



**Wednesday Week 32 of Ordinary Time
Annual Clergy Mass & Dinner**

Homily

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**Wednesday 13 November, 2024
Trinity College Chapel, East Perth**

When the kindness and love of God our Saviour for us was revealed, it was not because he was concerned with any righteous actions we might have done ourselves. It was for no reason except his own compassion that he saved us.

These words from tonight's first reading, especially when seen in the light of tonight's gospel, are an invitation for us to reflect on both the beauty and the importance of gratitude. The letter to Titus reminds us that all the gifts we have received, including the gift of faith, are gifts born of God's generous and compassionate love for us, and are not the result of anything we have done to earn such gifts. Our response to such generosity can only be profound gratitude.

The Gospel story of the one leper, a Samaritan, who came racing back to thank Jesus at the top of his voice for the wonderful gift of healing, invites us never to take God's goodness for granted, and to let others know how good God has been and continues to be to us.

As we gather tonight for our annual Clergy Mass and Dinner, which is an important way in which we say *thank you* to each other and *thank you* to God, I would like to invite us to reflect on all the ways in which God fills our lives with good things and perhaps, in a special way, to reflect on how God, in calling us to the ordained ministry, makes use of our gifts, our energy, our commitment and our faith, to bring joy and hope, forgiveness and peace, into the lives of so many people. It is good for us, from time to time, to let our minds run over the years of our ministry, recalling those people who in one way or another have allowed us into their lives, who opened their hearts to us, and whom we have been able to help, through God's grace at work in us. The truth is, of course, that in calling us to this ministry God has enriched our lives for more than we have been able, through God's grace, to enrich the lives of others.

As Saint Paul says in the letter to the Romans, "*the love of Christ has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us*" (Romans 5:5). It is this love, Paul says, in his second letter to the Corinthians, which "*overwhelms us and urges us on*" (2 Cor 5:14). One of my prayers for all of us tonight is that we might experience more deeply, perhaps even during



our time together this evening, this overwhelming love of Christ for us, which can renew and strengthen us, and enable us to persevere in the paths of fidelity along which we have tried to walk since the time of our ordination.

In tonight's Gospel, the Samaritan man who was cured of his leprosy decided to go running back to Jesus and thank Him at the top of his voice. As we reflect on the ways in which God has been at work in our lives, we might ask ourselves how we might respond to God's goodness. It is a question which was once asked and answered in one of the psalms which we pray so often in our liturgy: *How can I repay the Lord for his goodness to me?*

As the psalmist reflected on that question this is what came to his mind and to his heart:

The cup of salvation I will raise, I will call on the Lord's name. My vows to the Lord I will fulfil before all his people. How precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful one. Every time we gather together to celebrate the Eucharist, as we are doing tonight as a community of brothers called to the ordained ministry, we do indeed raise the cup of salvation as we call on the Lord's name. We do so with the words of the Lord ringing in our ears: *Take this all of you and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in memory of me.*

As the psalmist raises the cup of salvation he is moved to proclaim, "*my vows to the Lord I will fulfil before all his people*".

For the deacons among us this evening, you might remember the vow, or rather the solemn promise, you made at the time of your ordination: *do you resolve to conform your way of life always to the example of Christ, of whose body and blood you are ministers at the altar?* The answer you gave, the answer which I hope you can renew in the depths of your heart this evening, was this: *I do promise, with the help of God.* For the priests among us, you might remember the solemn promise you then made at your priestly ordination: *do you resolve to celebrate faithfully and reverently the mysteries of Christ, especially the sacrifice of the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation, for the glory of God and the sanctification of the Christian people?* You answered "*I do promise*": I hope you can renew that commitment again tonight. And for the bishops among us, at our episcopal ordination we promised many things: to be welcoming and merciful to the poor, to strangers, and to all in need; to be good Shepherds, seeking out the sheep who stray, gathering them into the Lord's fold; and to pray without ceasing to almighty God to carry out the office of high priest without reproach. To all these we answered, "*Yes, I do promise, with the help of God.*"

After the psalmist renews his solemn promise to be faithful to the vows he has made, he then cries out, "*How precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful one*". It is as if he understands that the fidelity he has promised will ask a great deal of him - in fact it will ask



everything of him. The same, of course, is true of us, because it was true of the one whose disciples we are. He was faithful even unto death, death on a Cross. Tonight, as we celebrate together the wonderful gift of ordained ministry in God's Church, we know, often from our own experience, that to be called to the ordained ministry is to be called to follow in the footsteps of the Lord, even as far as Calvary. At times it is a painful journey. The final document of the Synod on Synodality, for example, speaks both of the joy, commitment and dedication which bishops, priests and deacons bring to their lives and ministry, and of the isolation, loneliness and feelings of being overwhelmed by people's expectations which often weigh them down. This is all part of the following of Christ which asks of us that we take up our cross in imitation of Him. But as one of the prayers which the celebrant prays before receiving communion puts it, "*By the will of the Father and the work of the Holy Spirit, O Lord, your death brought life to the world*". We, too, brothers in the ordained ministry in the Lord's Church, by sharing in his death, become sharers in His mission to bring life to His people.

When the kindness and love of God our Saviour for us was revealed, it was not because he was concerned with any righteous actions we might have done ourselves. It was for no reason except his own compassion that he saved us – and, we can add, that He called us into the sacred ministry so that, through us, He might bring healing and hope to His people, just as He did to the Samaritan who, when cured of his leprosy, came running back to the Lord to thank Him at the top of his voice.