

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Reflection on the Sunday readings

1 Samuel 16; 1, 6-7, 10.13 – Samuel anointed by the Lord

Psalm 22 – The Lord is my Shepherd

Ephesians 5; 8 – 14 – You are children of the light

John 9; 1 – 41 – The healing of the man born blind

It is difficult to know what to write this weekend.

On the one hand, the scriptures are very rich and teach us so much about how Jesus brings light to our lives and how we are anointed and chosen through our baptism to be light ourselves ----- but on the other hand, we find ourselves living in strange times.

One thought is this.

When I worked at the Briars, we would sometimes do what we called 'trust games' or 'trust exercises' with secondary school age young people. We would always be very careful about not forcing people into uncomfortable situations and working safely, but we would purposefully introduce an element of risk into an activity and help young people learn from what it meant to trust others.

Often this element of risk involved one person being blindfolded and being led by another through a task.

When I went to the Briars myself with my secondary school, the then Director – a priest who shall remain nameless – led our group in just such an exercise. We all went on a walk through nearby woods which went along a ridge at the top of a high cliff. Stopping in line, each of us in turn was blindfolded and led further along the path. We were brought to stand in a particular spot, the priest held us tightly around our waist and we were asked to remove the blindfold.

Once the blindfold came off, we saw that we had been led to stand on the edge of the cliff.

Trust only really comes into play when we are at risk and depend on someone else to help us cope with and come through that risk.

Being blind – if only for a moment – places us into risky situations that we would normally not think twice about.

The blind man in the Gospel risked placing himself into Jesus' care and trusted that he would be healed – this is the very definition of faith. To have faith is to trust, particularly at times of risk.

There is no doubt that we are in a period of risk in our country.

There is a risk to our health, particularly for those who are older or vulnerable health-wise, there is a risk for businesses whose future is now unsure, there is a risk for institutions like churches that when

we do re-open, people have lost the habit of coming, there is a risk for pupils in school who were expecting to get qualifications

The worst element of this period is that we don't know how this will go – this is not happened in living memory before – and we don't know how and when the crisis will end. The uncertainty is maybe the most frightening element of all this.

So how can our faith help us?

We are standing on the edge of a cliff and we can't see into the present or the future. We have been brought as individuals, as a country and as a church to an isolated spot and we don't know where we are or what is in front of us.

As we stand there, we are held tight so that we will not fall, we will not step into the unknown and we will be brought safely back from the edge – all the time with God holding us tightly and gently keeping us safe from falling.

He guides me along the right path

He is true to his name

If I should walk in the valley of darkness, no evil would I fear.

You are there with your crook and your staff

With these you give me comfort.

Keep safe, follow the advice given, ask for help if you need it and find time to pray so that we remain united as a parish community.

Fr Joe

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Parish website; www.sacredheartcarlton.com – frequent updates, information, ideas for prayer and activities at home with families