February 15th

THE NEW SHOFAR

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so must you also do."
- Colossians 3:13

"What starts with hateful words ends with hateful deeds".

Our Gospel this Sunday comes at a significant time in Australia as we deal with the ugly antisemitism that has so dominated our public arena since Hamas and other barbarians swarmed across Israel's borders and raped, desecrated, tortured and killed more than 1,200 innocent Jewish men and women and kidnapped 254 to hold as human shields against the inevitable response by the IDF. Such is the moral decline in the public arena that the Government has called for a Royal Commission to explore not just the animalistic killing of Jews celebrating on Bondi Beach, but the mob supported hatred for all things Jewish that has undoubtedly grown from this willingness to demonise the Jews wherever they are to be found. The editorial in the Australian summarised it neatly: *Australians with a moral compass found it almost impossible to reconcile the nation they love with the scenes that played out in major capital cities early on Monday evening*.

In her childish tantrum and ill-informed ranting from the platform given to her, former Australian of the Year Grace Tame led a chant, "from Gadigal to Gaza, globalise the intifada", urging people around the world to rise up against the Jewish state. The mob, many clad in keffiyehs, chanted "from the river to the sea, Herzog to the ICC", referring to the International Criminal Court.

As a child of the 60's and 70's I grew into adulthood with street protests a significant part of the drama of the times. I do not mind people marching. We marched, we protested and we vented, all celebrating the joys of growing up in a fee society. It was a time for debating, not cancelling. I well remember one anti-abortion protest, I sat back and admired the likes of Bob Hawke who climbed the stage and took on the crowd with persuasion, argument, logic, a sense of history and philosophy all wrapped in a passion that did not cross the line into hatred. We had it all: ban the bomb; anti-Vietnam war protests; peace movements, hippies and even the Hari Krishnas. It is not these protests per se to which I object and find myself so ashamed. It is the hatred, the intolerance, the willingness to adopt violence as a means to an end, and a level of ignorance regarding history, culture, religion and law that stands, if nothing else as a suppurating condemnation of our education system.

***Hatred that starts with the Jews never ends with the Jews…Isaac Hertzog*.**

If we were to hold a traditional Ecumenical (worldwide) Council, like the ones we had in the early centuries of Christendom, instead of a secular Royal Commission that will be run by lawyers and do little more than produce pious piffle that will please few and accomplish not much in the long term it would have different results. This is where today's readings can be seen as a timely intervention into our thinking,

offering a model that Jesus alone could offer, one that is guaranteed to transform our society. It removes the whole idea of there being enemies, in-groups or excluded people(s). His is an all-inclusive embracement of the reality that all are born in the image and likeness of God and share a common humanity, one adopted by the Son of God Himself.

The attention deprived Grace Tame, the ideology driven ABC; the abusive Lidia Thorpe and the intolerable Greens senator Mehreen Saeed Faruqi along with Penny Wong and the ideologs of the Labor party cannot lead us to what Jesus offers.

But our imagined alternative Church Council investigation would spiritually bruise all of us by insisting that every baptised Christian, stands, to some extent at least, guilty of encouraging these anti-Gospel moves- by our silence if nothing else. When all that Christ proclaimed, performed and promised is not heard in our every word; when the love Jesus has for all is not experienced in our every action and gesture, then destructive and at times wicked people and philosophies will fill that vacuum.

The Lord himself declared that he had not come to abolish the law and the prophets. Rather, he comes to demand its fulness even in the smallest matters: *not to abolish them but to fulfill them.* To be citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven (both here and now on earth and for eternity in Heaven), we need to submit the entirety of ourselves to the law of Love a command applied to all without exception. To stress the value of human life, the Law said "you shall not kill" (*Ex* 20:13, *Deut* 5:17) because you will be open to judgment (cf. *Lev* 24:17). Jesus states that even wrath towards another person and insult *already leave us open to punishment;* and to curse another person *leaves one open to hell*. The dignity of each person is so great that one should repair the most minimal offense against another person before making an offering to God. Where was that message on the streets, in the television and radio studios or on the lips of those who feel they need to impose by fiat their own flawed views and vitriolic damnations of whole peoples and religions?

Not all public opinions are in tune with Kingdom demands

We live in a bubble of sensitivity that demands that all expressed views are equal, valuable and to be "taken on board". It is a bubble the Good News bursts. There is only one Truth and that is Jesus. As he himself made clear: ***I am*** *<u>the</u> way <u>the</u> Truth and <u>the</u> Life and nobody can come to the Father except through me*. That, however, is only going to become a reality for searching people when they can see what that means in practice, through experiencing it in the lives of the disciples of Jesus Himself. Our epitaphs or final words can offer insights to our lives after we die. When Muhammad fell ill and was dying, he declared *I have been made victorious with terror*. When Jesus died his final words included *Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit; it is finished; Father forgive them,* and *today you will be with me in paradise.* For The Buddha it was about self-help, changing ourselves in a changing through discipline: *All component things in the world are changeable. Work hard to gain your own salvation.* And ours? What will future generations write of our generation of Christians as they observe the way we maintained a safe but ultimately self-condemnatory silence while hatred stalked the land?