

27 July 2014

In today's first reading Solomon asks the Lord for the heart to discern between good and evil. Solomon in fact asks for the gift of wisdom. Discerning between good and evil is a relatively easy task. We saw an act of monstrous evil on the world stage only a week ago in the attack on the Malaysian Airlines plane. It was brutal, it was callous and it was heartless. The brutality of such an event has left us speechless; the callous disregard for human life and dignity in the way the crash site was treated was nothing short of appalling. Grieving families now grieve even more.

The bible and human history have been struggling for centuries about the problem of evil. How can a loving, kind and merciful God allow human beings to wreak such barbaric behaviour against each other? What lies within the human heart that allows violence to be the first and only solution to a problem? It commences with violence on our streets where people no longer feel safe and climaxes with acts of appalling terrorism on the international stage. Innocent people going about their business become hapless victims of monstrous evil on a huge scale. And the suffering is immense.

I'm sure all of us are like Solomon, searching desperately for the gift of wisdom to understand and make sense of events such as these. And yet what words can adequately help us to understand or explain or interpret blowing an international airline out of the sky? People of faith who lived centuries before us had within their hearts the same burning question, 'Why, O God, is there such evil around us? Why does the human spirit get overtaken by forces of such darkness?' For us who are a people of faith, this reality chips away at our confidence. We belong to a parish community and the wider Church; we seek unity, justice, compassion; we welcome people from various lands and cultures; young and not-so-young belong here and feel free to celebrate the gift of faith. Why does the evil seem so much greater when goodness abounds around us?

In today's Gospel, Jesus continues a valuable lesson about the kingdom of God, about seeing with the new eyes of faith, looking for the pearl or the treasure of great price. At the moment, the pearl and treasure we so desperately are in search of is the great gift of peace; peace for troubled

hearts, peace in troubled lands, peace where there is war and conflict, peace where there is suffering and oppression, peace when the innocent become victims and have no voice. One is tempted to jump immediately to the first Sunday of Advent where the liturgy looks to Jesus the Prince of Peace to come and visit his people.

None of us are in a position to help resolve the tensions and conflict between Russia and Ukraine. We are not politicians, we are not diplomats, we are not special envoys to the United Nations. However, we are disciples of the kingdom and we are called to bring the peace of Jesus to this parish community, to our families, our neighbourhoods, our places of study, work and sport. This is the 'pearl' of great price; this is the disciple of the kingdom at work finding the treasure in the field; this is the disciple hauling in the great catch and collecting all the good things for the kingdom.