



2022 ANNUAL

CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN

Our Church • Our Mission • Our Community

## **HOMILY FOR THE ANNUAL CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN 2022**

### **Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C**

Some years ago I visited Assisi with a group of pilgrims. We went up to the Carceri, the caves above the town which St Francis used as a hermitage. Now the doorways connecting the caves are often very narrow, and one of the larger members of our group got seriously stuck at one point. The narrow door was too much for him – or rather, he was too much for it. But it wasn't his fault, and he was eventually set free.

In the Gospel Jesus speaks of the narrow door and says that “many will try to enter but will not succeed”. But this is quite different from our companion getting stuck in the Carceri. That wasn't his fault; but in the case of those of whom Jesus speaks, it will be their fault if they fail to make it through the narrow door.

The door may be narrow but it is always God's will that everyone get through. The prophet Isaiah makes this clear when he has God saying, “I am coming to gather the nations of every language”. God may have chosen a people for himself, but only in order to gather every people and nation to himself. The divine plan embraces everyone; no-one is excluded. Not all will make it, but all are called to come through the narrow door into the fulness of life.

This is because all are daughters and sons of God, as the Letter to the Hebrews makes clear when it asks, “Have you forgotten that encouraging text in

which you are addressed as sons and daughters?” No-one is excluded because all are members of God’s family, flesh and blood of the God who has no favourites, even if he keeps an eye out especially for those who are excluded. They have a special place at the family table “at the feast in the kingdom of God”.

Jesus tells us that many will try to enter by the narrow door but will not succeed. They will be excluded because they themselves have excluded others. That is the sole criterion for entry. You will enter if you have allowed others to enter, even helped them to enter. But you will be excluded, will exclude yourself, if you have excluded others, especially the poorest and weakest.

The effort to include others, to help them enter by the narrow door, will require the discipline of which the Letter to the Hebrews speaks, the discipline of a father to his children in order to help them grow strong. This is the discipline required to move beyond the selfishness that tries to push its own way through the narrow door without sparing a thought for others. To look beyond ourselves in order to include others requires a sometimes painful discipline, but there is no other way for us to grow strong with the strength of the all-including God.

The Annual Catholic Campaign is all about the radical inclusiveness of God. It’s all about helping others to enter through the narrow doorway into life, especially the poorest and the weak, those who weep and are wounded; and it’s all about helping others to enter through the narrow so that we ourselves may enter and come to “the feast in the kingdom of God”.

Each year the Campaign invites the Catholic community to help in accomplishing God’s plan to bring all to the feast. There’s nothing vague or dreamy about it. It involves money, yes – money given in support of four very down-to-earth ministries of the Church in this part of the world.

There's Centacare's pastoral ministries which reach out to people doing it tough in all kinds of ways through family support, domestic violence aid, psychiatric counselling, hospital chaplaincy, prison ministry and many other acts of mercy. Then there's the Mary MacKillop Brisbane Catholic School Access Fund which makes Catholic education available to children whose families in financial and often spiritual difficulty. Thirdly there's the Priests Foundation which provides a dignified retirement and healthcare to our elderly, retired and unwell priests, allowing us to care for those who have cared for us. Finally there's Holy Spirit Seminary where we prepare young men for priestly service in the future at a time when leadership of all kinds in the Church is more important than ever.

Supporting these ministries through the Annual Catholic Campaign involves renunciation, even sacrifice. It's a kind of discipline. But I ask you to make an assessment of what you can give and to do so in recognition of where your true security lies, what your life really depends upon. You might perhaps consider a regular monthly gift of an amount which means something to you. Whatever your decision, the funds raised will be spent carefully and go to support only the ministries I've mentioned. Your generosity will be the answer to someone's prayer, which is the way God wants it to be.

The Annual Catholic Campaign was intended to reduce multiple Sunday appeals to a single appeal. But the intention behind it goes far beyond that. In the end, the intention is to call the Catholic people of the Archdiocese into the unfolding plan of God – not just to help the needy but to help change bad systems and bring to birth a new ordering of human relationships, a society where sisters and brothers can walk together through the narrow door and take their place, all of them, “at the feast in the kingdom of God”.