

Homily Te Pouhere Sunday 2021

Today is designated Te Pouhere Sunday, a day when we commemorate the acknowledgement of our 3 Tikanga Anglican church, here in New Zealand. The original missionaries had mainly arrived in Nz from England and brought with them, their own traditions and English flavoured worship. Our Nz prayer book was not published until 1989, prior to that this country and our island neighbours followed the English tradition. In our current Nz prayer book with its multitudes of services and variations thereof, allows for worship in Pacific Island languages, but still closely following the NZ traditions.

At the NZ Anglican Churches General Assembly of 1992 it was decided to acknowledge that the Pacific Island nations were able to design worship that was more appropriate to their cultures; and so was born the 3 Tikanga Anglican church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. The General Assembly, where representatives from all Diocese meet together remains our governing body, but each diocese, and ministry unit is free to follow their own way, still in the overall culture of an Anglican Church. Te Pouhere Sunday acknowledges that we all rest our canoes at the same place with the triune God as the solid post that holds them safely together. We -NZ - led the way in including the minority peoples to have an equal say in how they worshipped.

When looking for resources for today, my first port of call was our prayer book, usually a mine of information, but not today. It was published in 1989 ...Te Pouhere had not yet been designated a Sunday to celebrate. The church does progress, but often seemingly very slowly. I know that a new prayer book is in preparation. So, it was off to Dr Google, where the Anglican church has a few lines and links to other resources.

I have been part of 5 ministry units -parishes while living in New Zealand and have worshipped at many more. Each one is different, and indeed each new priest brings their own flavour to add to what is already present, building on, hopefully the solid past. When on holiday some years ago, Alan and I worshipped at a Cook Island Church. Not a word could we understand, except when we were given a most generous welcome in English, but we could follow the spirit of the service as it largely followed the form that we knew from our experience in NZ, but with a lot more physical affirmation! I did not enjoy all parts of the service, and would not choose to worship in the Cook Island way all the time, but was comfortable that I was in the Lord's presence. Again, I enjoy the pomp and ceremony of the special Cathedral services, but not all the

time, but the Lord's presence is also there. I believe that worship can be a learning time, and that learning situations are not always comfortable. We may not enjoy all varieties of Worship but we get used to a way that is comfortable but on the other hand, sometimes challenging to us.

In the reading from Acts, we hear of Peter telling the Gentiles the Good News of Jesus Christ. Til then, only the Jews had been privileged to hear this. The Messianic Jews who transferred their allegiance to the Christian faith would have brought some of their worship traditions with them and these would probably have been different to the way the Gentiles worshipped, having only pagan or no traditions to follow.

Jesus told the story of the houses built on solid or sand. He did not tell in what design these houses were built, except that the one built on solid ground survived the storm. The solid ground that Jesus spoke about was faith. Our faith needs to have a strong foundation to stand the storms of life. Just like those around Ashburton are weathering the aftermath of last week's storms. The structures that were well built on a firm foundation are likely to have better weathered the storm.

It is important that we all worship in a way that encourages us to communicate with our God deeply and meaningfully. We were all created individually by our Creator God, He knows our needs and how best to meet them, hence the 2 services we now have, here at St. Pauls', but...is God encouraging us to spread our wings both learning and sharing from our own; and our Tikanga partners' way? Just as others can learn from us, in ways of worship; so we can learn from others as we deepen our faith in whatever way we worship. Amen.

Rev Ann McLean