



Easter Vigil

Homily

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

St Gerard's Church, Mirrabooka Parish
Saturday 03 April - Sunday 04 April 2021

This Vigil in which we are brought together for the sharing and the hearing of the Word of God, is a wonderful gift, as we know, and we've heard already from the sharing of experiences about the fruit of this Word in the lives of many of the members of these Communities.

Their experiences may have helped us to understand where God has been in our lives too: where he has been active. Each of these readings of the vigil gives an example, great examples, of God intervening, and God being there – of God holding us up in very important ways.

In Genesis, the story of the Creation, the very first reading we heard, there is the idea presented that God is there in a kind of 'Passover', where there is a 'passing over' from chaos and darkness to light and life.

In the other Genesis reading, which was the story of Abraham and Isaac, there is another Passover, another lamb of God is present in the life of Abraham and Isaac, where Isaac is passed over. And as we heard, that poor ram was used as the sacrifice - in that way God intervened and Isaac was saved from having to be the sacrifice himself.

In the Exodus reading, of course, that great event in the salvation history of God's people is told where they pass over the sea and are saved - they pass from slavery to freedom. And so we go through each of these readings and we see different aspects of God's intervention and God's way of working with the people, as he works with us.

Some of us experience in our lives times when we are rejected. But God will be there: enabling us to pass over, being accepted firstly by him: to know that, to believe it; and to live in a new way because of his love and acceptance of us; that he has mercy on us and that he accepts us as we are.

So these are different ways of experiencing that intervention of God, or that way in which God works in our lives, so that we can experience Passover because of that presence of God - no matter what it is that we are facing in our life: the things that cause us to be anxious; to be frightened; to not know what our next step should be.



And that brought me then to that New Testament reading, the reading from the letter to the Romans and the experience that Jesus had of being obedient to the Father's will. It is because of that obedience of Jesus that we can be here tonight - obedience to the plan of God. A plan that even for Jesus, in one or two moments in his life, was overwhelming and very difficult for him to accept. But in obedience he did. And we can celebrate this Vigil tonight with hope that the promises that have been fulfilled in us so far are going to be received by the young ones who will be baptised tonight.

One of the things that we learn in the life of Jesus is that he was the first person to experience death not because he was a sinner, and not because he had a determination to depend on his own resources, but rather because of the trust and the faith that he had in the Father, and in the Father's plan for him.

It seems that only gradually, he came to understand what that plan would demand of him. And yet, as more and more of this became clear to him, he was still able to trust that this was the will of God, which was very good, and that this was something that he needed to do. He needed to place himself into the hands of the Father.

How he did that, of course, is important for us to know as well, because we're told many times that he would get up early, and he would leave the house and he would go to a place where he was alone with the Father and he would pray.

It was in the prayer that he was united with the Father: that not only did he, in his mind, understand what the love of God is, but in his heart, he knew that love of the Father for him and he responded with love. So it is through the prayer that this love of God is something that is possible for us, and is a way for us to learn how to be obedient to the plan of God that gradually unfolds in our lives. May we see, perhaps somewhat more clearly, the plan of God as we journey through our lives.

Shortly, we are to see a beautiful sign among many others. The children are to be brought to the font and as they are baptised will be grasped by the celebrant as they are plunged into the water. This is a sign to us of the embrace by Christ that we receive on the day of our Baptism. And that embrace is firm and supportive, the sign that God holds us and doesn't let go. He keeps his hands around us and we can rely upon that in our lives. So in those moments of darkness, those moments which we would say are like death, we must never forget that the Lord's hands are around us, holding us. God allows us to have an these experiences, that may bring about anxiety and fear within us. But those same hands lift us out – they lift us up and bring us to life again Let's never forget that.

So tonight as we see this baptism, which is at the heart of the Vigil, we pray that we will come to believe that God intervenes and that there are many 'Passovers' in our lives, many ways in which He acts in order for us to be delivered and to be made free and safe.



And that He shows us the way to humility, trust and to obedience through prayer.
So always remember that it is in putting ourselves in prayer that we come to experience the love of God with our hearts, not just as an idea.