

## **Sermon**

### **Saint Peter's**

### **Patronal Festival**

### **Missio Dei**

Three weeks ago, at the clergy conference in Melbourne, I had the immense privilege of personally meeting the keynote speaker, Dr Paul Avis. Dr Avis was the private chaplain to the late Queen Elizabeth. 'He's top shelf in the Church of England.' So said a local bishop privately to me over coffee. You could tell. His sermon at the Cathedral to open the conference, and his keynote addresses were of the highest quality. All in all, as I said, I was left with an incredible sense of privilege, having listened to him, and spoken to him privately on a number of occasions.

In his keynote address, Paul reminded us of our vocation as a Church: to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, to the people of Australia.

He reminded us that Australia is a great country. He spoke of the character of the Australian people, the vastness and beauty of the natural landscape. This island continent, that made you feel quite small. Coming from England, where everything was crowded and busy, we could do with some of that space, he said. 'We could give you our politicians, and many of our journalists', he quipped. Perhaps you would take ours in return, I thought. Has anyone seen the new ABC show, 'The Queen of Oz'?

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. So proclaimed the Apostle Paul.

Who doesn't want to be part of that? Part of the Divine action. God's gracious purpose for the world? Of justice and peace for all. Not through the politicians and journalists, who mostly cannot be trusted, but through Jesus Christ, who can. Who is trustworthy and true. In whom God created, reconciled, and one day will finally perfect the world. The Word of God.

There are three ways in which the Church proclaims the Word of God. The first is in the preaching ministry of the church. The second is in the liturgical ministry of the church, and centrally baptism and Eucharist. Where the church's preaching ministry becomes effective in our lives. Where the rubber hits the road. Where in baptism we are transferred into Jesus Christ. Where in Eucharist our new baptismal life is fed, nourished and renewed. The Church proclaims the Word of God in its ministry of preaching and liturgy. To which we must also add the church's ministry of pastoral care. In these three ways the church proclaims the Word of God. In these three ways the church fulfils its unique vocation in the world. The ministry, of the cure of souls.

The threefold ministry of the church, is the ministry of Christ. The threefold actions of the church, are the actions of Christ himself, through His Church. When we hear the words and works of Jesus faithfully proclaimed in the reading of the Gospel, and in the church's preaching of the Word of God, it is Jesus himself who is speaking to us. When we receive the sacraments, holy baptism, holy Eucharist, it is Jesus himself who is ministering to us. The ministry of pastoral care, in the name of Christ, is the ministry of Christ himself.

The ministry of Christ, is the ministry of the whole church, the people of God. We are all part, of all of this. We all have a share in the ministry of Christ, and of the Apostles, as Luther called it. The Christian ministry, that is both Word and Sacrament. That in both

the Word and in the Sacrament, is essentially two actions. Firstly, the remembrance of Jesus, and of his crucifixion. Secondly, the prayer for the Holy Spirit to make Jesus, and his crucifixion, present to us today, along with all of its benefits. By these two actions, remembrance, and prayer, Jesus is present to us, by the Holy Spirit. Human action, is divine action. God's action, through us. As we gather in worship, in remembrance of Jesus, and his saving death, once for all, for us and for the world. And in prayer for the Holy Spirit to make Jesus present to us, in his saving death, and in his risen life.

United by our baptism in sweet, mystical communion with Jesus Christ himself, we are united by our baptism in sweet, mystical communion with all who are related to him in this way. We are, the literal body of Christ. His Spirit is with us.

A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that we may proclaim the excellence of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light – in our God-given vocation to Make the Word of God fully known to the world – we are not alone. We are not left as orphans in this world. God's Spirit is with us. God's Spirit is preveniently at work, in our being, as the body of Christ, in our ministry, that is the ministry of Christ, and in our mission, to Make the Word of God known to the world. A being, a ministry, and a mission, that is the being, ministry, and mission of God himself, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in and through the worldwide Christian Church.

The Church is a creature of the Word. Jesus Christ, he is Lord of all. And the church is the present sign of the future of the human race in the kingdom of God. When God becomes all in all. At Christ's return. And the whole world will live in praise of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As the church already now lives in praise of God the Holy Trinity.

As the Church we are called to proclaim Jesus Christ, the Word of God, to the people of Australia.

In our preaching, in our celebration of the sacraments, in our pastoral care: we do this together. We do this as the whole church: the body of Christ.

For you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

In the power of Jesus Christ, the Word of God.

And in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Who is with us. And who goes before us.

A pillar of cloud by day. A pillar of fire by night.

Amen.