

Rev Peter Mayen- sermon on Sunday, 22nd of April 2018, Saint Mark, Evangelist and Martyr.
Readings: Isaiah 62: 6-12 Ps 89: 1-9 Ephesians 4:7-16 Mark 16:16-20.

Let us Prayer:

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

Theme: The community as a Loving family in Christ Jesus.

We have gathered here today as one family of God, inspired by the grace of Christ and filled with love and united to serve one another as Christ's members. We have also come together to celebrate the calling and achievement of Saint Mark the Evangelist and Martyr for Christ's Church. This is important.

Ephesians was a pastoral letter written by the Apostle Paul to Christian communities experiencing a specific situation in their faith and love, questioning how they could follow Christ in the midst of all that was going on in their lives. Paul is pastorally advising us as Christ's redeemed people to be a loving community, to stand up for one another, to reject all forms of divisions and discrimination, but to grow and use our talents for the benefit of all peoples in our communities.

Saint Paul saw the implications and challenges as having true benefit for his loved communities and therefore urged them to uphold moral values that would strengthen them in relationship with one another and to treat each other with love, grace and gentleness. This is because they have a common destiny, their identity is hidden in Jesus the King, and because of Christ's love for the Church. Everybody therefore, has a responsibility to receive one another as brothers and sisters into the family of God.

I believe many people gathering here, the majority of you have experienced the devastation of the 2011 flood in Queensland in one way or another. It's was a tough and difficult life challenging natural calamity. The flood affected many people here all parts of Queensland including our city of Brisbane. We were by then living in Ipswich, the suburb of Goodna suburbs and our house was completely inundated. The loss of lives and properties was huge, but our spirit of fair go and mateship was overwhelming, all Queenslanders were resilient, hanging together, united by true love and grace to help one another. Everyone stood by one another in solidarity of love, peace, recovery and unity. Our local, State and Federal government, Church and various community organization's efficiently provided financial, emotional, social and psychological support in many ways.

I witnessed our great Australian and ethics of true and real moral love and values. The communities supported one another with the utmost love and unity of purpose. I saw families, friends and even strangers, providing food, water and cleaning up the mess after the flood. I was really amazed when peoples from Gold coast drove to my door step in Goodna, just to clean up and fed me. This experience will be in my memory for the rest of my life. This is the real spirit of Australian people, advancing fairness to all in need, of unity in love and support for one another in difficult times. This communal love will perpetually guide us to love more and live in unity, peace and grace of Christ Jesus with each other.

Saint Paul exhortation on love, unity, peace, grace call us to use our gifts in building up the body of Christ together. I think Saint Paul is speaking meaning into our vision and missional statement in which we have promised and committed to uphold each other in building up our Christian community. We have pledged and accepted to be a loving community and to seek to be, "focused in Christ joyful and inclusive, compassionate in witness". All our three centers are on a mission to love and care for the people of God, to seek and imitate Christ's love for all peoples regardless of their nationality, gender and needs. This is very good, we can do it with God's grace. We are already reaching out to the most vulnerable peoples through the works of providing food items in the Pantry office.

We are a loving and compassionate community led by our Christian moral values to love and care for one another in need. I believes Saint Paul's pastoral advice has been embraced, on the right track and embedded in our Parish mission and vision statement. We are a community which is now delivering services on the promises we have put down as guiding principles in the life of our community.

Saint Mark's did it, Saint Paul did it, he became a prisoner even to death because of loving Christ's families, holding on to the teaching of grace and speaking the truth in love. Our church community is also participating in loving those in needs providing spiritual nourishment and material provisions.

We have lay people involved in pastoral care, who are visiting peoples in their homes and hospital. We have church wardens and priest's praying and planning things for the building up of Christ's families. To be a loving family requires more determination, participation, respect for each other, commitment through action and fulfillment for mission with united purpose. Saint Paul precisely illustrated the significance of Christ ascending and descending in death and resurrection gracefully as a fulfillment of our mission, to go out and draw all humanity into the family of God. Christ's love for the Church is now abounding through our imitation of His sacrificial love toward one another and in relationship to God so that we are able to fulfill the promises of living as a loving community.

Saint Paul encourages and exhorts Christian Communities, including our own, to embrace these values learning to be humble, gentle, and patient and to bear with one another in love. Saint Paul did not disregard Christian discords and challenges. But provided ways in which a mature Christian would approaches these with a proper mindset and be confident to all matters of concern within the Christian community. Saint Paul urged those who had been given key leadership roles in the Church to carry out their obligations with love and unity no matter how difficult the issues are. Saint Paul exhorts us to remember that we are call to maintain the unity of the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit, to coexist in harmonious relationships and mutuality as loving community.

Saint Paul said these words " there is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call- one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all, who is over all and through all and in all". These words remind us of our vocation, our mission in this place, they are not empty words, but they have a message which nudges us to hold on to our great commission in which we are reminded to truly speak the truth with love and to speak it peacefully toward each other.

Saint Paul closes with solid emphasis and say "From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love". These words give us meaning and context. They are to be absorbed in our minds and hearts and with the help of the Holy Spirit allowed to transform and form us as we are unrelenting becoming a loving community of Christ Jesus in the world.

Amen.