



**Monday Week Two of Advent
Memorial Mass for Joshua Subi**

Homily

**Most Rev Timothy Costelloe SDB
Archbishop of Perth**

**Monday 05 December, 2022
St Mary's Cathedral, Perth**

The gospel passage which Jayasuria, Subi and Amal have chosen for tonight's Mass is one which is full of hope and expresses deep faith, deep trust, in God's fidelity to the promises God made to us through his Son, Jesus Christ.

As we listen to the prayer Jesus made to his Father on the night of his Last Supper with his disciples, a prayer which he made in one sense, for the apostles gathered around him at the table, and in another sense for all those who would seek to be his disciples, we can be confident of two things. The first is that this prayer applies as much to Joshua as it did to those first apostles. The second is that it is impossible to believe that the Father would not hear and grant the prayer of his Son. The love of God for his people, which gives rise to our confidence that God hears our prayers, was something about which Jesus himself spoke during the course of his life. In Saint Matthew's gospel, in chapter 7, in speaking to the large crowds who had gathered to hear his teaching, Jesus said this to them: *if you who are evil know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him.* If Jesus himself, then, in whom there is no evil, asks something from his Father, we can be sure that this prayer will be granted.

So let us just listen again to the prayer of Jesus to his Father. It was and is a prayer for Josh:

Father, I want Josh, whom you have given to me, to be with me where I am, so that he may always see the glory you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Father, Righteous One, the world has not known you, but I have known you and Josh has known that you have sent me. I have made your name known to Josh and I will continue to make it known so that the love with which you loved me may be in Josh and so that I may be in Josh.

This is the hope and the faith which we express and celebrate tonight as we come together on the first anniversary of Josh's death to remember him, to continue in prayer to entrust him with great confidence into the Lord's loving care, and to support Jayasuria, Subi and Amal with our presence and with our prayer also for them.



To lose someone we love is always difficult and leaves an empty place in our hearts that it is difficult to fill. This is, I think, especially the case when a young person dies. As people of faith, we know that the gift of life is the most precious gift of all, for without it there is no possibility of anything: no chance to love, no chance to hope, no chance to believe. We understand that God gives us this precious gift by calling us into life and God asks us to embrace this gift with joy and with enthusiasm and live it to the full. In the strange ways of God's providence some are then given the extraordinary gift of faith in Jesus Christ and membership of his Church. This, too, is a precious gift which God asks us to embrace with joy and enthusiasm and live to the full. Jayasuria and Subi both received the gift of life and have lived and are living it richly and fully. They did not at first receive the gift of faith in the God who is made known to us in Jesus. But in God's immense goodness, he stepped into their lives and revealed his face to them through their encounter with Christ. They embraced this new gift with great enthusiasm and joy and have lived and are living it to the full. Through them, this precious gift was given to Amal and to Josh and a wonderful family, full of faith and love, flourished.

As we remember Josh tonight, I think we all recognise that, in a quite special way, he embraced the gift of life and embraced the gift of faith. As it became clear to Josh's family, and I am sure eventually also to Josh himself, that he was very seriously ill, I do not know if he ever wondered why this was happening to him. I do know that he, like all of us, was praying and hoping for a miracle. But it does seem to me that alongside his prayer for healing there was a great love for God which would have enabled him to put everything trustingly into God's hands. This is the mark of true faith and of a genuine disciple, for it is the attitude of Jesus himself as he faced his own death. *"Father, take this cup of suffering away from me,"* he prayed, *"and yet, not as I would want it, but as you want it"*. In Jesus's last hours, according to Saint Mark's Gospel, Jesus cried out, *"My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"* But when Saint Luke remembers the death of Jesus, he tells us that the final prayer of Jesus was one of trust as he prayed, *"Father, into your hands I entrust my Spirit"*.

These gospel accounts do not contradict each other. Rather they help us to understand that even in the midst of great suffering and great distress, when we struggle to understand why God does not come to save us as we have asked, we can still be people of deep and trusting faith, for we know that in the end, although we may not understand it ourselves, God's love and God's providence are at work.

Twelve months ago, here in the cathedral, Josh's mum told us that shortly before his birthday Josh asked, "Do you think God might heal me on my birthday?" And then Jayasuria said to us with great faith, great dignity, and great simplicity, "God did".

Josh's short life, marked by courage and by extraordinary faith, is an invitation to all of us to renew our own faith in God. He is a reminder of the truth which is contained in another prayer of Jesus recorded in the gospels: *"Father, I thank you for having hidden these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it has pleased you to*



do". I suspect - in fact I am sure - that Josh understood God in ways that are beyond our understanding, in spite of what we might think of as our sophistication and great learning. Josh has so much to teach us.

We continue to pray for Josh, simply because we know that, in the great mystery of God's eternity, the prayers we continue to offer for Josh now may be the very prayers which accompanied him as he walked through the gates of death into the joy of eternal life.

May Josh rest in the peace and joy of God's Kingdom, may our prayers for him be a powerful sign of our trust in God's great love for Josh, and may Josh, in his communion with the Lord, support and encourage us as we continue our own journey of faith.