

St Peter's
Pentecost 13
2 Corinthians 5.16-21
'I still call Australia home'

I've been to cities that never close down
From New York to Rio and old London town
But no matter how far
Or how wide I roam
I still call Australia home.

In our reading this morning we hear from the Apostle that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

The Christian idea about man, as reconciled to God, has changed the way man has thought about itself. Illumined the path of human nature throughout history. The image of God, Jesus is the image of man. Jesus is the truth, not only of God, but of man. Like a mirror, showing who we are, in the light of who God is. It has illumined the self-understanding of man, for more than two thousand years.

Jesus' proclaimed the kingdom of God, drawn near to us now in him, in an extraordinarily personal way. He addressed his message to individuals. He knows every hair in our heads. In his life, and in his parables, of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son, he revealed God to be the One who in eternity reaches out with reconciling love to every individual who is lost in this world.

This Christian idea of man, as reconciled to God in Christ, changed the course of world history. It ascribes an eternal value to the life of every individual. It ascribes to every individual, freedom in Christ. Freedom from every merely human authority. Leading to the idea of social freedom, of a social order of justice and peace, corresponding to the kingdom of God.

This Christian idea of political election, of Christian individuals, and of a Christian society, was born in the English Reformation. When England came to be seen as a new Israel. With English writer and parliamentarian, John Lyly, who spoke in 1580 of God's special care for England, as his 'chosen and particular people', as his new Israel. An idea that would come to blossom after 1588, when England was miraculously saved from the invading Spanish armada.

The idea of civil freedom became especially strong in England during the English civil war, and under Cromwell. And in 1644 John Milton saw that

England was called by God, to precede other nations, in setting up a free society, that would become the fulfilment of the Reformation. And civil freedom, the civil realisation of individual Christian freedom, came to pass.

The Christian vision, of a free society, based on the Christian freedom, would become God's gift to the world, through the English people. Leading to the American puritans to create a society of universal, individual, equal, freedom, based on freedom in Christ. As the social fulfilment of the Reformation. The largest realisation of the Apostolic vision of a new humanity, in Christ. In the form of modern western democratic society. To the modern western democratic nation, we call Australia.

The heart is restless until it finds its rest in God. So said St Augustine.

The heart of the nation is restless. It is searching for God. For the home that it once had, but has lost.

Lost, like a sheep without a shepherd, in the irreligious, secular ideology of our day. In a non-religious interpretation of society. Whether in the form of civil religion, secular liberalism, atheist socialism, or secularised ideas of redemption, the many theories of so-called liberation, so-called reconciliation, on offer today.

Leading not to the fulfilment of their tempting promises. But to the alienation of society. To the public crisis of legitimacy that is now there in society.

For which the only solution, is to return home.

Home, to Australia's Christian religious heritage.

Home, to Australia's Christian religious English, migrant and indigenous Christian.

Home, to Christian unity, to a new, ecumenical, pluralist unity.

Home, to the people of God.

To a new Australian unity, based on a new religious unity.

And someday we'll all be together once more
When all the ships come back to the shore
Then I realize something I've always known
I still call Australia home.

No matter how far
Or how wide I roam
I still call Australia home.

Amen.

The Prayers of the Faithful

Prayer for the world situation, and for the world situation of the church.

To the response, 'We ask this in Jesus' name' the response is 'Amen.'

Our Father

Your promise to us in Jesus is that whatever we ask in his name, he will do it.
We claim your promise today.

Thank you that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself, and have given us the ministry of reconciliation, the ministry of Christ, and of the Apostles. Thank you that have elected us to carry out your purposes in history, and to fulfil our social responsibilities as Christians, for which we come to pray today.

Father, accept the prayers we offer you today.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Father,

Thank you that in Christ you revealed yourself as the eternal God who searches out with reconciling every individual who is lost, thereby placing an eternal value on the life of every individual, leading to the principle of individual freedom, as the basis of a social order of justice and peace, corresponding to your own, eternal kingdom.

Father, we repent of our failure to uphold the principle of individual freedom within our society, and to uphold a social order of justice and peace, in correspondence to your kingdom.

Father, forgive us, heal us, and renew us by your Holy Spirit, for our ministry of the reconciliation of the world to You in Christ.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Father,

Thank you that in Christ the principle of the English revolution of individual liberty is your gift to the world, the basis of modern western democratic society, and the fullest realisation within history of the Apostolic vision of a new vision for the human race of universal, individual liberty.

Father, we repent of our failure to uphold the vision, ministry, and mission of Christ within society.

Father, forgive us, heal us, and renew us by your Holy Spirit, for our ministry of the reconciliation of the world in Christ.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Father,

Thank you that you call us to be a light and a blessing to all the nations of the world, by our proclamation of the liberating power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Thank you that in Jesus Christ you have liberated the life of every individual from every political order, from every final claim over the life of the individual citizen.

Thank you that this liberation of the world in Jesus Christ, is a present participation, a true anticipation, of your future kingdom. When, at Christ's return, you will come in the fulness of your glory, replacing the present human political order of this world, with your own divine rule, over the entire human race. In final liberation of the world from every rule of individuals over all other individuals, of every exercise of control of human beings over one another. In final liberation of the tension between the individual and society. By the final replacement of every human political order, with the divine order, with your divine rule, over all things, on earth, as it is in heaven.

Thank you that this day of Your Favour, your Justice, your Liberation of the world in Christ, is good news to the oppressed, it is liberty to the captives, it is sight to the blind, it is release to the prisoners. Thank you that the message of the Gospel brings comfort to all who mourn, beauty for all who live in the ashes

of despair in this world, the oil of gladness for those who mourn, it brings praise to every faint spirit. It brings forth a people who will be oaks of righteousness, a people who you have planted, that they might display Your glory. They will raise up the former generations, they will repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

Father, we know that where there is no vision, the people perish. We repent of our spiritual blindness, leading to our failure to proclaim the good news of Your Kingdom, the good news of your liberation, to the world, leading to the people perishing in darkness, in a land of deep darkness, with no light to light their path.

Father, forgive us, heal us, and renew us by your Holy Spirit, that we may faithfully proclaim the good news of Your Kingdom, the good news of Your liberation, to the world.

So that the people who are perishing in darkness, and in the shadow of death, will come to see your great light, that upon them, your light may come to shine once more.

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.