

Ascension – 28-5-17
Acts 1:1-11, Ephesians 1:17-23, Matthew 28:16-20

We are in a very interesting time in the life of the Church, indeed our world. There are so many changes that are happening, we are so busy, that life is filled with diary appointments and things to do and church becomes something that we have to fit in sometimes. Amidst everything else for many people it doesn't even fit in, and it's not even an option for some.

Some say bring back the good old days when things were different. The secular world at the time did not have all the answers and the church of the good old days was not much better either at times.

Today, the 27th of May, is the 50th anniversary of the right to be counted on the census for indigenous Australians. Before this time, they were considered as non-human persons, not worthy of being counted as a citizen of this land from which they had been for tens of thousands of years prior to European settlement.

Your children today are enrolled in schools across our community, for indigenous people those that were allowed to go to school, they may have went, but they were not allowed to even be enrolled. They're names were not allowed to be added because they were not worthy of being enrolled. They talk of today of constitutional change that is because in the constitution of this land there are 3 lines where it says that they were not to be counted as part of those who lived in this land. Because they were black, they were non-persons not to be counted.

So what has this to do with us here tonight/today as we come and celebrate Eucharist? It has everything to do with us, because need to learn from the past, not go back to it. Like the church in our readings, they too were going through changing times where the person of Jesus was no longer with them and they were to receive the Holy Spirit which will come down upon them to give them the strength, courage and direction for their time. That same Holy Spirit has been given to us to move forward with hope into the future. We cannot keep pining for the past and think that we can do it the same as we did things then because we got things wrong then too. If we only look back, in a sense we are denying the Holy Spirit to be at work within us today, right now.

What it has to do with us is that in our times of trial and change we can seek direction knowing that God is with us. We cannot change the past or go back to it but we can learn from it and we can learn from it so that we do not make the same mistakes or that we can be challenged to do and live differently so that the dignity of all people is held as sacred. That is at the centre of our faith and who we are. We need to remember the significant days of the past to learn from them and to live today with a deeper understanding of what is happening now and into the future.

The dignity of many in our world is being threatened. From the migrants and refugees that seek safe harbour, from the elderly who seek good care, from the unborn whose lives are being threatened, from the sick who want to be euthanized because some think it is ok, from the lives of those trafficked for sex, from the many whose lives who are mere pawns in a workplace where they get poorer, from those persecuted for their sexual orientation, from children who need to feel safe at home and in our world. Dignity is at the heart of who we are as people of faith and the dignity of all people must be held as sacred, no matter what or who.

Today as we gather and celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of our Lord into heaven, the disciples were challenged to live and think differently in how they were connected to Jesus and their story of faith. That story continues with us. In Jesus' absence the disciples were unsure but were given the assurance from Jesus that the Spirit will continue to be with them. They were now witnesses to a new way. In our time we too have the assurance and gift of the Holy Spirit so as to continue on the journey of faith.

When we gather for Eucharist we are **living** this Good News and it connects us to those who have gone before us – with those with us now – and connects us into a future with hope. Eucharist is **celebrating the life – death and resurrection of Jesus Christ in our lives – in our community – and in our world** and for the dignity of all. Amen.

Fr Matthew Moloney