

**Installation of the Eighth Archbishop of Perth
and Metropolitan of Western Australia
St George's Cathedral, Perth
Saturday 10 February 2018**

Isaiah 42:1-9

Philippians 2:1-11

John 13: 1-17, 20

The first time I sat in the Archbishop's Office in Church House was in early November last year. I was meeting with Bishop Kate. On previous visits in the last few years the Cathedral Square, Treasury and library building were all underway, but my last memory of the Church House building was a hole in the ground surrounded by builders' fencing. By November everything was different, building finished, the Cathedral Song School had been opened just a few weeks earlier and Perth was drenched in her spring colours, the blues of sky and river, eucalypt and other greens spread out from the Supreme Court Gardens to Government House.

The new office was more than a bit daunting. I have, after all, sat in similar offices many times as priest and bishop over the years under two Archbishops, but this was completely different.

As sure as I was that God's call had come to me, at different times since August I had wondered (*as perhaps have some of you*) if I had responded to this call as I ought. Had the discernment to which this Diocese had given itself prayerfully and carefully been careful enough?

And, after that I was also wondering if the Holy Spirit would help me, help all of us to be enough as we respond to God's call to be part of Christ's body, hands, feet, and voice, in Perth right now. Would we together be enough in the love of Christ? Could we be together enough in the love of Christ; part of his body of love for this day?

A matter of trust.

In our processes of discernment, God chooses men and women for particular ministries at particular times, but like Mary and Saint Scholastica, like many of us in this Cathedral, ordained and lay, we also choose by saying no or saying yes. And, while all this wondering was going on, a climate of trusting God's Spirit of grace was already part of the background of a fledgling shared Perth story.

Looking out of that office window across Perth however, before the words 'milk and honey' could even form, day dreaming of power and prestige and frailty and failure, there was suddenly, in the close foreground, a person standing out on the Cathedral tower. On the very top of it. His arms were outstretched, cross shape. His stance terrifyingly precarious.

It is in the very nature of such moments not to believe our eyes. And then we do.

Very quickly any pretension to self-aggrandisement blows away like a dandelion in the wind. Suddenly, frighteningly, there were two views out of the window of that office, now, my office.

I suspect that no matter how long I am there I will always be aware of both views, both worlds, both realities, one imposed on the other. May it be so.

People arrived quickly and all was well. The man cared for in a professional and attentive and unfussy way. Safe, at least for the time being. It is possible that life for this man is often a matter of being precariously balanced on the edge of things, community, security, sanity, safety, life itself.

On that November day trusting God and trusting others went hand in hand. On this February day trusting God and trusting others go hand in hand.

Trusting God, that we are part of the great purpose of God for good. Trusting God has brought us to this new day. Trusting our yes to God's Holy Spirit, trusting each other as we discover the next steps in the mission and ministry God has already entrusted to us. Trusting that we can all, take our part both individually and as together our particular place in God's eternal purpose. Trusting God and others who see us as we cannot see ourselves challenging us to look more and more like Jesus.

The story of the Anglican Church in this part of Australia has, as part of its beginning, not only letters patent and the royal creation of a city and diocese, but stories that were part of colonial migration. People who came believing that God was somehow calling them to the Antipodes. Every story of those first Anglicans and other Christians here is one of balancing precariously in, what was for them, unchartered territory. Learning new ways to live and tell the story of Jesus', of building; churches, schools, offices, community, relationships. All this set against the background of another world, another culture of more than 40,000 years with mixed outcomes. Learning how to transplant a church tradition so that it could live in the new world raised both hopes and anxieties.

Two views, two realities, two worlds.

Right now, the church's trust bank is pretty depleted. All churches. The hurt and grief which has been brought to light has wrapped around us, and we find ourselves in totally unchartered territory. The church not at the centre of city and community but on its edges. Two views, two worlds again.

One we have known, and remember as bright days and a golden past; the other a precarious story shared by many, but particularly our institutions in contemporary Australia. Balancing on the edge. Two views.

How we look to the future together as church matters. Both for the close-up of our here and now, and as we faithfully give ourselves to proclaiming day by day, in words and actions, the centre of God's great purpose of love.

Not as an organisation in which we feel labelled as untrustworthy. Not as an institution which is tired and useless, but people of faith, living from the deep spiritual wellspring of that place of homecoming in which each and every community, each and every person knows themselves fully part of the Body of Christ. Looking out, looking in. two views, well balanced.

The suffering servant of the prophet Isaiah comes to a people who regarded themselves as strong because God was on their side, at a time when their fortunes had been dramatically reversed.

God had delivered his people from bondage in Egypt.

God made a covenant with them.

God had brought them through wilderness into the promised land.

God had been with them as they forged a nation, and as they built a glorious temple for the Lord.

Over hundreds of years Israel knew victories and defeats under various leaders, judges and kings. Each time they strayed from God's covenant they were called back. Then the unthinkable happened and Israel was defeated by the Babylonians. The temple at the heart of Jerusalem and the heart of their faith was destroyed, the people captured and taken to the city of their enemy to live in bondage. In the midst of this complete devastation they asked themselves how they had come to this? They saw it as punishment. They hoped and longed and prayed for God to deliver them.

Their story is one of exile, of repentance, of return and renewal. Isaiah's promised servant is beyond imagination let alone expectation. The prophetic promise came 'A bruised reed he will not break, a dimly burning wick he will not quench'.

A wider lens reveals a picture in this city and around our regional centres of people, young and old, women and men asking themselves, how has it come to this? Those who sleep rough each night; women and children flee their homes every week because of violence; refugees and asylum seekers needing support each week. People all lose heart and hope and look for mercy and a word of welcoming love in all sorts of situations in all sorts of places. Where you are, where I am? On the edge, in the centre.

When Jesus knelt on the floor to wash his disciples' feet, and his act was so shocking there were no words for it. Whether we are on the edge or in the centre, balanced precariously or happily overlooking the big picture Jesus shows us still what it means to take up his love, to follow his way and to see the grandeur of God freed to see and serve, kneeling before others. No self-aggrandisement but alongside Jesus wonderfully free. Serving which is uncomfortable because it makes the back ache and knees hurt and hands calloused. Serving with heart, mind, strength. Friends.

As particular as one person at a time and as big as the whole world.

And it takes one more step. As Jesus' own arms stretched out on the Cross they were. as Australian poet Bruce Dawe says, 'seemingly over the whole damned creation'.

Love in the foreground, love as the backdrop. As close as breathing. God's whole landscape. Ours can be no different.

As we look to the future together, deciding what is needful for our part in announcing God's great intentional and creative purpose for the good of all, let us commit afresh to live our life worthy of the calling to which we have been called in Christ; his body the Church. Let us be of the same mind as Christ Jesus, having the same love, being in full accord. Let us do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than ourselves. Let us look not to our own interests, but to the interests of others.

Let the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus, who emptied himself of self and gave everything for love in God's name.