

Sermon Notes
Sunday 27th April, 2014
Easter 2
Holy Eucharist and Anzac Commemoration

John 20.19-31

A reading from the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to St John,
Chapter 20, verses 19 to 31.

Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, '**Peace be with you.**' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, '**Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.**' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, '**Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.**'

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that **through believing you may have life in his name.**

For the Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

...from the Anzac Commemoration

^{15.12} **'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you.'** [John 15.12-14]

**SOME THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS UPON
THE SOLEMNITIES OF HOLY WEEK and THE GREAT FEAST OF EASTER
JESUS CHRIST CRUCIFIED, JESUS CHRIST RISEN
and our national commemorations on ANZAC DAY**

BEHOLD GOD'S GLORY - THE CRUCIFIED AND RESURRECTED JESUS – THE TRUE PASHCAL LAMB

Informed by our Lenten and Holy Week Observance, the Christian Church is acutely aware that the teaching in the 15th chapter of St John, the dominical commandment to love one another as Jesus has love us, prefigures the loving and most gracious sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross of our shame. Thus, our Good Friday reflections named the stunning Johannine motif that **the cross of Christ is the revelation of God's glory, for Jesus indeed is the Paschal Lamb bearing all sin.** In the Prologue of the fourth Gospel we read...

*^{1.14} 'And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and **we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.**' [John 1.14]*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, our sacred yet perfectly human 'friend', God's true Paschal Lamb, lovingly bore the divine sacrifice **so that the eternal being of God might participate authentically, innocently and relationally in our degradations and inevitable destruction.** That salvific act means that all disciples of Jesus, that is, all who believe and follow Jesus (who is thus Lord of their lives) can humbly and faithfully anticipate an ultimate destiny immersed within the very being of the resurrected Jesus, being one with Him, just as the Father and Son are one [*regard John, chapter 17*]. Such sublime transformation in God is a new creation, in, with and through Christ crucified. And so on Good Friday we behold the glory of God as we contemplate Christ lifted upon the cross for our freedoms and eternal, Godly prosperity... **we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.** Good Friday is a life changing event written in innocent, sacrificial blood. In God's sovereign gift, *and because Good Friday happened*, God's Easter resurrection gift bursts through sin and death in the truth of the Risen Lord Jesus – a stunning beginning to a human/ divine relationship which is perfection, including the perfection of time itself.

**BEHOLD ON ANZAC DAY THE WARTIME SACRIFICES OF FRIENDS
FOR NATION, COMMUNITY and INTIMATES**

It may be for some that these transformational and Godly revelations resonate with elements of our nation's celebration of Anzac Day. It seems to be a reasonable generalization that the celebrated and valued notion of a friend sacrificially laying down his/her life for a friend is deeply ingrained in the Australian psyche. As a nation we seem to understand and celebrate this Gospel value of sacrificial love rendering hope and life and freedom. It seems more than a coincidence that at the very time the church is contemplating the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, a perfect exemplar of the commandment of Jesus to sacrifice for another in love, we as Australians are giving thanks and remembering the Anzac Spirit.

But do we, as citizens of our Commonwealth, give thanks and remember the Anzac Spirit and at the same time make any connections with such Christ-like behaviour and the commandment of Jesus and then make subsequent life-choices ourselves, in obedience to the commandment of Jesus? If we suspect that the answer to this question is no, or at least reservedly conditional, then what is going on?

BEHOLD THE NOBILITY OF GOD-BREATHED HUMANITY

In response to these questions it is relevant to note that Anzac Day in Australia is not treated as a time for triumphalism and jingoism. Indeed we are reminded that the Allied Anzac Cove operations were a military failure and no pivotal victory for the British Imperial forces. Veterans themselves talk of the degradations and folly of war. **They yearn for lasting peace!** Stories abound of the nobility, poignancy and apparent contradiction of relationships shared between men fighting on opposite sides of the battlefield.

Anzac Day is not an interminable process of claiming and celebrating victory but rather a deeply sincere and heartfelt response in the hearts of humankind to embrace the profound sacrifice of others, written in the most grotesque images of wartime savagery, deprivation and relational loss. Generation after generation, and seemingly increasingly, respond intuitively and sensitively to the stories of war recorded in the blood of selfless, noble and courageous sacrifice by family and friends for family and friends.

We seem to understand intuitively – that is, even before we know of and apprehend God’s call to righteousness and truth, justice and mercy – that **the prosecution of war atrophies humanity and renders deep injustices to selfless participants** and yet paradoxically **the outcomes have sometimes rendered new beginnings, hope and freedom for the unwitting recipients of the sacrifice of others.**

Thus, Anzac Day becomes an intentional and solemn call never to forget; to confront and acknowledge the brutality, deep suffering and unimaginably frightening experiences endured by literally armies of decent human beings; to embrace our costly inheritance with enduring thanksgiving; and to honour the fruits of sacrifice, so painfully wrought, in abiding memory, valuing our gifts and building upon them. And surely we do well to repudiate behaviours which create and prosecute war. Rather, we build upon our intuitions for that which is good, honourable and noble. But then, are our responses to Anzac Day really just human intuition or are we responding to something more deeply embedded in our psyche?

BEHOLD GOD’S TRUTH AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, JUSTICE AND MERCY

I believe that humanity is God-breathed...*”then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. [Genesis 2.7]* **We are of God and, it would seem, have an inherent yearning to return to God.**

Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, ‘Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, “To an unknown god.” What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸For “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we too are his offspring.”

²⁹Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. ³⁰While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.’ [Acts 17.22-31]

Perhaps we see something of that deep-seated affinity between Creator and creature in the wholesome and mystical bond between mother and child. And the sacred story revealed in Holy Scripture teaches us that God’s vision for our living was that of innocence and abundance; guileless and wholesome relationship with each other; and intimate and personal relationship with Him...

⁸And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. ⁹Out of the ground the LORD God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰A river flows out of Eden to water the garden... [Genesis 2.8ff]

God vested us with remarkable gifts, so much so that he created us in His image and likeness. [refer Genesis 1.26ff]

However the consequence of God's extravagant self-giving was the inevitability that we thought we could be God's equal, that is, to be a god. And so we heard His word and disobeyed Him – after all we were very self-confident and maybe even thought we could do better than our very Creator. In the Genesis account the fruit from 'the tree of good and evil' was eaten, in defiance of a specific divine prohibition. Does this sort of self-confidence and defiant bravado, based upon limited experience and very partially formed understandings of greater realities, resonate with our own adolescent excesses?

It is true, is it not, that we had then and still have the capacity to defy directions, to disobey authority, to make ignorant and destructive ethical choices, and to breach relationships by hurtful and wilful behaviour. And the well-rehearsed theological term for such inherently human behaviour is sin. **We can, in sin, hurt and even break our relationships with God, self and others.** That is what the concept of sin means.

The Gospel of God is the God-breathed revelation of God's response to the relational losses and the separations in relationships which our sinfulness creates. Old Testament prophecy and the life and work of Jesus reveals that **God is a God of righteousness, justice and mercy.** That is, he mercifully calls us afresh into relationship, first with Him, and then through Him, with others. The demands of our prior relationship with God inform the moral quality and ethical choices in relationship with others. Such God-breathed relationships overwhelm the consequences of our deep wounds and capacities to wound God and wound others. And that is so through the sacrificial gift of Jesus upon the cross. Thus we are called to give ourselves selflessly to Jesus. It is our self-giving relationship with Jesus (as pilgrims capable of mature, heartfelt choices) which is our God-given path to oneness with the crucified and resurrected Jesus. Through self-giving, harmonious union with the Lord of life, Jesus the Christ, God wonderfully mediates the fruit of our Lord's death which is the gift of true wholeness – the human/divine Christ Risen!

To be righteous as God is righteous is, first and foremost, to be in a healing, just relationship with God, though Jesus - God's gift to us to which he calls us to respond. **In the blessed relationship which Jesus gives and which bears all that Jesus was, is and does,** and which we sacramentally name and claim in Holy Baptism, we can be healed of the consequence of sin. Our relationship with Jesus reverses the consequence of sin for it is indeed a true and healing relationship. **Jesus can do know other than act justly,** that is to render God's justice by seeking to overwhelm things which otherwise diminish and destroy us. God's justice is not a clinical, forensic matter but is about healing unto wholeness. God sees when our relationships with Him, with ourselves and with others are at risk. He sees abuse, degradation and evil. He sees deprivation and deceit. He sees lives atrophied, at risk, and being destroyed. **God yearns that human kind is fully alive - that is God's justice realized. God's call to righteousness and gifts of justice and mercy are the cleansing and healing reversal and absolute antithesis of sin.**

Biblically it is God's wisdom to heal through selfless, sacrificial, unconditionally loving relationship. **God is a relational God.** That's what righteousness means. It follows then that he comes to us in relationship – hence the Christmas event, **Emmanuel, God among us!** And we do well to note that the relationship given at the incarnation of the Christ child is written in terms of **vulnerability, powerlessness,** innocence, obedience and coincidentally maternal, paternal, human, and divine love. Then, in due course, the public ministry of Jesus is a revelation of healing, hopeful, selfless relationships – between Jesus and his Father-in-heaven; and Jesus and his emerging church; and Jesus and the whole world...humanity at large.

The life and teaching of Jesus calls us into a transformational relationship, for God's justice, initiated by God, heals perfectly. The fruits of relationship with God through Christ is justice...overwhelming all that separates us from God and all that separates us from fullness of self and wholesome relationships with others. **And God's righteousness can only mean that God's people ought to be a healing blessing to others.** Thus Jesus ministers, often radically and with cries of consternation from onlookers, to widows and the marginalised, the persecuted and imprisoned, to the impoverished and to 'sinners'. And all of this in the public ministry of Jesus is a prelude to the revelation of God's glory – Jesus Christ crucified – God's ultimate and perfect consummation of his nature which is truth, justice and mercy in relationship with us!

On Good Friday we behold, with particular intention, the selfless sacrifice of Jesus. There we dwell for a very little while, in ethereal time, in the desolation of the day in human history when Jesus died. **How might it be if the emptiness, desolation and hopelessness of a misunderstood Good Friday was our ultimate and eternal destiny?** Thus we contemplate that our relational God has sacrificially gone to the place of ultimate human atrophy, degradation and hopelessness – our inevitable death.

Our righteous, merciful and just and God, in the glory of the crucified Jesus, willingly and wilfully, in a state of ultimate vulnerability and powerlessness, participates in the death of humankind. And as God's story then rapidly unfolds, in three days God bursts through the strictures of death and sin to raise Jesus from the dead...not simply revived but resurrected...**transformed from the finitude of frail humanity to the infinitude of God's perfection. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Now, **in the context of our relational God**, the call by Jesus into costly Christian discipleship starts to make even greater sense for us. Consider, for example, the first of our Lord's predictions of his death and resurrection, recorded in the Markan Gospel, and invoking the call to all who would be disciples to bear our own cross and to follow Jesus...

8.31 "Then [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. 32He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

*34He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let **them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.** 35For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'* [Mark 3.31-38]

Recall, that **it is our Lord who calls us into paradoxically costly and healing relationships with him and all others.** He calls us into abiding love...not just a superficial relationship but deeply abiding, even to perfect selflessness. And Jesus prayed, as received in John's Gospel, that we may be one with him as the Father and Son are one. We read in our Lord's priestly pray in the Gospel of John, chapter 17...

*[Father], as you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. 19And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth. 20 'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, 21that they may all be one. **As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.** 22**The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one,** 23**I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.** [John 17.18b – 23]*

How profound then our abiding relationship with Jesus can be. We are called to be one with the Blessed Trinity and thus perfectly healed through our participation in the body of the transformed life of the resurrected Jesus. That surely is a vision even more stunning than the Genesis accounts of paradise! That transformation is given by God in the unfolding work of his salvation history and our radical response. We are called to selflessly surrender to Jesus and thus to receive God's healing embrace even through the grave. **Through the womb of our dying – our ultimate powerlessness - we are mercifully drawn into the very being of God which is perfect justice and healing. But we must risk all in relationship with God as he has already done in the life and death of Jesus...and, wonderfully, that renders harmony, unity, life in abundance – humankind fully alive, God's justice complete!**

The consequence of God's expansive acts of salvation is written in terms of God's reversal of human degradation and ultimate death. **The pivotal event is God's willing participation in our dying through the sacrificial death of Jesus.** This transformational truth renders true justice – perfect healing, real hope. **We do well to note that our transformed destiny is rendered not by God's making war; nor abusing, degrading or enslaving others; nor creating subservient minions; nor any other abuse of supreme power. Rather, as has been rehearsed already, through God's act of selfless loving sacrifice upon the cross in the face of human savagery and gratuitous evil; in the face of self-serving pursuit of abused power which takes no prisoners; in the face of concerted abuse of all that is noble and true in humankind, Jesus went wherever it took to claim God's everlasting, perfect victory over death through the gift of sin-bearing suffering and life breathing resurrection and all that that means.**

...AND SO TOO OUR PERCEPTION AND RECEPTION OF GOD'S REALITIES...or otherwise!

The parallels between our observance of Anzac Day and the great acts of God's salvation may be apparent and of some interest. Of the former we honour the sacrificial gift of lives lost or stolen by war and we pledge never to forget. We understand that those who have died have experienced all that is abusive and unjust in war. We give heartfelt thanks that the fruits of that sacrifice are written in the new hope and precious freedoms of a world liberated, at least partially, from war. We acknowledge the paradox of this situation, that is, that the sacrifice of war in the human condition can yet render new if not complete freedom and hope. We cherish any endeavour to make war no more and to grasp our new beginnings as befits the cost of freedom and a renewed hope for the dignity of and nobility humankind. **We may ponder how so many, drawn into warfare 'for King and country', act in a manner approximating Biblical justice and righteousness, working to protect and prosper outcomes for others and seeking healing and hope. Just so we may ponder how many who inherit the life-giving gifts of selfless sacrifice perceive intuitively, if not with Biblical insight, the goodness, even Christ-like behaviour of the 'warrior'.** We acknowledge too that the abuses, losses, degradations and deprivations of war are profoundly unjust, especially by the standards of God's revealed nature and will, through Jesus Christ.

The Anzac Spirit embraces so much which is true and powerful in God's great works of salvation and yet acknowledges that the spirit of noble self-giving in war is set in the **theatre of deep human depravity and godless abuse of power and lust for control.** Those **we mourn and honour** on Anzac Day are so often the powerless victims of war who, nevertheless, serve selflessly and at great personal cost, sometimes in the most wretched and dehumanising circumstances, to honour and protect precious relationships; to prosper the greater and common good; perhaps, it may be contended theologically, to serve, however unwittingly, as conduits of Christ-like healing. **Certainly there is a community sense that war can paradoxically render remarkably noble human behaviour above and beyond most normal relational transactions.**

Consider the similarities with and contrasts between the Anzac story and some qualities of God's saving work in the face of the nobility and folly, the gifts and frailties of humanity. **We worship a God of relationship and ennobling healing.** We adore a God who meets injustice of all manner and sort with **costly companionship, perfect healing and real, enduring hope.** We proclaim the truth of Jesus crucified and resurrected – God's sacrificial, loving relationship which is given **powerlessly** and **passionately** and which renders new beginnings and the sure and certain overwhelming of all that is evil, destructive and hopeless. **We acknowledge that the treatment and destiny of Jesus on the cross was neither warranted nor just and seemed an incomprehensible thing for an all-powerful God to endure.**

Yet, the great mystery of God's passion for humanity fully alive, healed of all that would destroy self and relationships, is fully revealed in the Gospel of God. We worship God who takes on evil and sin, unrighteousness and injustice, abuse and destruction armed with the weapons of unconditional love and abiding relationships, vulnerability and powerlessness in relationships, costly, selfless and sacrificial discipleship. Unlike the ephemeral fruits of victory in human warfare, wherein inevitably we await the next godless, abusive, self-serving and deceitful excursion by those who would play god, **God's victory over death, the grave, evil and sin is perfect – behold the Risen Lord – human life perfected**

Early on in this address, having outlined our national response to Anzac, I dared to ask...

But do we, as citizens of our Commonwealth, give thanks and remember the Anzac Spirit and at the same time make any connections with such Christ-like behaviour and the commandment of Jesus and then make subsequent life-choices ourselves, in obedience to the commandment of Jesus? If we suspect that the answer to this question is no, or at least reservedly conditional, then what is going on?

The ANZAC SPIRIT – WE ARE GOD-BREATHED BUT WE ARE CALLED ALSO TO BE INTENTIONAL

Given my sense of the beginnings of humanity, as God breathed and treasured, and given the extravagance and selflessness marking God's salvation history, **I believe that a capacity to participate in, and to honour in others signs of God's righteous and justice, may be deeply within the human psyche, juxtaposed nevertheless with other less noble behaviourally human predispositions.** Surely to claim God's gifts with wholesome and selfless charity, with intention, and thus to respond to God in self-giving relationship may be quite another thing. Notwithstanding, much in human behaviour seems to point to a natural affinity with God's goodness which we the Christian Church may be called not only to embrace but to name, encourage and nurture. This optimistic view of human nature as God-breathed honours too the doctrine of human sinfulness which acknowledges that we can act idolatrously and act in ways which hurt and even break relationships, especially with God, and that gratuitous evil is also part of our human experience.

Thus I believe that, co-existing with other primal foundations, we have a deep, intuitive capacity to value and respond healthily to acts of goodness and selfless sacrifice and to embrace behaviours which approximate God's justice...participating in healing behaviours – certain necessary and meaningful caveats notwithstanding. Witness our intuitive and oft repeated community responses to adversity, deep suffering and injustice. Witness our deeply authenticate response to Anzac Day. I further believe that much of this is deep seated and intuitive because of the source of our behaviour...our beginnings in God. However it is true too that such charitable behaviours can of themselves also be abused and become a source of undignified self-righteousness and posturing. This scenario might also rapidly descend into some precarious, uninformed or even heretical sense of salvation by works. **Our intuitive sense of God's justice and our capacity to form and live healthy relationships is real, even if the source of our response is neither understood nor honoured. However, so too is our capacity to self-implode, to be unjust and mischievous and to entertain that which is evil.** The God-breathed dynamic for righteousness and justice are in place but a healthy, deliberate, intentional and productive response to God's call upon our lives is not always evident, especially in a community beset by the potentially idolatrous allure and illusions of material prosperity, self-sufficiency, cyberspace and digitalised realities, individualism and moral relativism.

From this pregnant but fraught position it is the privilege and responsibility of God's church first to **live true and Christ-like relationships**, worshipping and obeying the one true God, as revealed in Holy Scripture and personally experienced in Holy Spirit.

Thus grounded, it is our mission to be, by authenticate lives and ministry, a conduit of God's healing in Christ-like healing and then to call all people into committed Christian discipleship through the example of Christ-like, Spirit led lives and teaching with intention...naming the theological meanings and truths which undergird all that is Christ-like and which challenges that which is evil, unjust, destructive and degrading. And we have real life situations like the celebration of Anzac to bridge from the deep seated, wholesome and emotive intuition of the Anzac Spirit to the revealed truth of the cosmic, whole-of-life transformation of our destinies in the sacrifice of Jesus, fighting the battle of our sinful finitude. **We are called to be a part of a movement from God-breathed intuition and deep-seated goodness, away from evil and sin, to awareness and intention, ownership and participation in a lived relationship with Jesus Christ our Lord.**

And of our proclamation of God's will and ways there is yet another consideration. **One of God's great paradoxes is that as we respond to God's call to perfect a relationship with Him through Jesus, we are called to absolute submission and obedience to God...to give ourselves away to God.** This notion may appear to be, to the modern mind and to a community very aware of, sensitive to and rightly appalled by authoritarian abuses, the ultimate abuse and degradation.

Rather, it is the Churches experience, to be lived and proclaimed, that **surrender to God is the ultimate fulfilment and perfection of our potential. To be one with God is indeed the very meaning of our life and source of true hope and peace. However, to surrender thus is to defy many contrary forces in our daily lives and life-long experiences of community.**

Our putting this another way... **We must risk all in relationship with God as he has already done in the life and death of Jesus...and that renders harmony, unity, life in abundance – humankind fully alive. Is this, in the face of our humanity, our own call to selfless heroism – defying the spirit of the age and our capacity for sin, that is, our capacity to deeply hurt our relationships. Our costly surrendering to God begets, in His gift, deep, abiding oneness with God and that renders peace and hope, fullness of life, even life in abundance...in the perfection which is Jesus Christ and thus timeless.**

NOTES - SERMON ONE - EASTER TWO – 2014 - **John 20.19-31**

- Today's Gospel extract contains some of John's resurrectional material. The extract ends thus...

"Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

Faith in God through Christ renders life, and life in abundance, even though the grave. That is our resurrectional proclamation, faith and hope.

THIS RESURRECTIONAL FAITH TRANSFORMS OUR REALITIES AND DESTINIES.

- There is another context for our gathering today – our national observance of Anzac Day. Therein we honour the sacrifice of others for our peace, freedom and well-being in the face of destruction text. And so the Scriptural extract –

^{15.12} **'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you.'**

Our nation intuitively gets this teaching. Generations gather to give thanks for friends who gave their precious lives for friends. We pledge remembrance. We honour the fallen and commit ourselves to living which places real value and future on the gift of sacrifice.

- I BELIEVE FIRST THAT WE CAN BEGIN OUR PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL WITH OPTIMISM...WE ARE GOD-BREATHED AND THERE CAN BE A GOODNESS AND INTUITION IN HUMAN BEHAVIOUR.
- OUR RESPONSIBILITY IS TO GUIDE INTUITION TO REVELATION AND RECEPTION...PEOPLE SEEING AND ACCEPTING the Gospel of God who loves and as friend surrenders his life for as in the face of great danger ...a destiny which is, before Jesus, death.
- And so the denouement for John...**hear and see; turn to Jesus and believe for his sacrifice renders life and life in abundance. Christ's sacrifice, in the gift and power of God transforms our destinies and very meaning of our lives and death.**

(The Reverend Canon) Brian Gibbs, 27th April, 2014