

“Who packs your parachute?”

A message of reflection considering the essential question of who packs the parachutes that sustains our daily lives? If Jesus is the actual parachute that saves our lives in terms of salvation, is there anyone else that we need to be grateful for in our daily lives? Perhaps someone who consistently brings Jesus to us?

25/7/21

I speak in the name of Jesus the Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.

Amen.

Let us pray:

“O God, whose never-failing providence ordereth all things both in heaven and earth: We humbly beseech thee to put away from us all hurtful things, and to give us those things which will be profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.”

Amen.

The Lord be with you.

An extract from today’s Gospel reading:

“When they had rowed five or six kilometres, they saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water; and they were terrified. But He said to them, “It is I; don’t be afraid.” Then they were willing to take him into the boat, and immediately the boat reached the shore where they were heading.”

(John 6: 19 - 21)

Charles Plumb was a US Navy jet pilot in Vietnam.

After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile.

Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent 6 years in a communist Vietnamese prison. He survived the ordeal and now lectures on lessons learned from that experience!

One day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, ' You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!

'How in the world did you know that?' asked Plumb.

'I packed your parachute,' the man replied.

Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude.

The man pumped his hand and said, 'I guess it worked!'

Plumb assured him, 'It sure did. If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today.'

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man. Plumb says, 'I kept wondering what he had looked like in a Navy uniform: a white hat; a bib in the back; and bell-bottom trousers.

I wonder how many times I might have seen him and not even said 'Good morning, how are you?' or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor.' Plumb thought of the many hours the sailor had spent at a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands each time the fate of someone he didn't know.

Hold onto this true story for a moment, for we shall return to it.

Today we read about two of the famous miracles that Jesus performs in the Gospel of John, namely the Feeding of the Five Thousand and when Jesus Walks on the Water. Interestingly, in the miracle accounts, we could step back for a moment in the light of this reflection and also consider Jesus as packing the parachutes for the great crowd that followed Him, yet were hungry. Jesus, through His wisdom and grace, was able to empower His disciples to ensure that no one went hungry that day. Similarly, Jesus became the parachute for the frightened disciples on the lake near Capernaum. Jesus saw to the physical needs of the followers when he fed them and He also saw to the physical needs

of the sailors when He physically saved them on the water. Jesus was the parachute.

Jesus is the parachute for you and I today, as well.

If we extend the metaphor of the parachute for a moment, we could consider the parachute to representative of our salvation through Christ. It is through Christ, and Christ alone, that you and I are invited to His heavenly table and able to participate in the Kingdom of God and all that this means for us as Christians.

Let us go back to the true story of Plumb for a moment.

Plumb then asks the valid question, “Who’s packing your parachute?”

You see, everyone has someone who provides what they need to make it through the day. Plumb also points out that he needed many kinds of parachutes when his plane was shot down over enemy territory – he needed his physical parachute, his mental parachute, his emotional parachute and his spiritual parachute. Plumb called on or relied upon all of these various support structures he had in his life before reaching safety.

Plumb goes on to suggest that perhaps in the daily challenges of our lives, we may miss what is really important. We may fail to say hello, please or thank you, congratulate someone on something wonderful that has happened to them, give a compliment, or just do something nice for no reason.

Who packs our parachutes?

I cannot answer for you.

What I can do is answer for myself and so give you an idea of the support structures that help pack my parachute on a daily basis... and perhaps, upon reflection, I need to be more thankful for the people that pack my parachute!

Firstly, I acknowledge that Jesus is my parachute and so on a daily basis I need to remind myself to be thankful for His grace in my life. No parachute, no life. It is as simple as that.

Secondly, I give thanks for my partner who helps me keep my parachute open and operating. You, too, may have a special friend, spouse or family member who helps you every day.

Thirdly, I give thanks to Reeva, my colleague and Rector, who has been incredibly understanding and supportive of the demands and pressures that go along with a non-stipendiary priest who is a teacher.

Fourthly, I give thanks to my teaching colleagues, who help me keep my parachute open at school on a daily basis. Without them, I would not be able to do my job.

Fifthly, I give thanks for all the children that I teach. They are my ministry. They are, more often than not, also keeping my parachute open, for they give my career meaning.

Lastly, and not least, I thank you, the Body of Christ, for continually sharing His love with me. I am deeply appreciative of all of you.

We all have a parachute if we choose to put it on.

Jesus is our parachute.

Many people in our lives contribute to keeping it open and functional.

Let us, today, be more mindful and thankful of all of those loved ones who help us to keep our parachutes open on a daily basis so that we can be vessels of His light and love.

And remember, if your parachute fails to open, for whatever reason, there is something called a reserve parachute. We all have one. We all get a second chance with Jesus. Never give up!

Wishing you a blessed and restful Sunday with open parachutes!

Much love

Fr Darron.

