

**HOMILY**  
**ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHER PROWSE**  
**CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP OF CANBERRA AND GOULBURN**  
**SUNDAY, 3 FEBRUARY 2019**  
**ST CHRISTOPHER'S CATHEDRAL**  
**FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (YEAR C)**

**Readings**

**Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19**

**1 Cor 13:4-13**

**Luke 4:21-30**

Today's Gospel continues on the Gospel of last Sunday where Jesus preached in His home synagogue of Nazareth.

Last Sunday I had the honour and privilege of being at a Papal Mass at World Youth Day, Panama City, where the Holy Father Pope Francis preached on this chapter of Luke's Gospel. Indeed, the geography of Panama can make an initial point in understanding the Scriptures of today.

Panama is an Isthmus. This is a geographical narrow strip of land that connects two large land masses. In the case of Panama it connects the continents of North America and South America. Indeed, looking at it also from the oceanic point of view it connects the two great oceans of the world – the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans. There is a centrality therefore about the Isthmus of Panama.

One can take either a broad or a narrow view about this. At World Youth Day over the last two weeks where I've been attending with our wonderful youth delegation from the Archdiocese, this perspective can be overlooked. From a narrow perspective, one can say that Panama is just simply a beautiful country with a narrow width of 80kms. However, if you take a broader panorama and look at it from the spacecraft point of view, you can see that, indeed, Panama represents a connecting point between two enormous land masses and two enormous oceans of planet earth.

One can also take either a narrow or a broad perspective of the message of today's Scriptures. The people that are listening to Jesus in His home town synagogue of Nazareth take a narrow point of view.

At the start Jesus "won the approval of all," and they were "astonished by the gracious words that came from His lips."

But a narrow point of view emerged immediately.

They were wondering how a man with such graciousness and theological understanding could come from their own town of Nazareth and from a humble family. They said, "this is Joseph's son, surely?" This is a real put down.

Jesus, takes a broader panorama. He sees himself as the "Isthmus" of God. He is the one that connects all people and all nations and the entire cosmos of God. He brings God down to us and brings us up to God. He indicates that this universal broad perspective has never really been understood by His own people. He makes two examples coming from the Prophets Elijah and Elisha.

Determined to maintain a narrow point of view they are infuriated by what Jesus says and find Him insulting. They want to do away with Him, "but He slipped through the crowd and walked away."

In this threat to His life, Jesus takes on the role of the great Prophets of the Old Testament whose lives are always in jeopardy when they speak the truth. We see this from the First Reading. We see how God chooses people to be His truth speakers, even before they were conceived. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you came to birth I consecrated you.... so now brace yourself for action."

Despite all these difficulties there is always the reassurance that God is with His chosen ones.

"I, for my part, today will make you into a fortified city, a pillar of iron, and a wall of bronze."

My third and final point draws the message of today's Scriptures towards us, particularly as we begin the new year of 2019. We can either take a broad or a narrow view of the great challenges that await us in the year ahead. We can spend an enormous amount of time worrying about all sorts of things. This is a very narrow approach to our life and belittles our faith.

On the other hand, we can take the broad view of trusting God in all things.

We do this by taking on the great message of the main characteristic of those that follow Jesus..... love.

This is exemplified in one of the most beautiful descriptions of love in all literature in the Second Reading today. The love of Jesus and a love which we want to illuminate in the year ahead, "is always patient and kind, it is never jealous..... boastful or conceited. It is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope, and to endure whatever comes."

Let us pray in this Mass that we are given a broad perspective of our faith and of the challenges of this year. We do this always by imitating our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who comes to us now to nourish His people in the Eucharist.