

CLAIRE ROGERS - COMMISSIONING AS CEO WVA

St Jude's in Parkville @ Ridley College Melbourne 6 November 2016

Reflection / Sermonette

Bible reading: John 1:1-14 (NIVUK) - The Word became flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God whose name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Introduction:

Walking the talk, talking the walk, and living the heartbeat of Jesus Christ

I have been asked to give a 'sermonette'. Hence I will give my three sermon points, but no poem, no joke and no stories! I trust you will bear with me! 😊

Jesus Christ is the heartbeat of World Vision and we are to walk the Jesus' talk, talk the Jesus' walk and bring the life of his heartbeat to those in need.

God's love in Christ is extraordinary.

I recall discussing the incarnation with a good and gracious friend, Imam Sabri of the Hobart Mosque. Returning from Mecca, Imam Sabri gifted me a Qu'ran, a treasured commemoration of his scared pilgrimage. While we shared, I commented on the Incarnation, God coming to be with us in Christ. The Imam responded sincerely and earnestly, "But Bishop, that (the incarnation of Christ) is crazy." I replied, "Imam, I agree: the coming of God into the world as a baby is crazy. Moreover, if I was God, I wouldn't do it!"

But God did do it! And we are gathered here today because God did do it. PTL!

God entered history in the person of Jesus Christ who walked, talked and lived the heartbeat of God in the conflictive world of Palestine. Jesus walked the Kingdom journey of family, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension for us and continues in intercession for us today, indeed he is praying for us at this very moment! Precious thought.

The coming of the Holy Spirit empowers our own walk of faith in the complex and conflictive world of today.

We believe that the Holy Spirit has gathered us here today to commission our Sister in Christ, Claire Rogers for her walk, talk and life as CEO of World Vision Australia.

1. Walking the talk

John's Prologue declares the wonder, the miracle, of the Incarnation:

"The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." (John 1:14)

This was not just talk. John's Gospel account records Jesus' life and ministry as God with us. Jesus walked the talk of God's promised Messiah and the New Testament witnesses to it.

- Jesus' divinity is shown publically for the first time at the pleading of his mother to save embarrassment at a wedding feast. (John 2)
- Jesus' teaching is recognised by a religious leader who approaches him at night to discuss God's ways. (John 3)
- Jesus' compassion and challenge to an isolated woman drawing water in the heat of the day, draws forth the revelation of new life for her and her community. (John 4)
- Jesus' compassion and challenge to a man who no-one else had helped in 38 years! "Pick up your mat and walk. . . . Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you." (John 5:1-15)
- Jesus' miraculous healing of a blind man amid the chaotic and callous reactions of his community. (John 10)
- Jesus' key KPI seems to be his statement in the Garden of Gethsemane, *"Father, ... not my will but yours be done"*. (Luke 22:42)

Jesus walks the talk of God's promises through a disciplined life and ministry.

Claire, in your leadership of WVA, you are to bring the compassion, healing and justice of Jesus' heart to those in need.

2. Talking the walk

Increasingly Jesus did talk and explain his walk, his mission.

Jesus' mission talk in his home synagogue at Nazareth causes uproar. Do you recall his talk?

Upon reading from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, he declared that this prophetic word was fulfilled in him. Astounding! And as the synagogue conversation continued, the people were furious and tried to throw him off a cliff but he walked right through the crowd and went on his way". (Luke 4:14-30)

Yes, words are essential to explain God's work in the world, and explaining can be costly!

Claire, you are to articulate the mission of WVA: its walk, work, ways and whys: our passion and commitment to the children, the poor, weak, vulnerable, exploited and despised.

Advocacy of our walk of compassion and justice brings criticism: sometimes warranted, more times not, but it will surely come and needs a word.

Advocacy also brings joy to the suffering and oppressed.

In Tim Costello, Chief Advocate of World Vision Australia, you have an outstanding trainer. PTL!

Claire, we will pray for your resilience in public life: resilience as you continue the walk and talk of a public Christian.

3. Living the heartbeat – What joy! What challenge!

* Jesus withdrew from the crowds and his disciples to be with God. One of our Board members is on a prayer retreat right now: it's important.

Nurture your relationship with the Word made flesh for this is the fundamental relationship in all of life, for *"in him was life, and that life was the light of all people"* (John 14).

Jesus is the true vine, we are the branches and God the Father is the gardener – therefore remain in Jesus, obey his commands and so remain in his love that your joy may be complete. (John 15:1-11)

* Nurture and sustain your family life: your relationship with your husband, Michael, and children, Lachlan and Maddy.

I often asked the ministers under my care, "Do you love Jesus? Do you love your wife/ husband?"

Why? Because these are the two key questions to interrogate our discipleship.

Then, when the minister replies with "Yes. Yes." I reassure the minister that, "Everything else is negotiable!" 😊

* You have a parish community – keep those relationships and commitments alive amid your heavy schedule.

* You lead a Christian organisation and this brings particular challenges and opportunities for celebration.

- Be an encourager to your team. Remember Barney's Broadway: be an encourager after the heart of Barnabas – the son of encouragement.
- In the tough times remember your own parish dedication name, St Jude. St Jude is the patron saint of desperate cases and lost causes. St Jude is often depicted holding a picture of Jesus to his heart. Claire, like St Jude, hold Jesus to your heart, remembering that Jesus is holding you in his heart.

* Jesus' question of questions, "Claire, do you love me?"

In loving Jesus, you will bring his love to others. Remain in Jesus' love.

Conclusion

Walking the talk, talking the walk, and living the heartbeat of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the heartbeat of World Vision and we are to walk the Jesus' talk, talk the Jesus' walk and bring the life of his heartbeat to those in need.

Claire, we are delighted to be here with you:

- to pray with you and for you and your family: Michael, Lachlan and Maddy.
- to read the Bible with you,
- to sing songs of worship to the Lord of Life and Love who will guide, guard and bless you and your new ministry.
- to commission you as CEO of World Vision Australia.

There was a spontaneous time of prayer at an intimate and precious sharing during one of the CEO Search Committee's interviews with Claire. As we prayed earnestly and confidently then, may we continue in prayer, earnestly and confidently, dependant on the now Ascended Lord Jesus Christ, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us, whose ministry we carry forward in the power of the Holy Spirit, and all to the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Bishop John Harrower
Chair of the CEO Search Committee
Deputy Chair of World Vision Australia