

## Homily - Be Reconciled Luke 15;1-32

It's been another big week in International relations. We had our first visit of an Indonesian head of state – President Yudhoyono – who made a magnanimous gesture of condolence to the families of the Balibo five – expressing that the Indonesians feel their pain and grief . It was a small but important step towards reconciliation .

By contrast we had US Vice President Joe Biden visit Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories on a further bid at peace, only to be greeted by an Israeli Govt decision to build a further 1600 Jewish housing units on Palestinian land in East Jerusalem. This Australian newspaper headline says “Israel wrecks Mid East peace process”. Anyone with a heart for peace in the Middle East could only be exasperated in the unbelievable opposition to reconciliation that some players in the area still have .

These two different approaches to relationships were the subject of Jesus teaching in today's Gospel . He had sinners wanting to be reconciled, and scribes and Pharisees complaining about that . So he told them this marvelous parable - of one son who squanders his fathers inheritance , but desires to be welcomed back; of a father who is generous and forgiving ; and of another son who is jealous and resentful. We've all heard it many times, but it remains central to reminding us of the ways we can deal with relationships.

I think it's also provides us with insight into the different perspectives on how we might relate at times to roles we find ourselves involved in.

In some situations we might find ourselves as the younger son . This parable might remind us of how selfish we have become , but of how loving God or another significant person can be if we would but turn back to ask forgiveness.

The parable might help us to see ourselves in another situation as the jealous older brother and remind us of our hypocrisy . We might be reminded of how generous our God or another significant person has already been to us, and how we should warmly welcome our estranged brother or sister back .

In another situation we might become aware that we might be in the role of the father . I suspect that there are a few parents here who have had one or more of their children act as the younger or older son in the parable. And so we are challenged to be gracious and forgiving . I know that's a hard ask at times – when we've been hurt , disrespected , or rejected . Indeed the actions of the father that Jesus describes would have been even more astounding to the people of Jesus time . The father saw the son a long way off , ran to him and clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Fathers in Jesus time just didn't do that . Even today we still have to encourage fathers to hug their children , even when they haven't been naughty !

Jesus gives us a prescription for personal relationships and a prescription for inter-communal relationships that we should be following, if we are to truly follow of Jesus.

Of course the first step , the first initiative has already come from God as indicated in St Paul's letter to the Corinthians. God has reconciled us to himself thru the life death and resurrection of Jesus. But he gives us the work of handing on his reconciliation. He calls us to be ambassadors for Christ , to appeal to others to be reconciled to God and to each other.

Two weekends ago I had the wonderful experience of attending another Men Alive weekend . Men alive is a renewal programme put together by Robert Falzon from our parish with some others , who have now run 57 weekends for 3,500 men across Australia. The central hinge of the weekend includes the opportunity to experience sacramental reconciliation. Once again we witnessed amazing stories of lives being renewed and reinvigorated thru this sacrament . One man publicly shared a story of how he had born a burden of anger and hatred for almost 40 years against a certain group of people , and how thru the sharings of the weekend he realised he had to forgive them and ask mercy for himself, for the wrong that he had done . He was released thru the sacrament of reconciliation and then empowered thru the sacrament of the Eucharist to work at making the necessary changes in his life.

Having an attitude of reconciliation may not be easy for us in some circumstances . But we can be encouraged by the actions of others .

On Friday our son Michael was interviewed on Richard Viedlers Conversations hour – ABC radio 612 . Richard asked Michael what was the most significant thing he had witnessed in his last 6 years in East Timor . Michael responded by then describing the attitude of forgiveness and reconciliation that Xanana Gusmao and Jose Ramos Horta had displayed towards those that had formerly opposed , hurt , tortured and even killed their family members . He said that if they who suffered so much - suffered beyond our comprehension really , could display such an attitude of forgiveness and reconciliation , how much easier should we as Australians be prepared to be reconciled and be reconcilers in the situations we find ourselves in.

You can listen to that full one hour interview on the ABC 612 Internet site.

So in conclusion a simple yet vital message today .

Be reconciled to God . Celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation before Easter if you haven't recently done so . You are guarantee of forgiveness and liberation.

Let us try to be reconciled with our family members and neighbours . Let us Have an attitude of reconciliation even if it is not reciprocated - Let us Allow God to work on hardened hearts .

May we do our bit to be ambassadors for Christ , that we and others might live in the freedom and peace and love and joy that Christ desires for us.