

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

The Gospel of John:

Jesus said: Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty.

Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty.

The Todd River is in South East Australia. The Todd River is remarkable because the river flows all the time but most of the time it cannot be seen.

Once or perhaps twice a year, the river erupts and suddenly the waters gush forth and the river bed is suddenly, literally, in full flood. When the river erupts and flows, the whole community leave what they are doing, the local high school pupils line the river banks to celebrate the sight of the water, to celebrate the life giving water which brings growth, cleansing, hope, often in the midst of incredible drought.

And there are years of drought when the waters do not appear - but the Todd River flows.

Geologists, geographers will tell you about water tables and shifting sands but the community along the banks of the Todd River wait and watch and hope because they know the river flows and it is that knowledge which makes real to us Jesus words: "Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty."

The Todd River is the perfect example of what we mean by spirituality. The Todd River is the perfect example of what Lent is all about, knowing that the living waters of God's love flows through our lives whether we always recognise that fact or not and using the days of Lent, the discipline of Lent to go deep, deep, deep into our hearts our very being to recognise the Holy Spirit of God alive, active in who I am and why I am the way I am. To go deep, deep, deep, into our hearts and our very being is why we meet here tonight. We line the banks of the Todd River with Hope. Hope that we will see, recognise, experience God and it is that Hope which makes sense of the psalmist's words we sang only minutes ago –

"Who going through the vale of misery use it for a well and the pools are filled with water."

There is the call to Holiness, Wholeness, Health that is life with God, which flows like the Todd River, ready to bring growth, be creative, to bring experience of life and God, which passes all understanding and yet, and yet, is ours.

That is the legacy of Nelson Mandela's 27 years on Robyn Island. I have quoted many times over the last months the never to be forgotten sight of Nelson Mandela on his release, facing the world's media and after 27 years, the man – Mandela was utterly, utterly present, himself - who am I and why am I the way I am. That's where Forgiveness, Reconciliation, the Truth Commission came from. The Todd River flows deep, deep, deep within our internal wilderness of doubt, confusion, depression. In this celebration of the Eucharist, every time, we receive Holy Communion, we are told we make real, we experience Jesus words, "Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty" they are the words of

which the very ritual speaks, calls to our remembrance, resurrection, of Hope, of eternal life which helps us recognise the truth of the psalmist “Who going through the vale in misery use it for a well and the pools are filled with water”.

There is the psalmists call to Holiness, significantly, on this night, as our Diocesan Synod begins and as we enter a new phase, a new year of Building the Vision of God’s Kingdom in our Diocese of Argyll and The Isles. Significantly, after an inspirational conference day in which we have begun a new phase of reflective living and action. Significantly, on this night we hear, receive, recognise Jesus call to Holiness, Spirituality, and Truth.

Holiness is what that wonderful story of Rachel and Jacob is all about. When the psalmist used the word Holiness she/he used it in terms of what we would call integrity. The integration of every aspect of our life and thought, emotion and desire. The great story of Rachel and Jacob at the well, the reason the Old Testament stories are such a fund of inspiration. These stories are stories of very flawed characters, like me. And yet deep, deep, deep within they know the call of the Holy Spirit to seek God to be with God while being utterly, utterly themselves but in moments capable of noble, holy deeds. Jacob opened the well for Rachel. She was a woman, he should have ignored her and she should have waited. Nobly he facilitated her drawing water but was that only because he found her attractive - motivation is never pure and yet we are called to Holiness, which is why spirituality is so important, constant reflection, seeking the waters of the Todd River of Holiness flowing deep, deep within.

But it is spirituality not novelty. It worries me when people say I enjoyed that service. That is not what worship is about. Candles, incense, our ritual, call to remembrance the living water we do not always see, recognise, experience but which speaks to us of the things that are eternal. That’s what the glorious passage of Philippians is all about Our Lord Jesus Christ ‘emptied’ himself so that we might enter into the very mind of Christ, Son of God who is God, that is the Truth.

Truth is a journey not a destination. The God of Abraham praise as through the howling wilderness our way pursue. Truth is a journey, that the Samaritan woman at the well was invited to pursue with Jesus. She was an outcast but Jesus accepted, forgave, reconciled her to the two great questions of the spiritual life, to the great call to Holiness, to the journey of truth encapsulated in the questions who am I and why am I the way I am.

Whenever as a church, a community, a congregation we face great issues of gender, sexuality, morality. When passions are high and there are those who will leave if we do and those who will leave if we don’t. Truth is a journey not a destination. We seek the mind of Our Lord Jesus Christ - why am I the way I am in passion through which we hear Jesus words -

“Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty”.