



Installation of Relics at St Anthony's Parish Greenmount

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St Anthony's, Greenmount Parish
Cnr Innamincka Road and Gallipoli Drive ,Greenmount
Saturday 7 November 2015

The very beautiful occasion we are celebrating this evening - the installation of the holy relics of three great saints - really provides us with a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the lives of these three people: Saint Anthony of Padua, the patron of your parish; St Mary McKillop our first and so far only canonised Australian saint: and Saint John Paul II, who was pope from 1978 to 2005.

Saint Anthony was born in Portugal in 1195 and died in Padua in Italy in 1231, just five years after the death of Saint Francis of Assisi. Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop was born in Fitzroy in Melbourne in 1842 and died in 1909 in North Sydney where she is buried in the chapel of the house she lived in for many years. Saint John Paul II was born in Poland in 1920 and died in Rome in 2005. Three different people, each born in a different country and a different century: one was a Franciscan friar, one was the founder of a new religious order, one was a diocesan priest who became a pope.

And yet tonight, in a sense, they come together to form a community of faith and holiness, to be a source of inspiration, of hope and of support, for you as a parish community as you strive to be all that God is asking you to be.

Apart from the fact that the relics of these three great figures are altogether in our presence this evening, what is it that can draw them together? What is common to them? They are so different in their countries of origin, the historical period in which they lived, the cultures in which they grew up, the experiences they had, the challenges they faced.

Perhaps one way to answer this question is to think of these three saints in relation to this evening's gospel. As Jesus watches people make their offerings in the temple it seems that there are two types of people present. The first type, which seems to comprise people who are quite well off, contributed a lot of money, but they only gave what was left over after they had looked after themselves. The second type, represented by the poor widow, contributed very little. But, as Jesus points out, the widow, in the ways that really count, gave much more than the wealthy because she gave everything she possessed. She held nothing back. As we think about Saint Anthony, or Saint Mary MacKillop, or



Saint John Paul, I don't think any of us would have any doubt about which group they would have been in had they been among the people making an offering in the temple. Indeed we might say that in talking about the widow Jesus gives a perfect description of what a saint is: a saint is someone who gives everything he or she has, who holds nothing back, who makes of his or her life a gift, an offering to God, just as the widow made her offering to God in the temple.

This is a challenge to us of course. We may never become canonised saints, but as Christians we are called to be saints in the sense that we are called to make our lives a gift to God and to God's people. This is why God has given us the gift of life in the first place. Most of us do this through our commitment to our husband or wife, to our children and our families, and, beyond that, to the people we encounter every day who might need some help from us in one way or another. Others, like your priests here in the parish, or like priests and religious throughout our diocese and all around the world, do it by living lives of faithful witness and service to God and his Church through their commitment to a life of celibacy, community and mission. And even though the three saints we are reflecting on this evening were all priests or nuns it might help us to remember that just a few weeks ago Pope Francis canonised a married couple who had had nine children including the famous St Therese of Lisieux. Sanctity, holiness, is not just for priests and nuns: it is for everyone.

There is another way of thinking about what our three saints have in common. It is their love for and commitment to Jesus within the community of the Church. When I was a little boy there was, in the front entrance of my parish Church, a statue of Saint Anthony of Padua. I remember being very much struck by the way in which Saint Anthony was gazing at the child Jesus whom he was holding in his arms. I think it was very much that statue which helped me to understand that our Christian Faith is, before anything else, an invitation to a relationship, a friendship, with Jesus. I have carried that idea with me all through my life.

Saint Mary MacKillop is famous for her saying that you should never see a need without doing something about it. She lived her life this way and encouraged the sisters who joined her to do the same. But she had another piece of advice she used to give her sisters: never forget who it is you are following. It was only Jesus who made sense of her life: it was only her commitment to him that kept her going in her many difficult moments.

Saint John Paul, in his opening sermon on the day he was inaugurated as pope, cried out with great passion, "Do not be afraid, open wide the doors to Christ". This was to become the theme of his long years as Pope. He wanted nothing more than to bring people to Christ so that they could experience the joy, the freedom and the excitement of giving their lives to him.

These three saints, whose relics we solemnly welcome into the parish community, are all calling us to one thing: to a living, faithful, enthusiastic and hope-filled entrustment of



ourselves to Christ - to his love, to his compassion, to his mercy and forgiveness and to the wonderful gift of his friendship. Perhaps the words of Saint John Paul II expresses it best: " Do not be afraid; open wide the doors to Christ." May this be the distinguishing feature of your parish. May Saint John Paul, Saint Anthony and Saint Mary MacKillop support you in this through the example of their lives and through the help of their prayers.