

## **Homily for lament, Healing & Reconciliation**

St James Parish Church, Brighton, Melbourne

We began this evening with the Aboriginal welcome to country, and remember the people who trod this land and respected the creation that surrounded them. They consider themselves the custodian of the land, not a people who possess the land.

Pope Francis also reminds us that we are called to honour all of creation, to treat it with respect and dignity as a God-given gift that is entrusted to us.

We also pray in our liturgy that we are the custodians of the mystery of Christ that has been entrusted to us, not ours to possess but to faithfully hand on.

We gather at the shell of the burnt-out church, a reminder of the failure in respect and dignity; remembering people dishonoured, bodies defiled; where dreams, hopes, lives were consumed in flames of selfishness.

We call to mind not just the beauty of a church building, but the beauty of lives of faith that were shattered. The all-consuming fire is a painful symbol.

We come as the parish of St James the Great, remembering those whose pain doesn't allow them to speak; remembering those whose death doesn't allow them to cry out; remembering those families and friends who live with pain-filled memories; remembering the story in the Book of Genesis where the sin of one man, Adam, became the sin of all.

They are our brothers and sisters in Christ, part of the Body of Christ. All are affected by this event.

We come to remember that we are people of the resurrection. We cannot wallow in destruction, death and failure. We need to remember that we cannot remain in the grave, but must rise to a new life. We come to remember that evil cannot, and must not, overcome, but be overcome with the power of the risen Christ. Death could not swallow him up, nor must it us. Through his death and resurrection he became Christ the healer, the forgiver, the reconciler.

As he called James the Great to be one of his disciples, so he also calls us today.

When this church of St James the Great was built a foundation stone was laid. Now we come to rebuild the church, but it is no good building that church if we do not build this church – the people of God in Brighton.

This evening we lay a new foundation stone, not made of stone, but upon the rock of Christ, the cornerstone of our faith lives. May the building of this church of stone remind us that we are the living stones of the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

This parish will never be the same again, nor should it, just as this building will never be the same again, nor should it. We come to remember that out of death, out of ashes, comes the new life of the resurrection.

We begin to rebuild this church, and place at its centre the table of God's Word and the table of the Eucharist, where we must welcome all or we will be false to our calling as Disciples of Christ Jesus.

As we start to rebuild this church of stone, I ask you all to be part of the process.

Tonight I entrust to you a tile from the ashes of the old building; to take it home and be a custodian of that tile, to cherish it, to make it new. Let it be a symbol of your own heart, cherished by God, renewed by God. Let it be a symbol of how we can create all things new.

Over the next two years we will create a couple of mosaics for the rebuilt church, and may they be mosaics symbolic of the life and lives of this parish.

The first reading begins: "A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse; A scion thrusts from its roots." That shoot, that scion is Christ Jesus. May he rise in this renewed temple of the Holy Spirit.

Above all as we leave tonight we may open our hearts to our God that he may create a new heart in us; that he may create a new heart for the parish in the stones of this building that has been entrusted to us.

Martin Dixon, Parish Priest, St Joan of Arc Catholic Parish  
4 December 2016