

Reflections from The Hill – Go Fish

“Don’t follow me” read the vinyl spare wheel cover of the Prado that stopped in front of me at the traffic lights the other day, “I’m going fishing.”

I wasn’t sure whether this statement was a reference to the cache of fish that he hoped to have in his esky or to the aroma of decaying marine life that was coming my way from in front. Either way, it was an unpleasant diversion in an otherwise uneventful trip.

Fishing is what a lot of people do here in North Queensland. It seems every third bloke owns a boat of some kind, be it a tinny or a you-beaut Haynes Hunter with twin-100 Yamahas.

I don’t fish and I haven’t got a boat. Me and my family have been well fed for nearly forty years but if we had to rely on my fishing skills to keep us from starvation, then who knows how long we would have lasted.

As I say, I’m no fisherman – and I’m no gardener or chook-raiser either. I’m content to buy my fish, meat and vegs from the supermarket – fresh, frozen, tins or in packets, it doesn’t matter – and have my Cheese prepare them in the fantastic way she does. You only have to look at me to see that this has been a successful this strategy.

When it comes to Christianity I’d have to confess something the same: I’m no fisherman. I’m actually secretly hopeful that whatever it is I need to survive – and for it to be any benefit – will be down at the local church for me to bring home on Sunday.

As for sharing that stuff with anyone else, well, I’m not that generous, although I will do the washing up if I’m asked.

According to surveys by George Barna, only about half the number of Christians in the world (about 53% by his reckoning) feel a sense of responsibility to tell others about their faith. That means that the other half are content to let someone else do the telling.

I wonder about the 53%, though: how many actually share their faith with someone else rather than simply feel a responsibility to do so? Five percent? Twenty? One?

In the Gospel Reading for the Ordinations at the Cathedral this Sunday night, we get a bit of a handle on the answer to that question. We’ll hear these awesome words: “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.”

In its context, it’s quite a short reading: Jesus is walking around the lake, yakking to people. I wonder if, that day, He thought about its symbolism in the bigger picture of things. Whatever the answer to that, I’m sure that He saw more than blue water and bobbing boats.

I wonder whether, to Him, the lake represented the world and the boats floating in the water said something to Him about His mission. Maybe the boats were, to Him, symbols of what He was about to plant.

Maybe when He saw the fisherman, He thought of those he wanted to have on board with Him. Maybe the nets represented His appeal, claiming souls for eternal life, who knows?

One thing I know is this: you and I have been given an invitation to join Jesus in a fishing expedition.

It's not an expedition that will show us how to nurse the sick fish back to life or to give extra fish food to those that are under-nourished, although that might be part of it.

It's not an expedition to find out how many different varieties of fish there are or to influence the way they live, although that might be a part as well.

No. A fishing expedition is about catching fish. That means it's about getting those piscatorial creatures out of the water and into the Eskies.

Of course, The Book doesn't put it like that. The Book talks about being a follower of Jesus who, himself, put in the hard yards when it came to hooking people for His Kingdom: fishermen, tax agents, sheep herders, madmen, ladies with dubious lifestyles and heaps of others.

Then that same Book talks about Him making us fisher folk, just like Him. As we follow Him, it says, so He makes us like Him, a top fisherman and, as we've figured it out, that means that we'll have to go fishing ourselves.

"Follow Me", He says, "so that I can fashion you, chipping away everything that is not needed, to develop you into a fisher-of-men."

Following Jesus is a bit like following the guy with the Prado. The difference is that the odour that comes our way ain't the stench of decay; it's the sweet, sweet smell of Heaven.

Quote of the Week:

"As water never rises above its level, so what we do never rises above what we are. And in our preaching we shall never take people one hair's breadth beyond our own spiritual attainment. We may point to higher things, we may allure to brighter worlds, but when we lead the way, we shall only take them just as far as we ourselves have gone. We shall never take people beyond our own spiritual attainment." (W. H. Griffith Thomas)

One-liner of the week:

Dear GOD, what does it mean You are a Jealous God? I thought You had everything. -Jane

Humour of the week:

A bloke who settled in the Longreach region in the mid 1800s counselled his grandson that if he wanted to live a long life, the secret was to sprinkle a little gun powder on his porridge every morning.

The grandson did this every day of his life. He died last year at age 103.

He left behind 14 children, 30 grandchildren, 45 great-grandchildren, 25 great-great-grandchildren, and a 15 metre hole where the crematorium used to be.

Personal Stuff:

I'm off to Cairns this weekend for a multitude of Ecclesiastical fashion-shows that will include a Regional Consultation, installing Elisabeth Daniels as the priest in Marlin Coast Parish, Martin Christiansen's Ordination as priest at Good Shepherd and the Rectory Blessing and Confirmation at Innisfail.

Then I'm off to Pormpuraaw for the historic Ordination of Mrs Lillian Noah and Ms Elizabeth Norman as Deacons. Lillian is the first Torres Strait Island woman to be made deacon, so far as I am aware. I know she won't be the last. Elizabeth is the first Ordinand from the Pormpuraaw community.

Whether there will be a *Reflection* next week is, at this moment, a moot point but keep your eyes on your email box, just in case.

In the meantime, I'm going fishing. Anyone want to join me?

Stay hot for God, cool under pressure, do good and laugh a lot.

In His Grip

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He is no fool who gives away something he cannot keep to gain something he cannot lose - Jim Elliott