

Notes on a Pentecost Theme: 2007

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“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.” (Acts 2.4)

And those who were there responded -

“... in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.” (Acts 2.11)

This is why we celebrate Pentecost – to tell everyone about God.

It takes religion from Judaism to Christianity
from the specific to the general
from them to us

Finally the good news of Israel’s God is for every one of God’s children, no longer the chosen few.

Salvation is for anyone who follows Christ.

Unfortunately, some brothers and sisters say yes, so long as you follow Christ like I follow Christ (coz I’m right)

But this is NOT what scripture teaches

Wasn’t that the problem with Jesus? Sharing the good news of the Kingdom with the unworthy – tax collectors, prostitutes, Gentiles ...

So, to whom are we to share the good news of “God’s deeds of power”?

Who do you talk to?

When you speak, who is listening?

How you talk makes the difference.

Christianity has a long tradition of missionaries – who truly shared God’s “deeds of power”

Those who were successful fed, clothed, healed – they used the language that the people could understand

THEN they used words (myriad of translations of the bible)

Deeds speak loudly of Christ to the community too

For example the Salvation Army have very good public image and support because of how our community perceive they care for those in need

In Anglican tradition in Perth, there are the Community of the Sisters of the Church, most well-known of these is Sister Kate.

Sr Kate and others began Parkerville Children’s Home early last century, a very progressive home for it’s time. She was forcibly retired by Abp LeFanu and didn’t take well to that. So, using the example of the work at Parkerville, she encouraged the businessmen of Perth to donate money with which she built the Queen’s Park Children’s Home (also known as Sr Kate’s and now

called Manguri)*. What a woman!! Stories go that none of the men dare refuse this nun. She continued her 'disagreement' with Abp LeFanu to the end of her life – although a chapel was built at Queens Park, she would not allow him to consecrate it, and that is how the home was taken into the Uniting Church because her Protestant assistant took over after her death.

How do we communicate?
What Gospel do we preach – in word and deed?
How do we speak about “God’s deeds of power”?

In my current ministry, I care for families of all Christian denominations (as well as people of other faiths and no faith). I am thankful for my experience in the church which has enabled me to pray with families responsive to their church affiliation – Charismatic Christians pray in a different form to Orthodox Christians, to Anglicans, to Churches of Christ. We need to speak the same language if we are to communicate.

Public hospitals have patients from different social groupings – for example the Liaison Nurse for Aboriginal Families was encouraged by his supervisor to wear a suit to work, to look professional, he knew that a suit would be a barrier to his care for indigenous people.

The Mercy Sister I work with said recently she is embarrassed arriving in a car to visit the poor who have no car – nevermind she had a little Getz, one of the cheapest vehicles on the road!

Communication is not always verbal, indeed, very little is verbal. It is a touch, our presence, being there when times are difficult and not running away (even if we want to!)

Prayer: That all of us are filled with the Holy Spirit and begin to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gives us ability.” AMEN

*details of this story in published paper in the Battye Library in Perth by J. McCracken “A Penny for the Ponies: The History of the Community of the Sisters of the Church (1901-1929)”