

A legacy of insight



A selection of Biblical reflections
by Father Elias Leyds

A word of introduction from Father Dave

I was shocked to the core when I heard that dear Father Elias had died. It was Thursday, January 25th, 2024. Elias and I hadn't spoken for a couple of weeks, but I was expecting him to be involved in my [Sunday Eucharist broadcast](#) that week and was in the middle of composing an email to him when I received the distressing news from our mutual friend, Father Iovane.

Elias was more than a friend to me. He was a father, a brother, a mentor and an archetypal wiseman. I didn't always feel comfortable with Elias' perspectives, and yet I found it hard to disagree with him. Every thought he expressed had always been thought through so thoroughly. He didn't waste his words, and he spoke with such deep intellectual integrity and clarity. He was a hard man to debate with, but a great man to listen to and to learn from.

This short collection of homilies are good examples of Elias' insight and wisdom. I don't know whether he spent a lot of time preparing them or whether the thoughts came to him spontaneously. I do know that what he came up with was almost never what I expected to hear. Indeed, my request was normally that he offer us a brief reflection on the Epistle reading for the week, but sometimes he'd speak to the Gospel reading or to all three of the readings, and one time he by-passed the Bible readings altogether and gave us a commentary on a movie he'd just watched!

We are all poorer for Elias' passing. The church has lost one of its great thinkers and speakers. Humanity itself has lost one of its finest sons – a man of integrity and compassion. I have lost a father, a brother, and one of the greatest friends I have ever had. Vale, dear brother. I pray this small collection of your homilies does something to preserve your legacy.



January 30, 2024



Fathers Elias and Dave in 2008, proudly displaying their Fighting Fathers tats

The raising of Lazarus (John 11:1- 45)



Today's readings are about the resurrection. That is the ultimate miracle that Jesus has performed. He has called someone after four days from the grave. Let's just pause for an instant and reflect on what happened to Lazarus.

Jesus, in order to perform – to prove himself as the son of God, in order to be able to do this miracle – he has asked Lazarus to die twice in his life! That's a thing that I think you could say you wouldn't even ask from your worst enemies. We would like our enemies actually to die twice (or maybe even more often) so it's strange that Jesus asks this not from an enemy but from someone whom he loves a lot. That's the first very strange fact about this reading.

There's another strange fact, and that is that Lazarus is still bound when he comes out of the grave. Jesus says, "*Come out, Lazarus*", and of course. Jesus knows everything, so he knows that they're all sort of straps and tissues tied around Lazarus. So, he comes out. He doesn't even know where he's going. I mean, he finds the exit although there's still a cloth on his face. His feet are still bound. It's very strange.

What does it mean? It means that Christ, who is resurrected, asks us to share in his resurrection, although we are still sort of blind, we're still sort of bound. Often, we're blind because we're too sad, we are too angry, and in this life we are often bound by everything that keeps us down, keeps us, hinders us when we want to go forward like addictions, also anger, disappointments. There's a lot of reasons why we can get locked in ourselves – our own sadness, our own anger, our own little pleasures – and, of course, the internet is a fantastic world of virtual pleasures without any responsibility, so also without any lasting happiness.

Anyway, whether it is the virtual world of pleasures, the real world of sadness and anger, we can get very much locked up in ourselves and our ego becomes a grave, but we must not be scared for the fact that Jesus calls us from the grave

– from our ego – although we're still bound, and although we're still quite blind, that's the beauty of the fight.

We can share in the resurrection. Even before we are dead, we're still alive and kicking. We're not dead yet, and yet Jesus gave us the chance in this life to fight, go forward and share in his resurrection. Now that may sound a bit strange. That may seem a bit silly, but very often that's because we still have a dusty cloth hanging over our faces.

So, when we want to fight – and I guess there's a lot of you listening watching – who reflect on why fighting can be so interesting. When you like to fight, you should understand that to fight is just another way, actually, maybe even the best way, to express your desire to see, because we can have come out of the grave, we can be free, but we still don't see yet, and that's what our life of faith is about. It's about being moved ultimately by the desire to see.

First shared on [The Sunday Eucharist](#) on March 26, 2023



Dave and Elias in Trinity's Youth Fitness centre in 2008

The Secret things of God (Matthew 10:26)



"So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known." (Matthew 10:26)

Hello, dear brothers and sisters Down Under. As you may have noticed, today's readings are about secrets.

We all have secrets. We have bad secrets. We have good secrets. We have bad secrets that we don't want anybody to know about, and, of course, we have good secrets too, but if we have a certain degree of personality, we don't want to share those good secrets immediately with everybody. We want to share them – our good secrets. We want to share them with people we choose, with people we love people, with people we consider worthy to receive those secrets, who are capable of understanding those secrets. You don't share them with everybody. In a certain way, the good secrecy in ourselves shapes our personality. It gives us strength, especially in times of war, in times of trouble, secrets give us strength – an inner Force.

Now, when we read and hear the gospel of today, we see the meaning of those secrets. We understand why God gives us secrets. Good secrets are given to share at the right time. There are secrets that God whispers into our ears, into our hearts, and they are to be shared with others because they're God's secrets. They're not just our secrets – the good Secrets – they're somebody else's too. The people we have fought with, the people we share our intimate intimacy with and, of course, our deepest intimacy is God. God is the creator of the universe. He's, our saviour, so the good Secrets – it's God's secret in the first place, and He may decide too when they must be proclaimed, and especially those most precious secrets that are related to God. They are given for the whole creation, and there will be a time when we share them.

It might be in heaven it might be at the general at the universal Resurrection, but they are going to be shared, so it's good to prepare those secrets well – to deepen the secrets of God's love in our hearts because there will be a day when we will share them. On the other hand, there's also the danger that we keep the bad secrets to ourselves because they give us the impression that we are

creators of our own universe. The bad Secrets there – we are really alone, and we will be forever alone, we think, because there is a moment when God will ask us what we have done with our lives.

We cannot remain alone like gods in our own universe, full of bad secrets. We cannot remain alone forever, and so it's good to share those bad secrets too – not with everybody but people that can help us with our addictions, people that we have to ask forgiveness from. We ask for forgiveness. That's the revelation of a bad secret we hold inside. There are many ways of getting rid in a good way of the bad secrets we have, and that, in a certain way, also solves the problem of that unnamed person that can cast us into hell. *“Don't be afraid of the one of who can kill your body but be afraid of the one that can cast your body and your soul together in hell.”*

Well, first of all, that means don't be scared of God, because He certainly doesn't want to cast you into hell. The demon is actually incapable of doing that because he must respect your freedom too. In the end, there's only one you must fear and that is yourself, because only you yourself are capable, because you keep the secrets – these bad secrets – for yourself. You choose really – it's possible to choose this darkness as your home, where you think you're going to be on your own. You can be hardened in this choice for solitude in darkness, with your own bad Secrets, which, actually, if you look at it (and I've, heard a lot of confessions, I've heard a lot of very, very bad secrets). I can assure you bad Secrets: there's nothing original in them. Sin is the most boring thing you can find in the universe. It's repetitive, it's always the same. It doesn't give any joy. It's lukewarm, -it's neither cold nor hot.

Sin is boring, and the only one that can cast you into hell because of your sins because of your bad secrets, it's yourself, and we get time – God gives us the time – to get rid of bad secrets and let the good secrets, the secrets of God's forgiveness, the secret of God's mercy of His love, of His truth, let it grow bit by bit in us, and in that way our life becomes a very fruitful time where we prepare beautiful original secrets – secrets that we acquired in the fight for life, the fight for love, the fight for faithfulness, the fight for causes worth living and causes worth dying for. Those good secrets – they will be revealed, and we will share them in the end of time.

That is Heaven. That is God's glory, finally revealed. That's the final truth about the fruitfulness of the Holy Spirit in our souls.

First shared on [The Sunday Eucharist](#) on June 25th, 2023.

The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (Matthew 13)



Hello, brothers and sisters down there Down Under in Australia. It's Father Elias here from Holland (up here).

Today's reading from the Gospel for this Sunday is pretty rough. It's about Heaven and Hell. It's about judgment. It's about God and the devil. It's pretty rough to hear all this, but after all it's just a matter of common sense.

Sometimes you hear today that we should not judge. That's completely ridiculous. To be alive means to judge. Already our living bodies are judging all the time. We eat and we absorb what is good for us and we use it for as an energy, and we throw out, yes, the ashes – the smelly ashes of that energy, and we throw out the garbage and all things that are not good for us. Our body judges all the time, and, of course, with our senses – with our smelling and our tasting – we're. Judging all the time things that are good things, that are bad, things that are smelly, and things that are attractive, things that are tasty and things that are disgusting. To be alive means to judge, and there is no reason why our spiritual life should not also judge.

We have to judge, but we have to judge with Christ in a very special way because if we have faith in Christ, we should not so much fear our judgment but prepare it together with Jesus and what we should fear is to judge too quickly. Jesus talks about these different weeds in our life and that our life gets meaning if we weed already our life like a garden – to separate what is good from bad – but we never judge in an ultimate way, in a final way.

We must help others also to find out what is best for them. Saint Paul does say that everything is allowed but not everything is good for you, so the big challenge of life is to prepare ourselves and prepare others for this final judgment, by judging on the way what is good for us and good for others and what is not good for us or not good for others, and we have to help them in a very merciful, very loving way, but also very straight straightforward way.

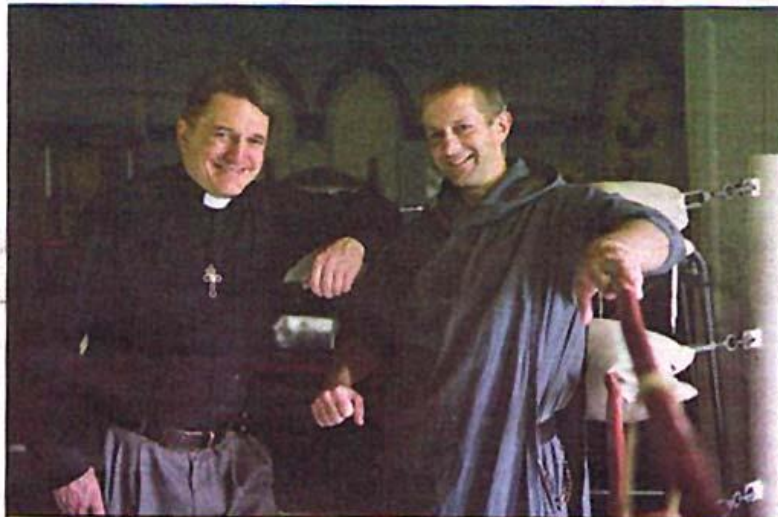
The work of Christ in US is a work of discernment. It's a work of separating good from bad and we can cooperate with that. We get that responsibility with Christ and that's what makes this life meaningful.

We are not saved in a passive way. We are saved in such a way that we can cooperate with Christ in the work of salvation, and we can in that way return as a Thanksgiving all our sufferings, all the moments where we have to sacrifice something in order to discover a new dimension of reality.

There are Frontiers that we have to cross which are unpleasant for us but that's where this separation in us takes place. That's where we get rid of what weighs us down, what makes us lonely, what takes away the meaning of our lives? It's especially in those moments of darkness and moments of suffering that we get rid of the garbage of our lives, and we discover a new territory = a new light which brings us closer to God.

First shared on [The Sunday Eucharist](#) on July 20th, 2023

One out of the box



Dulwich Hill's Holy Trinity Anglican Church's "Fighting Father" Dave Smith with Dutch monk Father Elias Leyds.
Photo by GEORGE VOULGARPOULOS

By JEANETTE STEPHEN

DUTCH monk Father Elias Leyds will be staying with Dulwich Hill's Holy Trinity Anglican Church community over the next 12 months.

Father Elias is a monk from the Catholic Order of the Community of St John in France's Bourgogne region, and is keen to study the activity program offered by the Holy Trinity Youth Centre.

He is being hosted by the "Fighting Father", Reverend Dave Smith, renowned for his introduction of boxing training for youth in the parish.

"This is a first in our area in terms of the cooperation between different churches,

let alone coming from all the way around the world," Rev Smith told the *Valley Times*.

"Father Elias has been improving his skills as a boxing trainer and boxer, but he's also a great preacher in the parish and has been extremely well received by the people here."

Since entering the Order two decades ago, Father Elias has spent time working in France and Holland.

He had himself organised one-off boxing classes for boys as a juvenile prison chaplain in Lithuania over the past decade.

After discovering news of Holy Trinity's boxing program via the internet, Father Elias got in contact with Reverend Smith via an online fo-

rum, later developing a plan for a study tour in the parish.

Father Elias said he ultimately hoped to establish a similar boxing program for youth upon his return to France.

"The environment here is different to what I'm used to," Father Elias told the *Valley Times*.

"For me, it's a very big change to live with people with different attitudes and cultural backgrounds.

"Boxing is not just a thing to interest people but it's also a bridge for the generations. It's not just interesting, but often a way for them to discover something new about themselves by confronting each other physically."

The Valley Times 8th March, 2008

Romans 12 and the Boxing Gym



"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

For as in one body, we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness." (Romans 12:1-8)

In today's reading from the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans, we see a whole list of duties in the church, or let's say '*vocations*': ministry, preaching teaching prophecy. It seems there is something for everyone in the church, but where's the *Fight Club*. It's not in the list, and today, as you put a lot of effort over there in a fight club or retreats with a lot of boxing, you should wonder is the fighting – the boxing – is it just for relaxing a little bit during the spiritual effort? Is just for fooling around, or does it have a deeper purpose? What does it have to do with religion?

Some people might say, "*Oh my God, it's a bit violent. It can't be Christian.*" I remember the first time I told friends in the church that I was boxing (it was my *coming out* if you like). They told me, "*Ah, so that's to be able to defend yourself.*" I said, "*No, it's actually for attacking too!*"

What is the sense of fighting? What is your place in the church today? Well, actually, it's not that difficult to see that. Fighting – *Combat Sports* – gives like the symbolic language of religion. The rhythm of the fight has very much to do with the way we present ourselves before God.

There's three very elementary steps in religion, and I'm talking here about the natural virtue of religion. Man can become aware that God exists, and so he can wonder what justice he must render to God. We must be respectful and just with respect to other people. How is this with respect to God? The behaviour of man with respect to God – that's what religion is. Religion means '*binding back*' the relationship with God, and there's three elementary steps in religion.

First of all, you go to a sacred place that you have created. That's *God's home*, if you like. The omnipresent God has a home in this world that we give to Him it's a sacred place. You go to that sacred place.

The second step is, when you're there, you adore God. You recognize that He is ultimately the just one, the righteous one – that, in the end, you have to be accountable with respect to God.

And the third and final step is a *sacrifice*. You offer a sacrifice as a gesture to complete your acknowledgment of God, to complete your worship of God.

So, you go to the sacred place, you adore the almighty, and you offer a sacrifice. Now, this is very much the same rhythm as what is happening during a boxing match. You go to the sacred place, which is the ring. You salute the referee, who has to judge who has won or when to stop the fight, and then the fight itself is your sacrifice. You're doing something which, strangely enough, is not that pleasant, because you're trying to hit the other, and even hurt the other, and yet there is a deep spiritual pleasure, if you like, a reward which, if you win, makes you grateful and, if you lose, it makes you humble. So, there is a very radical education of human virtue following a rhythm that is almost religious, whereas that virtue is very useful with respect to God.

We should be humble, and we should be grateful towards God, and so, whatever revelation you believe – whatever divine revelation you have freely chosen – whether it's Muhammad (Muhammad's Revelation) or the Revelation in Jesus Christ. Whatever manifestation of God, you have freely chosen – if you recognize God, you know that you have to pay Him respect, that's what we call *religion*, and that is what is learned in a very elementary fundamental way in fighting sports

First broadcast on [The Sunday Eucharist](#) on Sunday, August 27th, 2023



Elias in 2008 with Father Dave's son, Soren, and Rugby League Legend, Tommy Raudonikis

Father Elias' Movie Review – Warrior 2011



Hello, friends, brothers, sisters Down Under.

First, I apologize for my voice. I've been having some problems with a chronic bronchitis recently. Please pray for me because of the bronchitis. I cannot go training, and lack of training is cause of this bronchitis. So, I'm trapped in a vicious circle. I can only get out with your prayers.

Next, I want to apologize for the bad quality of this film. It's dark already, and I didn't have time to put all the lights and the cameras in place to make a more or less professional video. It's quite amateurish.

Next, I want to apologize that I don't want to comment on the readings for today, because I was too impressed by a film I saw yesterday evening. A friend (a young friend) invited me to see it, and probably you know the film it is "*Warrior*". I think it's 2011 2012 It's about, basically it's about the father and his two sons. One is an ex-marine boxer and the other is in is a family father who actually has some experience, and quite a good experience, with mixed martial arts.

It's not unusual that quality films have a screenplay that actually has a lot of Christian or philosophical themes. There's always a certain wisdom behind good films but yesterday I was really struck because I think, providentially, there are a lot of things in that film. I just would like to mention that, and maybe encourage you to look at this this film again because it's not just a fighting film, but it's the fight of life.

Very often when there are two heroes fighting, it is an image of men fighting with himself and it is actually man fighting with God, not so much between good and evil (that's for the cheesy Hollywood movies) but between the man who wants to know God and the man who, with the best intentions, wants to live a good, dutiful life as nature wants men to be. So, it's more a fight between the religious man and the good natural man who is tempted to forget that he is a mediator between God and his wife and his family, and to a larger to a larger extent, with society.

The allegory in this film I found very, very deep, and, in fact mystic. Have a look at this film and imagine that the father of the two sons is in fact the *Heavenly*

Father. The older son, *Brandon*, is either the *Holy Spirit*, and then *Tommy*, his younger brother, is *Christ*. You could also say *Brandon*, the older brother, could also be *Christ*, who is risen, who is united to his bride, and then *Tommy* is more like *John the Baptist* – *John the Baptist*, who lives and has lived in a fantastic way, and he wants to live in us!

The phrase that was written on the big poster that was (that used to be) in Father Dave gym that unfortunately burned (and I guess this poster burned with it) but it shows a boxer, and it has the text, “*All Guts, No Glory*”, and I think that just defines the personality of *Tommy* in this film.

So, it's either *John the Baptist*, and then his older brother is the *Holy Spirit* – sorry, and then his older brother is *Jesus* – or *Tommy* is *Jesus* before, and in his sacrifice, sent into the world, and then *Brandon* in some way is the *Holy Spirit*.

Think about that. Have a look at this film. See the different relationships of these men with the mother = the mother who, well, you know, the film and you're going to see it in the film, who died a long time ago. See the role of *Brandon's* wife. See the role of the of the relation, or see the relationship between *Tommy* and the widow of his best friend. Have a look at that. It's about not the sweet and cheesy way of looking at Christianity. It's about the real fight in life when God sent his Son into the world, the real fight started – the fight that will bring the end of the world, not with a bang but a whimper – a whimper where the correct kind, the religious kind, of vulnerability is shown.

It's not a weakness or being a coward when you cannot solve problems. Man wants to, and I think should, escape from that vulnerability. If your vulnerable on that side, because of fear, you're not going to be able to sacrifice. You're not going to find any fulfilment of your deepest desires in your life – your deepest aspiration – but you see that the vulnerability of this man – of these men – is that they cannot change the past and that's where they meet God.

And so, the three men in this film actually, in an amazing way, signify the way that, through real strife, real spiritual fight, the three Divine Persons have to break their way into our hearts, and they will continue fighting in our hearts until we return to our father.

First broadcast on [The Sunday Eucharist](#) on Sunday, September 24, 2023



meeting up with Father Ola in Stockholm (2023)

The Great Commandments (Matthew 22:34-40)



When you ask a question about what is most important, you usually expect a straightforward and simple answer: It's either this or that thing. It cannot be two things. However, Jesus usually gives an answer that is not very simple and not very straightforward. In fact, with every answer, there's a new question: Jesus always gives answers that sort of force you to think. You have to choose between leaving it at that (it's too complicated, it's not straightforward enough, it's not simple enough) or go forward and ask Jesus more questions. You have gone towards him and when he answers you, you'll have to either return home to your safety zone where you don't have to ask questions, or you continue with Christ, asking questions.

That's the way. Jesus leads us into the mystery. You get to know more and more about Jesus while hearing his answers about the will of God, about life, but you also get to understand more and more what you don't know and where your ignorance is still stronger than you. Jesus wants to take you with him. When you go towards Jesus, it doesn't stop there. From the moment that Jesus answers to you, you go further., you go on with Christ. And Christ always gives answers that force you to choose, *'Am I going to return into my safety zone or am I going to continue with Christ on this path towards God'*,

Now the answer of Jesus to the question, *'What is the most important commandment?'* Jesus in fact, says, *'You have to adore and love God and you have to love your neighbour'*. That's two most important things. They're most important together, if you like, and that's because Jesus leads, or he wants to lead this Pharisee into the mystery. God is a mystery that we shall never understand completely, but we are preparing ourselves in this world to see Him – to see God.

To shed some light on the answer of Christ, we have to go back to Genesis where we see a little bit in the Revelation – what God thinks. What is his idea before creating us mankind? We read in Genesis about the reflection of God about what he's going to do, and he says, *"I'm going to create a man in my image and in my likeness"*, and then it is said he created man and woman as his image.

But there's very little about this likeness. Where has the likeness gone And that's the very important thing: God creates and then later saves, redeems his image with his omnipotence, but then he wants to realise his own likeness in us with a shared power and a shared power that actually looks more to us in a human way like a shared vulnerability, a shared suffering, a Shared death, but which is, in fact sharing in the power of God, which wants to unite itself to us to realise this likeness to God.

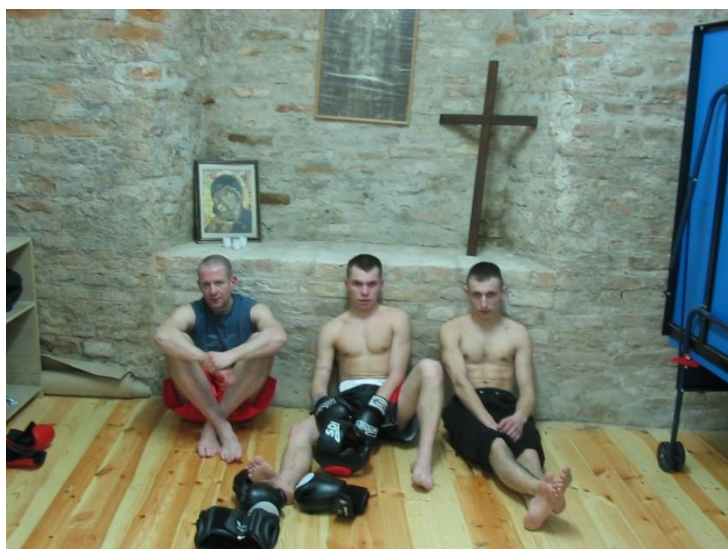
And that's where this mysterious second half of the most important commandment comes in. We realize, with God, his own likeness in us by choosing life, by choosing reality, by choosing risky reality. We're here to take challenges.

First, we get out of our virtual worlds. Our idealised world of gaming and pornography First, we choose the true reality as it is, and then we live in that reality. If we get trapped in some comfort zone for some reason or another, it might be wealth or social security or, you know, in reality we can get trapped. We can get imprisoned in a safety zone, so we have to get out of that.

We have to get out of the audience and jump into the ring in our life. It will have to happen one day or another in order to become someone. We choose life, We choose reality, We choose a reality that is full of chances and risks because it's the true potential that we have in us and that God wants to use to realise, not so much his image in us because that's what he created and that's what he redeemed, but in order to realize this likeness to himself in us, and that's why he gives a little bit tricky or ambiguous answers, because what he wants is that in us, in our soul, his grace bears fruit and that in us a thirst grows – a thirst that asks to God *'How is it possible? How are you going to do this?'*

It's good not to stop at just saying “. *“I believe Jesus. I love Jesus”* but asking him. How do I go towards the house of the Father with you from here “

First broadcast on [The Sunday Eucharist](#) on Sunday, October 29th, 2023



while working in the Caucasus Mountains in 2005

The Kingship of Christ



Hello friends – brothers, sisters – down there in Australia. I would have liked to join you live, but maybe next time that will work out. For the moment, again, it's a video that I make on my own and I send it to you. I would love to share some time with you and discuss the theme of this Sunday, which is *the Kingship of Christ*.

We read in the letter to the Ephesians that we are part of a mystery that is divine – that is eternal – and we are called to share in it – to take part in it.

God calls us. He has chosen us to give an answer to the word he gives to us. The Eternal word is given to us. We, as human beings, we are chosen by God to give an answer to the given word from our humble human nature, even when fallen into sin, we are called to give a truthful answer to the Divine word. The whole letter of Ephesians speaks about that. This is the mystery that St Paul wants to entrust to the faithful.

Now, when we see the way Jesus talks about his kingship in the in the Gospel of St John, you see that Christ relates His Kingdom to the truth. He is a king, and He says people who are of the truth – that means who are trying to live in the truth, who are trying to find out what is truth, and who are trying to live according to the truth – they are his followers. They are part of his kingdom.

And that also means that we, as Christians, we never have to find hope in politics. We don't rely on politics to give us hope. We may take part on it but it's never going to give us a kind of Utopian fulfilment of our dreams.

People may talk about a beautiful future or about paradigms that need to be realized but in fact we are members as Christians of the kingdom of God that exists already. We can take politics with a grain of salt.

There is this victory of Christ which has been won already. If we have to fight, especially with ourselves, it's because we have to get our share of that victory, but the victory itself has already been won, and that's why in our spiritual life – in our life where we search for happiness – it's important to always realise that our moral choice for God and our moral choice for our neighbours always comes

before our vote or our participation in democracy or any other kind of political life.

We may be happy to vote. We may be happy to express our opinion, but more important to that is meeting our neighbour – communicating with him. Whether it's at work, in our family, when on holidays with our friends, or even when we are communicating with somebody in the boxing ring. It's also a manner of communication, although it might be a bit mysterious, although we might have to reflect a little bit on what that communication in the boxing ring means.

Anyway, before we vote, before we express our opinion, we have to meet our neighbour. That's what we're called to. Why? Because God gives us, as an assignment in our life, as a challenge in our life, to see Divine Light in our neighbours. The great challenge for those who search the truth and who want to participate in the Kingdom of God is to find the presence of God – the thirst for God – in our neighbour.

First broadcast on [TheSundayEucharist.com](https://www.TheSundayEucharist.com) on November 26, 2023



The mystery of God and of family



Hello there, down under. I'm sorry to disappoint you. I had promised to be with you live but it's not going to work out. There's too many things going on here and I'm a bit tired, so it's better to record something and send it to you. I hope it gets there in time. I hope actually to be with you later at a later moment, at a more convenient time. Of course, I would like to meet you in reality, but for the moment that's out of the question.

Today's letter – the Epistle to the Galatians – it's a very short passage. It's about a mother. It's about the father. It's about a child, and in the short passage, we see that having a mother, having a father, and being a child is something very important in the government of God, in the wisdom that God wants to spread and share in creation, so it's very important to see that God reveals Himself through humanity – being man and woman, being father and mother, being a child. Those natural aspects of human life. They are to be respected and to be understood well because through them, God reveals who He is.

We see St Paul writes that the Son of God became man through – the Eternal Son of God – became man through a creature – Mary, the Mother of God – and redeemed all of mankind so that they could reconcile with the Eternal Father and return to the Eternal Father.

Of course, everything that has to do with sexuality and that has to do with gender as they say today that exists in God. God is the creator of all things. So all the ideas in about creation must have come from Him. In Him is the inspiration for all works of creation and also for the works of redemption. He is the source of all wisdom, so in God is womanhood, in God is manhood. In God is mother – being a mother, being father, father, the fatherhood, the motherhood, it's in God, but it would be totally against the whole Revelation and the tradition of the Christian faith to say that God is a mother. God is not a mother.

We address ourselves to God as '*the father*'. So there is a kind of paradox that there is motherhood in God. There is Womanhood in God, because he's invented it and in creating he invents everything as being inspired by something that He is Himself and that He has in Himself. God has motherhood and

womanhood in Himself, but He is not a woman. He is not a mother. The amazing thing is that the motherhood in God is revealed by God being in a mother.

Christ comes into the world while abiding for three months in the womb of his mother, whom actually we can call the '*Mother of God*'. This has been decided in the year 431, if I'm not mistaken, at the Council of Ephesus.

There a fight broke out. I think, you Australians, who would have felt at home in this Council of Ephesus, because there was a bar fight. The police came in, and everything finished well, probably with a good meal and the very nice decision that we could call Our Lady Mary, the '*Mother of God*'.

So, it was actually a very beautiful dogma, honouring woman and womanhood. That was the issue of quite a vulgar brawl amongst the theologians. I think we should also always remember that that our church history is full of eccentricities. Anyway, God reveals the treasure of his inner life by choosing very radically a creature to be his mother and while being the source of all gifts and the main actor in the redemption.

The source of all giving and all forgiving wants to be receiving everything, from a creature. So he reveals the Holy Spirit, who is gift, by in exactly inverting it, If you like, by making really nature the mirror image of what he is, because he must receive everything. He's a small baby. He lies there. He must receive everything from our lady. He must receive everything that has to do with his Earthly life. He has to receive from a mother and then later he needs, of course, the education of his adopted father. There also, the inverted roles. The father does not adopt a child, but the child adopts a father.

If we think about being a man and being a woman, we speak about different modalities, different ways of giving – that's the secret. You can write books about Mars and Venus, and you can fill your bookshelf or earn your wallet by writing those books about gender, about psychology of men and woman, within men and woman, but in fact it's a very simple thing: God has create created us incomplete. Our knowledge is incomplete, our physical presence is incomplete. We need the other, and in the same way that man needs woman and woman needs man.

Today, of course, it's very fashionable to say that woman can do plenty of things that men cannot not do, but if you say the other thing – that man can do a lot of things that woman cannot do – then you cause a bit of a scandal, but, anyway, man and woman need each other because they're incomplete and they complete each other, but in the same way it should be said that a child is incomplete because it needs a mother and it needs a father, and because a child is innocent and harmless and vulnerable, you can even say that a child has the right to have a natural father and the right to have a natural mother.

That's not so much a matter of rules, but it is a matter of trying to understand the language with which, in which God tries to reveal the mystery of His self-giving, an eternal mystery of gratuity in himself. He needs us. He needs human nature of fertility through man and woman to reveal what is most precious in Himself –

his glory His gratuity, His total self-giving love that we will see when we meet our heavenly Father.

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