



**Tuesday Week 29 of Ordinary Time (Year B)
Catechist Services Commissioning Mass 2024**

Homily

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

**Chapel of St Michael the Archangel, Leederville
Tuesday 22 October, 2024**

The Gospel we just heard from Luke is a gospel that speaks of faith and trust. Faith in the service that Christ gives us, but also trust in the goodness of the Father, who seeing us is ready to receive us, is ready to provide for us. St Paul says this in a similar way, when he talks about the three great virtues of faith, hope and love.

The ministry of catechist is, I think, one of the great jewels of the Archdiocese. I have a great admiration for the catechists and from time to time, we have the opportunity of honoring those catechists who have given such wonderful service over so many years, very generously, very faithfully. Looking back to the days when I was a parish priest, I think of those families who were moved by the work of those catechists. I think of the children - some of whom I'm celebrating marriages for at the moment - and I'm always amazed at what they received in the program, and those who, in some way, were moved by the catechesis - how it planted a seed, and that this seed is something that is bearing fruit in their lives at the moment.

Because I'm not living in a parish anymore as a parish priest, I often have couples who come looking for me because they know me, they were part of that journey that we had together during my time in the parish of Mirrabooka. It's wonderful to see that they come looking for the sacrament of marriage, and they come because they also have a real faith in Jesus.

Life without these gifts of faith, hope and love quickly becomes meaningless. *"The person that I love is the one I believe in most deeply and that love, that trust I place in that person, leads to a hope for a meaningful future."* It's in that spirit that these young ones come in order to be prepared for their marriage. We see that today, we are living in a time when there's a decline in the practice of faith or even in belief altogether.



However, given what is happening in our world at present, is something that we need to understand and perhaps explore more deeply, particularly when it comes to faith. This decline in faith doesn't, however, mean that people have given up believing in someone or in something. One once occasion, when I had the opportunity of visiting Singapore, I left believing quite seriously that everyone [in Singapore] believes in something. They have a variety of faiths, religions and of course, they can believe money too. They can believe also in the importance of education, but they believe in something.

The question is not whether people have faith, but what kind of faith they have. The mission of the catechists is to help people to come to know Jesus. We often talk about evangelisation, that primary evangelisation, which then leads to the announcement of the Kerygma. That primary evangelisation is introducing people to Jesus. Many times, we won't see the result of that work - but perhaps you have the opportunity of having someone speak to you many years later and tell you about their experience and what they received during that time and how it transformed their lives. This is a rare thing, but it is something that can actually give us a great deal of encouragement.

The Gospel spoke about a generous God. Our God who is in our lives, inviting us, with Jesus Himself, the great icon of our God. Jesus as we know, is the one who has shown us how to be servants. He has shown us that, as master Himself, he can also, at the same time, be a servant. This gospel also speaks about being ready. Not in the sense that we are the perfect ones, or that we are the ones who have it all together, least of all, it doesn't say that the young ones and their families have to have it all together before we teach them.

Instead, it's about God making up for what is lacking. To be ready is to be able to be moved by God, to be open to that indication that God gives at certain times in our lives, and that's when that little seed starts to grow.

This evening - I want us to reflect on that mission that we have. In Luke's gospel we hear again how Jesus was gentle. How Jesus was able to reach people who perhaps were living on the edges, how Jesus was making Himself available to them and in that sense, being a servant to them and journeying with them. Some of them responded well, some of them were unable to respond at that moment. Nevertheless, he journeyed continuously with them. And that, I think, should be the approach that we have in this work; to be gentle; understanding of where people are, and not at all intent on imposing something that they're not ready to receive, but proposing, as Pope Francis says, proposing the truth, proposing Jesus and the way that he has provided for us in the gospel, and in that way, to patiently wait for that seed to germinate, because the seed has been planted because of who we are and how we do things. We can be a bit discouraged I



suppose when we think of all that effort that we put into it; yet we don't see 100 per cent of those young ones going to Mass - not just yet anyway.

And that should be how we approach it – with a mindset of 'Not just yet.' Let us wait. Let us see what the seed can produce, because we all have our memories, and there will be a memory of that experience that those young ones and those families have of you. And if they have encountered one who is so closely aligned to that method that Jesus teaches, then we have a chance for that faith to germinate. So tonight, we pray that we will have that gentleness of spirit, that patience and that perseverance to continue announcing Jesus to the young ones and their families, and perhaps in a very important way, to be models of that faith ourselves, of that gentleness, of that kindness and of that patience.