



Rite of Election and Welcome

HOMILY

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St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
Thursday 22 February, 2018

“You did not choose me, no I chose you and I have commissioned you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last.”

These words of Jesus, which he addressed to his disciples at the Last Supper, are words which we will hear more than once over the next few weeks as we reflect more deeply on the meaning of the Last Supper and the terrible and wonderful events that followed on what we now call Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

For all of you who have joined us this evening for the Rite of Election of Catechumens and formal recognition and welcome of candidates for admission to full communion with us, they are words which are especially important. They are I think perhaps confusing words as well. I say this because I am sure that each one of you would see your presence here tonight for this very special occasion as being very much something you yourself have chosen. Certainly there is a part of me which wants to thank you and congratulate you for the courage you have all shown in choosing to take this important step in your journey of faith. I hope indeed that tonight's celebration will provide you with the opportunity to reflect on all the ways in which your choice has been supported, nourished and guided by God who has been at work in your lives through the things that have happened to you, the people you have met, the joys you have experienced and the sadness and difficulties you have encountered. In all these ways God has been leading you to the point where you have been able to say “yes” to God and choose the path of life which he has been holding out to you.

Your courage, your fidelity to the persistent call of God in your life, and the faith that you have allowed to grow within you, have brought you to this point and you should be honoured, and congratulated and thanked for your openness to God's Spirit. In that sense then you have made a choice – perhaps a difficult and challenging one, perhaps one about which you have hesitated, perhaps one that causes you even now a certain apprehension – but hopefully too a choice that will bring great joy and deep peace into your lives.

But at the same time, as the words of Jesus remind us, in the end you have only been able to make this choice because God has first chosen you. God has been at work deep within you calling to you and inviting you, again in the words of Jesus, to “come follow me”. Just as Jesus chose his first disciples so he has chosen you. It is an exciting thing, I think, to realise just how deeply God has been and is involved in our lives. It is not something we are always conscious of. And of course, just as Jesus asked of his first disciples that they bear fruit that will last, so he is asking



the same of you. The call to baptism and the call to full communion in the Lord's Church is a precious gift which the Lord wants to give you but it is a gift he offers not just for you but so that through you he might continue to offer the gift of faith to others. By being baptised, or by being received into full communion with the Catholic Church, you are becoming part of a community. This is one of the great benefits of the RCIA program because it focuses very much not simply on an individual's journey to faith but on the fact that by becoming, or becoming more fully, a member of the Church you become a part of Christ's body, a part of a people who are called to be the living presence of Jesus in the world today.

As St Paul tells his readers in the city of Corinth, "You are the body of Christ and individually members of it." As members of the Church therefore you will belong to Christ but also to each other. You will be able to rely on Christ, but also on each other. You will be loved, and supported, and renewed and forgiven by Christ, but also by each other. And this means that through you, in communion with all your brothers and sisters in the faith, Christ will reach out to others offering them the gift of life and hope, just as he has reached out to you and offered you that very same hope, the hope that has brought you here tonight.

The gift you will receive at Easter is a gift you are called to give away – and the more you give it away the more truly and deeply will you hold on to it. This is the paradox and the logic of faith and the mystery of the Church of which you are soon to be a much valued member.

This evening then, I want to thank you for your faithfulness to God's call and encourage you to persevere on your journey. I thank too all those who have helped you and encouraged you so far, and who will continue to accompany you on your journey towards the joy of Easter and new life. In moments of doubt and uncertainty, never forget the words of Jesus which he will address to you personally in such times: "Courage! Do not be afraid for I am with you."

Be assured of our prayers for you especially during Lent. And pray for us too that we will give you the best example we can of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, children of God the Father and people who are led by the Holy Spirit. And may God bless you and be with you in the coming days and weeks.