

Homily: if only the whole people of God were prophets and the Lord gave his spirit to them all.

Numbers 11.29

The visit by Archbishop Mark Coleridge to our parish last week was a significant moment in our community life. He is the spiritual leader of all Catholics in Queensland, with diverse and far reaching responsibilities in the wider community , and we are very privileged to get a comprehensive visit from him so early in his tenure .

In a small addendum to that visit, I was meeting with Bishop Brian Finnigan on another matter on Friday and he mentioned to me how Archbishop Mark had come back and shared with the Episcopal Council. what a wonderful impression he had of our parish, and how excited he was about the hope and enthusiasm that FrTuong and many parishioners showed . He was particularly delighted to meet our new Parish Council. I think all of us would be appreciative for those members that volunteered for that important role in our community. Thank you for serving us in that ministry .

As I've indicated in the bulletin cover the Archbishop plays a unique role in our community, in particular, he is our primary teacher in matters of faith. Indeed, in the person of Mark Coleridge. We have a teacher of great learning and experience. He has doctorate in sacred scripture and is a speaker of world renown. He's going to be a blessing to us I'm sure. He gave a great homily to us last week on the spirituality of service and you can read his other recent homilies on the Archdiocesan website.

The one aspect of today Scriptures that I think is most significant for us, is in our first reading from the book of Numbers. The setting of this reading is in the wilderness when the people of Israel were on their 40 years of journey through the desert. Many of them were struggling with their understanding of faith and

allegiance to God. Some had taken to worshipping false gods. We hear that the Lord came down in a cloud and spoke to Moses and shared some of his spirit with 70 elders and as a result of this, they were able to prophesy. Now in this context, the word prophesy really means to teach, and to call back people to God. That was what was needed at that time for that community. Moses couldn't be expected to do all of the ministry himself – others needed to be called in. So the Lord shared his spirit with a number of them- significant number- 70 - that that might encourage the people to turn back to God.

Of course that is something that's very much on the mind of the Archbishop, and certainly on the mind of many of us here in the parish. We know there are many people in our wider community that have seemed to have turned away from God. There are many Catholics whose participation in the life of the community is very minimal. Like the situation in the time of Moses, we are in a time when we need to call on people, welcome them back into our community, to invite them into relationship with us and restore and refresh their relationship with God. We might not be able to do that as a community, unless we have people that are specifically focused and prepared for that. We need elders and leaders like Moses had, that are open to the blessing of the spirit that they might have the courage to go out and encourage those that are wondering in spiritual deserts. This of course is the work of evangelization. I know some people find this task a little scary. But with the spirit of God in us, we just have to make ourselves available and teachable. Of course we need a message to share and some of us will need some training for this mission. That should be a normal part of our Christian lives that we should undergo regular personal and spiritual development. It was great that so many people attended at parish mission. We had some great input there but now I particularly want to commend to everyone here the Men Alive weekend that is occurring in two weeks time. This will build upon the work of the parish mission, and provide some more teaching experiences and growth in spirituality. As some of you know, I've been involved in a number of Men Alive weekends and found them to be outstanding experiences.

We would ask that all of you pray for this weekend that's coming up. We ask you to encourage the men in your lives to take an opportunity to receive some good

teaching and some good manly fellowship - to become men fully alive fully alive at the spirit of God, that can empower them. We would ask you to pray for the weekend's protection from any evil interference. We'd particularly ask you to pray during that weekend for an outpouring of grace on all involved.

We are grateful for the many women who ministered in our churches. They provide involvement in so many ministries. Proportionally, fewer men are involved and Men Alive provides a context where men can see the possibilities of using their unique giftedness to make the world a better place. May we be excited at the prospect of fanning the flames of some more men in our parish being fully alive, fully committed to Jesus, filled to overflowing with the Holy Spirit, empowered and encouraged, to take their rightful role in God's mission in our parish.

Of course ,Mission should be the object of all of us here, to be people who are utilized by God into transforming the world. There are as many ways of doing mission as there are gifts and abilities of all of us here. Every week we will have opportunities that God provides us to interact with friends or even family members where we can encourage them in faith and invite them to participate in the life of our community.

Archbishop Mark Coleridge's favorite metaphor, that he has repeated time and time again- I'm surprised he didn't mention last Sunday- was that we have been circling the wagons and been in a defensive posture for too long, worried about attacks and criticisms from others. He now thinks it's time to uncircle the wagons and move out, move out into new territory an engaged with the world. Moveout, and take the risk to share our faith with others because truly, we have a pearl of great price in our faith. We know with absolute certainty that God will be with us, that God will give his spirit to us, and will help us to speak in his name and build up his kingdom.

May spirit of God come down all upon all of us, that we might prophesy and announce the gospel of the Lord in the market places of our daily lives .