



Annual Archdiocesan Agencies Mass

Homily

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

St Mary's Cathedral, Perth
Thursday 15 July, 2021

The words of Jesus we have heard this morning were to resonate in the life, faith and writings of the thirteenth century saint, Bonaventure. He wrote that Christ is “the one true Master”. Bonaventure was very clear on this point. He was one of the great philosophers and theologians of his time. Yet regardless of his knowledge and erudition he looked always to Christ as his Master and Teacher.

He was a fellow student with Thomas Aquinas at the University of Paris. They agreed on many things but could pose different views on others. But they both sought to serve the One Master and Teacher. Both were to be acknowledged by the Church for their sanctity and service of the truth. The Franciscan Pope, Sixtus IV canonised Bonaventure only eight years after the saint's death in 1274, and another Franciscan, Sixtus V, proclaimed him a Doctor of the Church in 1588.

Bonaventure, like others in his time, wanted to integrate faith and reason with the aid of the recently recovered sources of philosophy. He constantly taught that Christ “offers humans knowledge that begins in faith, which is developed through rational understanding, and is perfected by mystical union with God.”

We, today, speak of the process of evangelisation: the human heart hears of the love and mercy of God in the life and teachings of Christ, and this announcement of the Good News is fanned into a maturing faith through catechesis, with the aim that we would develop a close, loving union with God fed by our reflection and discernment of the presence of God in the events of each day.

We know that the works and service to our society by the agencies are ways in which we are drawn into the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ in the Archdiocese. When we join in the work of an agency, it is possible to sense the call to partnership and an intimate relationship with Christ. This call is nurtured by our continual reflection on the events and interactions we have with the people and situations Christ leads us to serve.

I often reflect on those experiences that I had when serving in chaplaincy at Royal Perth Hospital. The hospital stands alongside this Cathedral, in a sense like a sacrament, reminding the priests



and lay ministers of the Eucharist of the essential ministry of pastoral care for the sick in hospitals, nursing homes and at home.

This ministry must not be withheld or neglected.

Such ministry brings, as well, the benefit of personal growth and integration for the minister. It is through prayerful reflection and discernment that priests and lay faithful discover more about themselves and grow in being able to be there with those facing pain, suffering or death.

Putting ourselves into situations that are uncomfortable or, better, allowing ourselves to be led into these encounters by Christ is how the partnership is formed. Then we can become sacraments of care and accompaniment, and bringers of Christ to those in need.

There is a mystical dimension to our ministry in our agencies. We go with God into the lives of the people. Sometimes we go in trepidation and uncertainty, but like the psalmist, we come back rejoicing in amazement at the harvest, what God achieved through our service. And we are amazed at the closeness and the love of God. We gain “the strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is, beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God”. (Ephesians 3:19)

These are the questions that help us to grow in faith filled ministry: What is God calling me to be and to do? How does my service help me to see the closeness and intimacy of God? How has Jesus been the Teacher for me today?