

## Homily for 30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time 2011

What's love got to do with it?

Apparently, while Australia is pressing the Indonesian Government to free a NSW teenager arrested in Bali on drug offences, something like 35 Indonesian teenagers were held in Australian adult prisons for people-smuggling (*The Australian* 11 October 2011). Some ages are disputed but most are under 18 employed on fishing boats as crew or cooks and caught up in the people smuggling trade. These teenagers from backgrounds of abject poverty mostly speak no English and do not understand where they are. Their parents were not informed of their plight nor have the Indonesian Government sought to help them. We live in a morally ambiguous and contradictory world.

The Lord said to Moses, "You must not molest the stranger or oppress him,... You must not be harsh with the widow or the orphan". It is always the strangers, the widows and children who are the collateral damage of war and turmoil. They fill detention centres all over the world.

The Pharisees had 631 laws by which they observed the covenant. There were often disputes about their relative importance. They try once again to trap Jesus into revealing an ignorance of the Law of Moses. And again he outwits them. They ask for the greatest commandment of the law. But he quotes two of those laws. But these are not just two amongst many. They are the heart of the matter. And what is unique to Jesus is that he puts them on equal billing. You cannot claim to observe one of them if you are not also observing the other. Love of God and love of neighbour are two sides of the one coin so to speak.

The following is a story by a priest from Africa who came to Townsville to work and was appointed to Palm Island parish, an aboriginal community deeply traumatised by events of the past few years. I cannot begin to imagine the experience of such a transition in life as this priest experienced. He writes,

"I am a Catholic priest from Ghana, West Africa. My colleague and I were sent here in Australia to help in the pastoral work of Townsville Diocese. We arrived in Townsville on the 5<sup>th</sup> of September, 2009. In mid November of 2009 I was sent to St Anne's Parish in Palm Island to do pastoral work. Since I was going through cultural shock, I was always sad, lonely and confused. Due to that, I used to go to the beach to sit on the rocks there sometimes, just to watch some boats passing, the beauty of the beach and the sea, the big rocks and the waves of the ocean. Since I was not born near the coast I really admire the scenery.

Once while on my regular visit to the beach, a certain man and his children came for fishing. I was engaged in conversation with him and I told him whom I was, my mission in Palm Island and why I was sitting there alone on the beach. I told him I was feeling sad, lonely and confused. He said, "You have the biggest man to talk to." I asked him who that man was and he pointed to the sky and said "God". I sighed and did not know what to say anymore. Not that I was not praying. I was praying always but my prayers were not yet answered so I was still disturbed.

The man cast his net into the sea just near the beach and to my surprise he caught a lot of fish, very big ones and small ones alike. With the help of his children, he began pulling the net ashore. I could see the fish jumping here and there in the net. Since I was not born near the coast, I was admiring the scene very much.

When the man saw the great number of fish and how big they were, he said to his children, "I need just some small amount. I don't need the very big ones either." the man picked out a small quantity of fish and to my surprise, he asked his children to let the rest go into the sea. For him, he does not have to take the whole lot home. He felt he should return the rest to the sea for anybody who needs to come and fish. More or less his fridge is the sea. How many of us in this world could behave selflessly like this man?

For me, I could see that one of the philosophies of the people I am living with is the spirit of sharing. This man I am talking about also had the right take whatever he and his children caught but he thought of his neighbours and so let go of the rest of the fish. I believe if we all have the spirit of sharing like this man, the world will be a better place to live." Fr Daniel Djodjowu Mawuko.

Jesus in his very person lived the two commandments of love. It cost him dearly.