

***This is the child protection Sunday and our common message is Lost and Found.*** We lose things all the time. How excited are we when we found something that we thought we had lost forever... That's the feeling of joy and relief. Jesus tells us that's how God feels when we turn back to him. And hopefully that's how we feel...full of joy because we have found God in our lives as well. The gospel invites us today to cherish the small acts and intimacies of God. Jesus tells us that small things are important to God and will not allow them to be lost. The lost coin and lost lamb belong to a litany of small things that God will not let go of. We are invited to see through different lens. *How do we see ourselves and others?* This man welcomes sinners and eats with them. Jesus acted with them how He saw God and how we might see God. Like God, Jesus receives "Trashy" people and eats with them: the lost, the rejected, the not listened to, the disregarded, the excommunicated, the people who had violated the law; the people excluded from synagogue or temple....***Who is lost? We are supposed to be in their business? What lens are we using...?*** People who came to Jesus and listened to him knew they were accepted despite the fact that their human dignity was thrashed by family, and the religious and social system. This is a very appropriate gospel for this Safeguarding Children Sunday because both talk about the LOST and FOUND. The Royal Commission shows that the Catholic Church has so much regret in action and attitude and the healing process will take

long time and many of those who have been lost should still be found. Unfortunately some people in the church have been LOST; some people have lost their way and have abused their authority and need to find their way back to God. We are praying for all of them. As a Church we have to re-find the Spirit of Jesus in our daily lives. We are a church here, right now, at Blacktown when we come together to pray and receive Jesus and as we leave the church on Sunday we are challenged to answer the question *how can we be FOUND*; meaning, *how can we support each other in following Jesus, in making right choices, in making up for what we have done wrong*. Following Jesus, the good Shepherd we need to find together the ways to support each other every day, finding and of course helping the one who is lost and this include the really lost: religious leaders who fail to understand Jesus' message, who fail to see as Jesus does; who cannot respond with love and mercy as he does. There is not just ignorance, but a willed ignorance regarding the abuse of children in the past; regarding asylum seekers. We don't want to know their stories. To avoid listening and responding we exaggerate falsehoods about them. We contribute to their dehumanization. Each act against the dignity of the child, of the asylum seeker, of the mentally ill person in our midst, the homeless person or the addicted person is a failure to recognise the sanctity of the other. The biblical ideal is that every human life is sacred...the "bottom line" should be the creation of a world of love

and caring, and that the best way to prevent these kinds of acts is not to turn ourselves into a society in which social justice, love and compassion become only a distant memory. We are interconnected and called to share compassion and peace. We have love to share; to experience ourselves as sisters and brothers. It is who we are in God's heart that needs a focus adjustment.

The Church is more than a building; the Church is more than an 'Institution.' WE are the CHURCH. YOU are the CHURCH. The Church is a sign of God's love on earth. You are the sign of God's love on earth.

How are we going to invite others who may be lost, to find God again in their lives?

How are we going to be the positive experience of Church to others?

*Fr Luis Herrera*

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