

TRINITY NEWS

Pentecost IX The Listener Luke 6: 12-17

“Let whoever has ears, listen” is an imperative saying that Jesus used on several occasions. Today we listen to him calling his key disciples, the ones who would be called apostles. Some were at work mending nets, one was collecting money according to other information that we have about them. Not one refused at first. They all listened to the voice of Christ. They would have their moments, and one was accused of betraying him. But they all began by going down the road with him, and it would be a costly journey.

We rarely listen attentively. It requires effort to be aware of the flood of thoughts in our minds, set them aside for a few moments, and listen with deep awareness of the other person and what they are saying. As I write this I am thinking of the late Bishop Geoffrey Parker when he was one of my lecturers. He would sit and look at us in a way that gave us no doubt that he was totally focused on our person and our words. He had a way of looking at people with loving compassion and focused awareness. He was the Vice Warden of my seminary and he had known what it was like to be broken in life. He was one of the few holy people that I’ve met in the life of the Church. That is not just a judgement of mine. It was quite obvious to almost everyone who met him. **I don’t think that as a young man I fully appreciated his gift of discerning attention. Can you recall someone like that in your life and regret that you didn’t listen to them more?**

We need to listen attentively to our own feelings, thoughts, words and inner narratives as the “best practice” before we listen to others.

Jiddu Krishnamurti in India searched his highly articulate mind from youth to 90 years of age to let go of past and present superfluous inner chatter and exterior influences. We are all at times aware of a deeper awareness other than what we express as “I think”, “I understand”, “I believe” etc. But we need to pause to give it space to be heard. Otherwise the daily flood of thoughts will drown it out. Krishnamurti was so focused on being free of other influences such as religion, dogmas, moral rules and customs that he did not integrate his individual freedom with the thoughts of wider society. He listened intently to people but sometimes his beautiful modulated answers came too quickly and slid over the real issues for others of different

approaches. When we feel “free at last” and content with it, we want to share it only in the way that we achieved it and now feel it. The converted person always wants to convert the other in the same mode.

I have at times been fearful of not loving enough. But intention is also crucial. It is never more so than in prayer and public worship. I think that I should have been more intentional about listening to myself and to others over the years. Prayer is about listening to God. What I intend in prayer is what I bring to it. I have listened to more people than I can remember, but how focussed was I on what they were saying, their body language, and the play of feelings on their faces?

I was very overtired in the study group one night in Melbourne after getting up at 4:30 AM to attend lectures at Latrobe University. Camille, one of the students in the Gestalt psychotherapy class, was speaking of her need to be more assertive when I fell asleep. When I woke up all the class was looking at me and Camille told me in no uncertain terms what she thought of me. Later I made my peace with her and she said in front of the class, “Arthur has heard me.” Whew!

Being “heard” is so life enhancing for all of us. Jesus wanted to be heard. He shows signs of having listened intently to others and to his own inner discourse of feelings, thoughts, words, and recalled narratives. It is said that he “knew what was in man”. Jesus’ words at Mark 7:1-23 about “what comes out of a person” are surely the result of deep reflection within himself.

Let us pause to look at our own inner world day by day and use it as “best practice” in listening to others.

Christ listens to us. I sometimes wonder how he can bear it. It is costly to be an attentive listener, but it is life-giving for the other person. “Let whoever has ears, listen”. Let us listen to ourselves, to others, and to God.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Wednesday.

- Bible study, 10:00am.
- Group Discussion, 7:00pm, Parish Office

Thursday.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10:00am, Chapel.

NEXT WEEK’S READINGS:

Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15; Psalm 78; Ephesians 4:17-25; John 6:24-35