

Sermon

'Aunty Pauline'

Christ the King, Year B 2021, 2 Sam 23:1-7, Ps 132, Rev 1:4b-8, Jn 18:33-37



My Auntie Pauline stood at around four foot. A religious nun, within our family, she stood tall. Her eyes sparkled. She was full of life.

I remember as a boy being at a family party. We are blessed to be part of a large family. The living room was very noisy, and crowded. It was like being in a mosh pit, in the family living room. There she was, in her nun's habit, in the thick of it. Suddenly, out of the blue, a child asked her a

question, ‘Auntie Pauline, what does Jesus require of us?’ You could have heard a pin drop. The room, the world it seemed, stood still. Turning around to face the child, Auntie Pauline smiled lovingly, and with sparkling eyes, said simply, ‘Acknowledge him...Simply acknowledge him.’

At the end of her life, knowing that her time had come, Dad and I had the privilege of being with her, in a convent in Geelong, on the day of her death. There she was, her tiny, humble body, in her tiny, humble room. Her smile, her sparkle, was gone. It was her hour. Out of the blue, mid conversation, Auntie Pauline’s gaze turned suddenly away from us, fixing themselves on something, someone, at the end of the bed. Dad and I looked up. We could not see what she saw. But we could feel it. Someone, there in the room with us. There in the room with Pauline. After about 30 seconds, or a minute, Pauline’s vision, her trance, her transfiguration, ended, as suddenly as it began. She became present to us again. ‘That was him’, she said simply. ‘Jesus. Standing there. At the end of my bed.’ Peacefully, as if it was the most natural thing in the world that could have happened. Shortly after, seeing that she was tired, we left. The next day we received the news that Auntie Pauline had passed away.

Anyone who acknowledges Jesus, in this world, Jesus will acknowledge, in the next. ‘In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places’ Jesus said. All who acknowledge him, in this mortal life. God will acknowledge

them, in eternal life. He will fulfil their earthly life. Complete their earthly life. ‘Acknowledge him...Simply acknowledge him.’

In our Old Testament readings today, we hear that the history of Israel was a history of promise. A promise for a human king, who would also be divine. By the hand of the promised Messiah, the reign of God himself would come into the world.

And that is the point of the Christmas story. Revealed today at Christ the King. ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing.’ We hear in the sentence of today. ‘For the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of God, and of his Messiah. And he will reign for ever and ever.’ We read in the Book of Revelation.

‘Aunty Pauline, what does the Lord require of us?’ ‘Acknowledge him. Simply acknowledge him.’

In the kingdom of this world, the self reigns. In the kingdom of God, the self is put in its proper place.

And so the Christian church prays this morning for the world around it:

‘Everlasting God, whose will is to restore all things in your well-beloved Son, our Lord and King: grant that the people of earth, now divided and

enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his gentle and loving rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.'

In our epistle this morning we read the beautiful words from Paul:

'Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.'

Jesus is the firstborn from the dead, because of his faithful witness to God, in his earthly life. Jesus is the truth. Because all who follow him, all who are a faithful witness to God, in this earthly life, God will raise up, in the next. In the New Testament, God's promise now, the promise of history now, is resurrection life. Eternal, resurrection life, beyond the empty promises of this world. Eternal life, that is the fulfilment of our lives in this world.

'Jesus is the ruler of the kings of the earth'. The human race, the individual human being, the kings of the earth, must acknowledge him, if they are to enter into salvation. Jesus is the way and the truth and the life. He is the way to the Father. All people - princes, Premiers and Prime Ministers – are called to acknowledge him. The one true King. The one true authority.

“Politics is downstream of culture. And culture is downstream of faith.”
Said Karl Schmude, the founder of Campion College.

‘It’s very unclear that Western nations without transcendent belief can prevail in the long run.’ Said Greg Sheridan, in the Australian, this week.

There is no future for Western society, based on the creature alone. Based on the human creature, in the place that belongs to God alone.

There is a future for western society, only with a return to the Christian religion. Only by the relation of the human creature, to the Creator God. A relation based on self distinction. The self discintion of the human creature, from the one God. Revealed in Jesus Christ, The messiah of God. The one true King. The kingdom of God himself.

In the kingdom of this world, the self is at the center. In the kingdom of God, the self is put in its proper place. Here, in the kingdom of God, the arrogant are humbled, and the humble are exalted. Here, in the gentle rule, the justice and peace, of the unshakeable, upside down, kingdom of God himself.

What does the Lord require of us?

Acknowledge him. Simply acknowledge him.