



Simbang Gabi Mass Homily

**By the Most Rev Don Sproxton
Auxiliary Bishop of Perth**

St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
Friday, 23 December, 2016

We all have come to know Bear Grylls. His television shows record his amazing adventures and the survival techniques he has learnt along the way. These adventures have included treks through the frozen tundras of Siberia; scaling a Guatemalan volcano; crossing the North Atlantic Ocean in an inflatable boat; and climbing Mt. Everest.

In a recent interview, he was asked, 'What has been your greatest adventure?' His answer comes as a surprise to those who do not know very much about him. His answer was that his greatest adventure has been to take his Christian faith seriously. He is an ambassador for the bible program, Alpha.

In the interview, he reflected on his experiences and what he has learnt about himself and his relationship with God.

"For so many years, I always strived to be strong in myself. It was as if all I needed was me and my buddies, and we would be, like, invincible. But the truth is none of us are.

And I don't want to do this thing called life, I don't want to do it on my own.

It kind of feels as if my longing for this light inside is now stronger than my fear of what others might think.

This faith inside is like a backbone, helping me to stand tall, and helping me be strong when I am really up against it, facing those odds, whether it is on a mountain, or stuck in some jungle, or just dealing with the storms of life.

Sure, I need that. But at heart my Christian Faith says, 'I'm known, I'm known to Christ.' "

Bear Grylls words fit so well to the faith of Mary, the mother of the Saviour, which we are celebrating this evening. Mary found it possible to say "Yes" to the invitation she received to work with God's plan to send our Redeemer, His own Son.

Throughout Mary's life, she found that special strength to follow the call of God. We call this strength, Grace, and it had proved to give her the backbone to stand tall, especially when she knew that others could not understand what she was doing in faith.



Her complete openness to God grew from her experience of His faithfulness to her. God could trust her to be the 'faithful spouse' that he had searched for and within whom His Son would find a secure dwelling. God would truly live now among his people in ways not foreseen nor understood except by faith. Mary would become a beautiful temple in which God would be present.

It has been wonderful for us to journey towards Christmas through these days of the Novena of Masses, Simbang Gabi. The Word of God, indeed, through the entire Advent Season, is full of expectation and joy, and our Novena has spoken of the ancient plan of God being fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ, Son of God and son of Mary.

This evening, we can joyfully acknowledge the love and compassion of God our Father. Each of us is known to him and he reaches out to us continually. How many times can we recall when we discovered that we were not alone in the storms of life? Remembering these experiences will give us more confidence to draw on God's powerful gifts of grace.

The faith that we sense in our hearts can become very strong and form the pillar for our lives, like the backbone that enables us to stand up. As Christians, we have a special part to play in the work with God in the world. This springs from our care for the others around us. Today there is a growing sense of hopelessness in people. We have something to offer from our lives that have been graced by God that can restore hope for others. We need not be afraid to speak using our experiences for they are the truth that we have to share.

May Mary be our model of humble faith and trust. Let us say more often "Yes" to the invitations of God to work with Him for the good of humanity.