

# THE VISION STILL HAS TIME

The vision still has its time,  
presses on to fulfillment,  
and will not disappoint;  
if it delays, wait for it,  
it will surely come,  
it will not be late.

—Habakkuk 2:2-3

*Living our faith in a time of chaos*

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# THE VISION STILL HAS TIME

*Only the kingdom therefore is absolute and it makes everything else relative. —St. Paul VI*

We are living through a period of great crisis as Australian Catholics today. It is hard to deny that plenty of people struggle with the credibility of our witness.

Many, outside the Church (and plenty within), clearly have an image of us as a hypocritical institution that seems only to teach, judge, and condemn. The impact of recent scandals has profoundly shamed and embarrassed us all. Our credibility as preachers of the Good News of Jesus has been undermined.

Some others, inside the Church, seem stuck in a form of low-grade depression. They spend an awful lot of their energy evaluating colleagues, offering critiques, bemoaning the lack of leadership of others, disagreeing with other people's views and even taking pleasure in others' frailties and mistakes (the Germans even have a word for it: *Schadenfreude*).

Everyone else is always the problem! In the time of Jesus the people of God faced precisely the same situation! So troubled was the world of Jesus' time, and so deep in despair, that it was commonly believed that nothing short of divine intervention could change things. People spoke of this hoped-for intervention as the kingdom of God.

They imagined the kingdom coming in one great reform, as many do today. When the masses in Jesus' day were looking for God to send a messiah to rescue them, Jesus introduced his followers to the kingdom as the expression of an invisible presence that lies at the heart of reality. Instead of viewing the depressing condition of the world as something only a divine intervention could change, he insisted that God's reign could begin in people's lives any time they were ready to awaken to this presence. It is 'at hand'. Do not look for God to appear

in the desert or on a mountaintop, because the kingdom is not about location. Instead, 'The kingdom of God is within you'.

This was not a message most people of Jesus' time wanted to hear. I suspect it is not something we want to accept deep down either. We want a Church where we are in 'control'. If, however, we can resist the temptation to despair and overcome the delusion that we can 'save' ourselves, we can discover the divine. Above all, we pray for the grace to 'let go' of our plans to 'convert' everyone but ourselves!


As N. T. Wright puts it: "...we need to discover that when God wants to take charge of the world or the Church, he does not send in the tanks. Instead he sends in the poor and the meek." That is what Pope Francis has also been tirelessly saying for the last six years! Our 'salvation' is not achieved by 'circling the wagons' and seeking refuge in some supposed 'golden age' of the Church. Instead, we Marists are sent on mission as 'kingdom people' to the 'peripheries'. The poor and meek are our salvation and our guides.

With them, we go on a journey to form a community of 'kinship'. God longs to be encountered in Jesus and at the margins. We need to rediscover him in the lowly humiliating places where we find ourselves today.

We are called then to stand with all who are suffering: for the vision still has time, presses on to fulfillment, and it will not disappoint; and if it delays, wait for it (cf. Habakkuk 2:3). Only the kingdom ... is absolute.







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