

19th SUNDAY OF THE YEAR FOR ST PAUL'S RONDEBOSCH

Gen.37 : 1 – 4, 12 – 28, Ps.105: 1 – 6, 16 – 22, Romans 10 ; 5 – 15, Matt. 14: 22 -32

TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO MOVE FORWARDS IN LIFE TRUSTING GOD TO HOLD THEM UP WHEN NECESSARY

Greetings St Paul' members and friends. No doubt you are surprised to hear my voice. I am Erica Murray . Reeve gave me the gift of preaching to you. May you be blessed by God's gift too.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Today is a special day. We remember WOMAN'S Day, Women's month AND are celebrating the way God lifts us up when we lose hope. All this will help us to cope in the three pandemics around us. COVID 19, GENDER BASED VIOLENCE and STEALING FUNDS MEANT TO HELP COVID 19

The Sea of Galilee is an inland lake. One can see land on the other side. Usually it is calm but can be transformed in a storm is quite frightening. After feeding the 5,000 Jesus sends them to the far side of the lake. The storm erupts and the disciples are scared stiff. Jesus appears to them on the lake. He calls Peter who steps out bravely then his courage fails him. Immediately Jesus reaches out to him. Peter allowed self-doubt to enter his thoughts. That happens to us too. We may move ahead confidently and become overwhelmed by a crisis or problem. The first human response is one of fear and doubt. So too for Peter. We are challenged with a choice. Like Peter we can cry out LORD SAVE ME . The unlimited power and presence of the Resurrected Christ is always with us LO I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS (Mt 28 : 20)

Matthew was trying to encourage the early Christians to be faithful to Christ. The boat was seen as symbolising the faith community who were floundering. Today, in the midst of Carona Virus. We can't even gather in the Church building to worship. Do we, today, trust Jesus to help us move ahead?

The storms we are all facing are COVID 19, GENDER BASED VIOLENCE and thirdly CORRUPTION. We all know what we should do about COVID 19 – KEEP SAFE, WASH OUR HANDS AND WEAR A MASK. There is little we can do about CORRUPTION except by being truthful ourselves in all we do. But what can we do about GENDER BASED VIOLENCE?

Inanda in Kwa Zulu Natal is now the capital for the number of rapes. In Cape Town we used to be the Rape Capital of the world. Nothing to be proud of. Just last week-end a 91 year-old was raped. We have to ask WHY WHY WHY. One of the myths is that if you rape an old woman you will be cured of AIDS.

Firstly we have to accept the fact that most of the world around us is PATRIARCHAL not just South Africa. We have to do what we can where we are .Unless we recognise this reality we can do nothing about it. I want to share with you a story you may have heard before in the English TABLET:

An English visitor to North Africa before the war noted that women walked a respectful distance behind their husbands. After the war, however, this visitor noted , with surprise that the women were now walking in front of the men.

“Yes”, said the chief, “ It is a very good thing There are so many .unexploded landmines still left in this country.”

Secondly we need to act in whatever way possible. For each of us the way will probably be different. Neil Henderson is doing a thesis on GBD. You might like to keep in touch with him as he develops his thesis.

Here is a simple, very simple, way to look around us to identify the GBV around us. Simple but deep. Ask yourself DOES MY PARTNER MAKE ME FEEL SMALL? DOES MY PARTNER PUT ME DOWN? Whenever I have prepared a couple for marriage I see it as my duty to check the answers to these questions.

When I was Rector of St Aidan’s Lansdowne we had a support group for women who were being abused. People who are being abused need a SAFE place to be free to talk. We met in my house AND confidentiality was a requisite. Most abused women are afraid to leave the familiar. Only one member of the group got divorced – the decision came after her EX put a hot iron on her son’s thigh. After filing for divorce she developed a relationship. I refused to marry them for a year to see if any signs of abuse appeared. She met me to work through her abuse. Women who are abused usually link up with another abuser. They are now happily married I am pleased to say. He is not an abuser!

It is usually not a good idea to meet with an abuser to try to HELP. That will lead to more abuse. We do have a duty to report if we are aware of a woman being abused. However, we HAVE to report abuse of a child. We will be held responsible if we fail to report abuse of a child.

I am moving on to some positives. Today is NATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY. I want to share these lovely words from #OneLove:

“Today I want to remind you how POWERFUL & AMAZING you are.
You were Created by God, Blessed by God
Thank you for being such an amazing GIFT.
Happy WOMEN’S MONTH”

Another wonderful positive is the good news of the Gospel today.

I don’t remember whether Reeva has given us HOMEWORK or not. I, too, am a qualified teacher and I believe in HOMEWORK . Here is some pleasurable homework. Find a quiet comfortable place and re-read Matthew’s gospel. Then imagine you are in the boat with the disciples and feel their fear. You see Jesus coming on the water. Jesus calls you by name. What part of your life is it that Jesus wants you to step out towards - towards women, Covid 19, GENDER BASED VIOLENCE, or CORRUPTION? As you face the choice can you ask Jesus to save you. I have meditated on this passage many times especially during retreats. Before Ordination I had an eight-day Ignation Retreat in New York city. As I stepped out I saw sharks in the water. IN the Sea of Galilee there are NO sharks. These sharks represented an unrealistic fear that I woul have to be like some priests who do not keep their word. That was such a freeing moment given by God as a gift. I was able to move forward to Ordination to the priesthood confidently.. I pray that you will be gifted by God in your meditation.

Today we are encouraged to move forward wherever Jesus leads Knowing that Jesus will lift us up as Jesus lifted Peter. ALLELUIA AMEN