what he has to say to us, the way he lives out that message, perhaps as a resource of how to live out this time of transition.

On Tuesday, we will look at the Eucharist. Again, a resource that our faith offers us. The Eucharist is called the source and summit of our faith. So by deepening our understanding of the meaning of the Eucharist perhaps this is something that we can draw on through this time of transition. We will look at it in terms of what it means to share communion, this act of solidarity with each other, and we will look at it in terms of what do we mean by the 'sacrifice of the mass'.

On Wednesday we break.

Thursday we look at the whole human experience of transition. We experience different transitions in life. A mid life crisis is a transition. When we lose someone we love we are thrown into a time of transition. How do we negotiate our way through that transition, how do we navigate our way through it so that we end up healthy psychologically, emotionally and spiritually at the end of it?

We will look at the resource our church offers us, of Christian solitude, to make sure that to deal with transition we take quiet time to be with our God.

Finally, on Friday, we conclude the mission by looking at the church in a time of transition. Where have we come from and where are we going to? We will conclude the mission by celebrating the sacrament of reconciliation because when we are in a time of change and transition that can cause pain, frustration and fear, we sometimes make choices which harm ourselves and others and so we need to conclude with the sacrament of reconciliation.

And so I am inviting you, not just to ride this wave of change and transition blindly, hoping that you come out okay at the end, to take up this invitation to come to the mission, take this time to retreat from that confusion, to find that bit of clarity, that God is offering us.

Come to the mission. Come and see and you won't be disappointed.