

## HOMILY – WAITANGI DAY, 2018

As on any Sunday, we gather to celebrate Jesus' resurrection – all that this means, to Jesus personally, and to ourselves personally. We anticipate the outcome of our lives; of all human history, and begin to savour what lies ahead. That future is ours through union with Christ, which is what our celebration of Eucharist is about.

But today we are focusing also on Waitangi. So does this also belong to our celebration of Eucharist? Well, to whom shall we listen? There are those who say: “keep religion out of politics” (lest it interfere with business); and there are those who say: “keep politics out of religion” (in favour of a sanitized religion.)

There is, of course, an autonomy that properly belongs to people's social, political and economic lives, and must be respected. But it is not absolute: Pope Paul VI reminded us that the Gospel is to permeate every aspect of our lives. And the Second Vatican Council taught that “the split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be considered among the worst errors of our time”.

Our life of faith and our social, political and economic lives cannot be kept apart. Celebrations of Eucharist that do not flow over into our lives, according to Pope John Paul II, fail the criterion by which the authenticity of our Eucharist is to be judged. And, according to Pope Benedict VI, leaves our celebration of Eucharist “intrinsically fragmented”.

This is why the Church's social teaching is so important: it makes the connections! - between our faith and our ordinary lives. So let's reflect a little on Waitangi. It involves a treaty in which the Crown undertook to protect and respect the rights of Maori; a treaty that was then breached and dishonoured by the Crown itself; with on-going consequences into our own day.

We need look no further than events that took place within our own diocese a few years after the treaty was signed. At Parihaka. Last year, the Hon. Chris Finlayson, on behalf of the Crown, went to Parihaka for a reconciliation ceremony. He explained why we cannot turn a blind eye to the past.

QUOTE from his speech: see if these lines don't reflect both natural law (redressing injustice) and Christian faith (concerning reconciliation):....

Those of you here today know the history of Parihaka, but it is important to put the events of the past on the record. First, I want to say something about Tohu Kakahi and Te Whiti o Rongomai.

As young men, both received formal instruction in traditional Maori knowledge and in Christian theology. Their spiritual and political views, and the principles that came to underpin the community they established at Parihaka, therefore drew on ideas from Pakeha and Maori systems of thought. Both men had lived for a time at the mission farm at Warea on the Taranaki coast.....

I now want to outline what happened at Parihaka. I do this because while these events are among the most shameful in the history of this country, they are even today not known or understood. In part this is because the history of Parihaka is an uncomfortable one. For some it may raise questions about our history that we would rather not confront. For many people here

today, the history of Parihaka is uncomfortable for a different reason: for them the sense of grievance that arises from that history is anything but historical. It is remembered and lived every day. That is why the Crown comes today offering an apology to the people of Parihaka for actions it committed almost 140 years ago.....

Ultimately, there can be no reconciliation where one party remembers while the other forgets....

A few short years after guaranteeing to Maori the undisturbed possession of any lands they wished to retain, the Crown began systematically to dispossess the tangata whenua of Taranaki of their lands. By purchase deed, force of arms, confiscation and statute, the Crown took the rich lands of Taranaki and left its people impoverished, demoralized and vilified. The Crown reiterates the apologies it has made to iwi of Taranaki for its many failures to uphold the principle of partnership and good faith that the Treaty of Waitangi embodies, and for the immense harm those actions have caused to generations of Maori in Taranaki.....

Notice how conscience unsettles us, even as nation, until injustice is redressed. And notice the influence of Christian/Catholic faith on the formation of Tohu and Te Whiti and their now famous practice of peaceful, non-violent protest. It's a real charisma. On the marae at Parihaka one can experience of deep sense of peace.

It's interesting that on Nov 7<sup>th</sup> each year the people of Parihaka come together to celebrate that charisma – while we, as a nation, on Nov 5<sup>th</sup> commemorate acts of violence that took place in far away Britain. Which of these two events should we be commemorating?

Mr Finlayson was there that day to offer the Crown's/nation's apology. The treaty settlement would come later; reconciliation had to come first. What Maori call "mana whenua" is about a relationship with the land that is not reducible to treaties and transactions; it goes much deeper. The German missionary Riemenschneider who worked throughout Taranaki in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century recalls being told by Maori: "our land is our greatest good; to us it is like our mother's breast". You can't put a price on that.

That's why Pope John Paul II could say that ecological concerns are moral and spiritual before they are economic. I am also reminded of Pope Benedict's teaching that our economic planning must include room for "gratuitousness", compassion, giving, and forgiving – not as things to be attended to afterwards, but *built into* economic planning. How foreign this must sound to those for whom "the business of business is business". According to Catholic Social Teaching, "the business of business is people". That coincides with the Maori proverb: "what is the greatest thing in the world? It is PEOPLE: he tangata, he tangata, he tangata.

This is where the Gospel, the practices of our faith, and social, political and economic concerns converge: all of them must stand before the tribunal of authentic human development; must be measured against the criterion on what makes life more truly human, more fully human, more truly free.