

Pentecost 14 2024 All Souls' **INWARD STRENGTH: OUTWARD ACTION** dtw

Jesus said, "The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6.63)
Paul wrote, 'Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God.' (Eph 6.10,11)

If you ever go to WA's Great Southern where they make reds to rival the Coonawarra, you should visit St Werburgh's Chapel, 6 kms out of Mt Barker, 30 minutes north of Albany, where I was Parish Priest for 4 years in the mid 80's. The chapel was built in 1873 by the Egerton-Warburton family, who were pioneers of the district, on a hill below their farm-house, a good many years before the first parish church of All Saints was built in Mt Barker itself. (I have seen references to that same name here at All Souls', which is special) That chapel and its timeless ambience was one of my life-supports in my ministry there and was the catalyst for a thesis that I began there in 1986 and completed in 1987 at Applecross in Perth. I can't believe that nearly 38 years have passed. I have revisited the Chapel a number of times since. It remains indelibly fixed in my spiritual flight-plan, because it is a symbol, in rammed earth, timber and corrugated iron, of that delicate balance I try to maintain as a Christian and a priest between contemplation and action.

As I put my head around the readings for this Sunday, the thesis work came flooding back. It is entitled: *Adoring God, Serving God: An Evaluation of the Themes of Contemplation and Action in the Christian Life*. Bread of Life! Armour of God! The Readings from Ephesians and John today say it all. Inward Food, Outward Action. Sit at the Lord's feet Sunday, feeding on His Holy Word and His Holy Food. Then get out there in your week, nourished by the Bread of Life and equipped with the Armour of the Living God to bear fruit by the way you live. At the end of the Eucharist every Sunday, we say in response to our Holy Communion: *Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.*

This Church is our Powerhouse, our Refuge and Gathering Place where we are fed, fellowshiped and re-charged for Mission! Sunday is 'Part A'; the rest of your life is 'Part B'. People who have done a *Cursillo* would know what I mean. It happens over 3 days. It is a Spiritual High – a mountain top experience for many. But the REAL work is in the valley; the Monday to Friday slog. That's why in *Cursillo* language the rest of your life is called 'The Fourth Day'. That corresponds with our very redemption too. Christ died on a Friday; he rose on a Sunday, the third day. Christianity is the fourth day! What does your fourth day look like?

Let me go back to St Werburgh's Chapel for a moment. I often think of it when I read Psalm 84, which is one of my favourite psalms. Appropriately, it is the Psalm for today. Look at the words again in your reading sheet – such beauty, such serenity. Sparrows sure did find their home at St Werburgh's, and pigeons, and bats! At thy altar! No white dust cover there; a piece of thick plastic to catch all the bird droppings and bat dung. But what a mystical little place on a hill, a place where I took a number of baptisms, and an

idyllic wedding which even had electric lights powered by a generator, for the chapel simply had its original candelabras. I took Quiet Days there and every Eucharist, only celebrated on the 5th Sunday of the month, was a sheer joy, often followed by an impromptu picnic in the grounds near the pioneer graveyard. Beautiful, tranquil, comforting and nourishing in the extreme. But don't forget; only Part A. Jesus got his mesmerised disciples on the Transfiguration Mount to get back to business on the plain!

Paul has the prescription in Ephesians 6 for Christian Action: Part B. 'Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. Put on the whole armour of God...fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness...the gospel of peace...Take the shield of faith... the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.' Many people caught up in Spiritual Direction practice a thing called *Lectio Divina*, which is a way of deep reflecting on a passage of scripture. Two years ago, I took our SA Commandery of the Order of St Lazarus through this particular reading from Ephesians. The practice of *Lectio Divina* requires reading the passage slowly at least 2 times. Each person is then encouraged to choose a text or word that stands out and they can then ask themselves:

What does this passage/chosen text say:

to my head? (knowing)

to my heart? (loving)

to my hands? (serving)

All my sermons are posted to our website, so I encourage you to revisit this one, try doing a *Lectio Divina* with today's Epistle, and for further reflection, here are some more ideas:

1. 'Contemplation and Action'. On a page with two columns, make a list of the things you do in both areas of Christian life.
2. 'As bread is broken on the altar, so our lives are to be broken in service'. Consider.
3. Why doesn't active 'evangelism' come naturally to many Anglicans?
4. What skills do our church members need to bring more people to active faith?
5. Pray for our Parish Council and all members as we seek to grow in faith, hope and love.

Amen.