

## **Jn 17:22-26 Reconciliation Week Fullarton. 290522**

**‘That they may all be one, as we are one’.** In his final words to his disciples, Jesus, today, prays for unity. He prays that all people, indeed his whole creation, will be one, ‘as he is in God and God is in him’.

‘As he is in God, and God is in him’:/ Our doctrine of the Holy Trinity tries to capture the essence of this unity, God's three in oneness, in which we are called to live. As we work through what this means to us, we must keep in mind though, that the **Doctrine of the Trinity**, is the particular theological understanding of the early church, using the best language and understanding available in the first century Roman world, to describe their experience of the nature and character of God. And their use of the term ‘persons’ yet still one God, to describe how God chooses to reveal God’s self in three distinct ways, has long been problematic, and caused confusion for many (including me) in the years since. And that’s why we now often prefer to understand our Trinitarian God more as 3 aspects of the one ‘presence’; as in **God the Father who created all that is, in love, God the Son the who shows us how to love, and God the Holy Spirit, God’s love within and amongst all that he has created;**

I find this understanding much more useful, in exploring the Divine unity, oneness and interdependence we are called to live, indeed love, as God's people./

But as I ponder this understanding in today’s world I find myself asking: is our living out such ‘Unity, oneness, complete interdependence!’ in our personal lives, our communities, across our nation and creation, even **achievable, is it just a hope .....or**

**is it merely a pipedream?** / Well the more I ponder the plight of our world, the more I realize that living out this understanding of God's love can't be just a hope; it is the only viable alternative for any possibility of any future for our broken world - for us, our children and all of God's creation! Just think about that! Is there any alternative?

And the **cultural context** of today's Gospel shows us that Jesus was very familiar with a broken world! John Pilch in his book 'The Cultural World of Jesus' points out that Jesus is not talking to a world of unity and oneness. Indeed he speaks to a world of brokenness. For John's community, which is still strongly committed in the Jewish tradition, to the God of Israel, has been recently ejected from the existing Judean institutions due to their belief in God's accessibility through Jesus, a view not exactly kosher to the Jewish faith! John then is writing Jesus' words into the context of brokenness, a brokenness displayed in the violence of the religious leaders do you mind, towards Jesus and his followers, a brokenness which reflects a much deeper disunity amongst individuals, families, classes and cultures in the society of his time. **John's world is NOT as one!**

And, you have probably noticed, **our world is NOT 'as one'.** / Many of us I suspect, have experienced, or maybe even right now are living through, broken or strained, personal relationships; failed marriages, shaky friendships. Our nation, sometimes our very communities, are fractured along the lines of race, class or culture. And our world seems constantly riven by individuals', leaders' and groups' quests for power.

Indeed the whole of creation is broken and groaning through the voice of extreme weather events, bushfires, flooding, the bleaching of coral reefs and rising sea levels, in our own nation and across our region, all the effects of climate change as a consequence of humankind's abuse, indeed breaking, of our environment to the very brink of our survival! Amongst us and around us, individuals , communities, nations and all creation, cry out for healing./

And in the face of all this brokenness the **challenges can seem insurmountable**. Indeed one can be tempted to hide and hope it will all go away! But it will not just go away; for ignored, it will just fracture and rupture into even more damaging pieces. So in our own interests, in the interest of our children & grandchildren, for our fellow beings, indeed for the whole of creation, we must do what we can to heal our broken world./

But what can one person do. And where do we start? Well remember the adage from some years ago now **'act locally, think globally'**? We are to look at the broken relationships closest to us- in our own lives and in our own communities. For the moment I'll leave you to ponder how you might begin to heal any broken relationships in your own lives...../

But today, as we begin our celebration of Reconciliation Week 2022, with the theme 'Be Brave. Make Change', I think it is appropriate that we focus on the theme of addressing our **brokenness with and within Australia's own indigenous people./**

I was blessed a few weeks ago to attend a performance titled 'Tell Me Why' featuring the well known elder Archie Roach, who in his biography by the same name, describes himself as 'stolen child, seeker, teenage alcoholic, lover, father and leader'. Archie Roach

was only 2 years old when he was forcibly removed from his family and brought up by a series of foster parents until his early teens, when he learnt of the family, life and culture from which he had been torn away, and his world imploded! Only a chance meeting with Ruby Hunter, who would become the love of his life, halted his downward spiral into addiction and death. His is a story of love, heartbreak, family and community, survival, renewal and the healing power of love and relationships./

At least 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed in this way from their families and communities by government agencies and church missions, right up to the early 1970s. The trauma which resulted for these children and their families, and which continues to be passed down through subsequent generations, has resulted in a wide range of adverse outcomes, including extreme poverty, poor physical, mental and emotional health, severely limited education, alcohol and substance abuse, and a high rate of incarceration, often leading to early death, too often death by suicide./

This brokenness which afflicts so many of Our First Nations peoples, was precipitated by the ignorant and arrogant actions of our forbears,/and is perpetuated by our inaction today!//

And this tragic chapter of Australia's history is only one aspect of the seemingly general brokenness which pervades our lives and our world, where injustice, racism, exploitation and oppression seem commonplace. Indeed it might seem that we live in a state of brokenness. We are not as one, as (Jesus and the Father) are one'./

And it seems to me that at its heart, all this brokenness stems from our failure to see our fellow beings as persons, thinking instead in terms of me or us and the 'other' or them, and treating

'them' as lesser parts of God's creation. As such we disregard the interdependence in which we and all beings, indeed all creation are meant to live!

The late Bishop Desmond Tutu in his book *Credo*, reminds us that, to treat one as less such as this, is not just wrong. . . . It is veritably blasphemous and sacrilegious. It is as if we were to spit in the face of God. Consequently injustice, racism, exploitation, oppression are to be opposed not just as a political task but as a response to a religious, a spiritual imperative. Not to oppose these manifestations of evil would be tantamount to disobeying God./

But think for a moment about our relationships - with each other, with those of another class, another culture, another race, our relationships to other parts of our society - the desperately poor and needy around us, those who are physically and mentally challenged in many ways, the members of the LBQTI community, our First Nations brothers and sisters, refugees,/ all whom we may consider 'different' or other. Then of course there is our fractured relationship with the environment in which we live!/  
And we are called by Jesus today 'to be as one as he and the Father are one!'/

Our lives, our world, God's creation, is desperately in need of reconciliation, of healing, of bringing back together as one ... as God created it to be.

Elaine Enns and Chad Myers, in their book '**Ambassadors of Reconciliation**' write that 'ideally, such change, such healing, needs to lead to the transformation of the person(s) (and I would add, the creation) that is harmed, the transformation of person(s) causing the harm, and the transformation of the community as a

whole, with covenants of accountability, restitution, reparation & reconciliation, so that things are made as right as possible. RPT

\*\*\*\*\*

The Uluru Statement from Heart, which the largest ever consensus of First Nations Peoples put to us, the Australian people, 5 years ago this week, invites us to walk with our indigenous brothers and sisters towards reconciliation, a healing of our relationship with them, through:

the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution; and

a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations, and truth-telling about our shared history.

But these members of the longest continuing culture in our world today, the descendants of the 60,000 year old first inhabitants of our land, provide us with more than principles for healing our broken relationship with them. The principles of the Uluru Statement from the Heart are just as applicable to all the broken relationships in our own lives, our community, our nation, our world .... and of course to our rapidly deteriorating relationship with the environment!

The Uluru Statement then, puts forward 3 steps to reconciliation, to healing our brokenness :

Voice - recognising the 'other', and listening to them as one of/with us;

Treaty - developing a process to know and grow in our relationship with them as one with us; and

Truth - growing as one with them in our relationship through sharing the truths of what has lead us to this brokenness.

Following the recent state and federal elections our governments have undertaken to take up this invitation to work together towards the healing of our relationships and a better future not just our First Nations brothers & sisters but for our nation as a whole.

As we begin this week of reconciliation let us embrace the theme 'Be Brave, Make Change' to be a part of the healing of the brokenness in our relationship with our First Nations peoples. But let us also undertake to do what we can, to heal the other brokenness in our own lives , our communities, our nation, our world and in all of God's creation, through listening, seeking a way forward, and together growing towards true unity, oneness and interdependence, such that we may truly 'be one, as Jesus and the Father are one'.