

Homily - Michael Palmer Sunday 22 March 2020

Living in the light

The phrase 'Living in the light' usually refers to us living in the light of a particular reality a reality that perhaps had previously been hidden from us. The things that shed light on a situation can be anything from a torch to an insightful article - an encounter with a friend or the taste of a new food.

At the moment we are all appreciating the impact of COVID19 - Coronavirus - it is a dynamic situation where we are discovering just how serious our new situation is. Perhaps we thought it would be like any ordinary flu, perhaps we thought it might 'stay over there', perhaps we thought, like I did, that it would slowly dilute and by the time it got to Australia, it would not be so bad. How we were living in half lights! Well the 'lights are coming on' and so living in the light, as far as Coronavirus is concerned, is treating it with utmost seriousness - wash hands, social distancing - it is 1.5 m everywhere - inside or outside and now inside the distance is 4 square meters for everyone. Living in the light as per coronavirus is increasingly limiting our movements - the lights are on - we must act.

Do I have to add why? Of course not! The 'why' is love.

If we love self and neighbours - if we love the vulnerable - our elderly and the young and those with chronic illness — then we must act in the light of what we now know. This is clear and totally appreciated by our Christian tradition - the prophets of old constantly shone a light to help us see better - Isaiah 1:17 - learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, defend the fatherless and plead for the widow.

And most fully - God the Son - became a human and lived amongst us full of grace and truth - he shed light on how we should be living.

Jesus is a sort of light - reminding us of God's love and showing us what living in the light of that love looks like. A wonderful example is in the healing of the blind man in John chapter 9. We read only a few verses from the chapter but the whole chapter is a great read - please take the time to read it later.

Jesus and the disciples come across a man who has been born blind and interestingly for us in the midst of COVID19 - the Disciples try and discover the cause of his blindness - they assume it must be because of someone's sin - They ask Jesus - Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?'

Jesus clearly says neither BUT his blindness is rather an opportunity 'that the works of God might be

made manifest in him'. This might seem like a strange answer but the actions of Jesus make his meaning plain. Immediately Jesus heals the man and the blind man sees!

Jesus is the light of the world - he lives out the compassion to the blind man that is in his capacity - He opens the eyes of the blind and he show us how we should live in compassion to others that is within our capacity.

The Blind man noticed the amazing capacity of Jesus. Later in the Chapter, John records him as having said, 'Never since the world began has it been heard that any one opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.'

Jesus is from God. He is God. As the light of the world he had a capacity of compassion far more than just opening the eyes of a man born blind - he performed many miracles, spoke amazing heart truths and ultimately died so that we might know peace with God. He then rose from the dead, as Lord of Life, to share his abundant life with us.

What is in our capacity of compassion during this terrible COVID 19 context?

It is everything in our power to limit it - hygiene, social distance, always but particularly if we are feeling unwell, and simply limiting our activities beyond home to the necessary

It is as we do everything in our power to care for one another - our capacity of compassion might not be to open the eyes of the blind but we can open our eyes to look out for others - might our neighbour have enough to eat? Is our friend Ok? We might need to give them a call.

It is in our capacity of compassion to write to friends and family - an email or a letter. It is within our capacity to pray, within our capacity of compassion write a poem, or a story or to knit a garment, patch a quilt, read a book mould some clay, paint a picture, plant a seed or build a whirligig - all these sorts of things to share with others.

In these various ways - as we live out our capacity of compassion now, then, when we do emerge from this crisis, we might be a little more like the very best of what it means to be human the very best of what we saw in Jesus indeed if we now imitate Jesus, as much as our limited capacity will allow (out of gratitude to Jesus for the unbounded capacity of compassion that he showed us), if we do that now - then, when we do emerge from the COVID19 pandemic, we would all have grown in our 'living in the light.'
