

HEADING: Bishop Don Sproxtton 2017 Easter Message: A Christian is reborn in the waters of Baptism

By Auxiliary Bishop Don Sproxtton

About half-way through Lent, I had the very pleasant duty of celebrating the Sunday Mass with the parish in Attadale. We walked together, following the Mass, to the site of the new Church to bless the work that had been just completed of laying the concrete footings and floor. The people have already developed a great sense of joy and anticipation as their Church begins to take shape.

I had a conversation with a group of parishioners who are directly involved in the building project about the proposed baptismal font. The plan is for the font to be located near the main entrance to the Church and provision is to be made for a full immersion font, to be added at a later time.

Our discussion reminded me of the tradition of constructing the font with eight sides. Such a design is a sort of catechesis on an aspect of Baptism.

A Christian is reborn in the waters of baptism, on the first day of the new creation at Easter. Six sides of the font recall the story of creation in Genesis and the seventh reminds us that God rested, having completed his work.

What about the eighth side? This side of the font refers to the Resurrection of Jesus. He had completed his work on the cross, where he died, and then his body was placed in the tomb before the Sabbath rest. The next day, the first day of the new week, he rose victorious from the dead. The first day of the new week is represented by the eighth side of the font and is the first day of the new creation.

There is much to be said for careful reflection and planning when it comes to the building of our churches. Hopefully, the simple design of the elements in the buildings helps us to understand more deeply the meaning of the liturgy and our faith.

Of course, the central part of the Christian faith is that Jesus really died and was raised to life in the Resurrection. At the Easter Vigil, there is a moment of enormous joy as we listen to the Exultet, the Easter Proclamation.

“Let this holy building shake with joy, filled with the mighty voices of the peoples,” are words that we hear sung in the Exultet. Because Christ is truly risen, we are caught up in joy as we listen to the greatest news: “Christ broke the prison-bars of death and rose victorious from the underworld”.

The Baptism we have received has meant that we have become sharers in the victory and glory of Christ. It will be our privilege to see adults and children baptised at the Vigil and on Easter Day. They will become, to an even greater degree, our brothers and sisters who live with the gift of grace in Christ.

The blessing of the Church site in Attadale has begun an exciting journey for the local Catholic community. They will have a building that will give the people a renewed focus as they gather for prayer and worship. From the new parish centre, they will be finding ways to reach out to the wider community in Christ and for Christ.

The building will also be a kind of sanctuary, a place to come for quiet time, prayer and reflection.

This is an aspect of our lives that is in short supply these days. Our lives are so busy and we can become time poor with all the demands that are being placed on us. High quality rest, quiet and calmness, and the time to reflect and take stock are rare but nonetheless seriously important for our balance, wellbeing and spiritual life.

Our churches can be wonderful oases of peace and communion with the Father. I hope that the new church will provide the place for the busy person to stop and be at one with themselves, the others in their lives and God.

The wonderful season of Lent has offered each of us the chance to find the space in our daily lives to be silent and to look within ourselves. This can be confronting and we may not always like what may arise in our consciousness. Yet the silence can be the opportunity for Jesus to reveal his understanding of us and willingness to bring healing and new life for us.

Reflection on where we are and where we have come from in our lives so far, can be very beautiful and reassuring as well. It can rekindle joy and wonder in us as we see more clearly the many ways Jesus has accompanied us and blessed us.

We may have found that making the space in our lives for silence has had a powerful impact on us, so much so that we have decided to keep up the practice.

May the celebration of the Resurrection this Easter draw us all close to our God of infinite mercy. Let it remind us that we are especially blest to have been invited into a new life with Christ. He calls us to live trusting his love and providence, and not in fear. Above all, may we make the most of the opportunities to rest with Jesus.

I pray for each person and every family at Easter, and ask that the Father strengthens your faith in the Risen Christ. With this renewed faith, may our hearts be full of joy as we contemplate how great the love of God is for us, shown in Jesus.

CAPTION (2017 at Attadale Church Blessing.jpg)

Perth Auxiliary Bishop Don Sproxton speaks about Baptism in his 2017 Easter Message.

Photo: Josh Low.