

WEEKLY REFLECTIONS

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Jeremiah 31:31–34 | Ps 50:3–4, 12–5. R. v.12 | Hebrews 5:7–9 | John 12:20–33

Written by Michael McGirr

The word 'heart' occurs almost a thousand times in the Bible, more than three times as often as the word 'soul.' Perhaps this is just another item of trivia but surely it gives us a clue about Christianity. It is a religion of the heart. It gets our blood pumping.

As we approach the climax of our Lenten journey, this week's readings ask questions about our hearts. The psalm begs 'a pure heart create for me, O God.' Those words invite the Lord to come right inside us, into the very core of our being. The prophet Jeremiah quotes the Lord as saying, 'deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts.' In other words, we won't find God's most intimate whisperings to us just in books or lectures. We will find it when we are genuinely in touch with our core, our most intimate space. God's love is inscribed on our hearts.

In his letter *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis speaks against 'a culture of walls.' He asks us to treasure the hope found in every heart:

Hope 'speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical conditioning. Hope speaks to us of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfillment, a desire to achieve great things, things that fill our heart and lift our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love... Hope is bold.'

The word 'caritas' means love. The work of Caritas Australia is a heartfelt response to the needs of the world, one that gives expression to our shared hope. Caritas always works in partnership with others. During Lent, as we have listened to the experience of people we have helped through our support of Project Compassion, we will have noticed that life-giving partnerships with groups on the ground in many countries make this possible.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks of the grain of wheat that must die to create a rich harvest. Of course, he is referring to his own passion. But there is a message here for us all. 'Anyone who loves their life will lose it.' We are called to wear our hearts on our sleeves. To be led by love for others.



Jen (centre), teacher at Faithful Companions of Jesus (FCJ), teaches a class of students as part of the Alternative Learning System (ALS).
Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia.