

Weekly reflection – 23 April 2020

St George's Day: stories of slaying dragons and martyrdom as Roman soldier who inspired legends. It is the patronal festival of our parish – we have a rose stained glass window of St George slaying the dragon, which could be interpreted at the death to death through the power of the resurrection.

Acts 5:27-33. Peter and the other disciples are brought to the religious council of the Sanhedrin. Peter makes harsh comments and theologically condemning remarks, such as accusing the council of being murderers. The ethical question is how do we obey God as opposed to people, appreciating that as in the text the high priest is highest institutional representative of God.

In the history of Israel there were false prophets, failing in their role to keep the political powers accountable because of lacking moral and spiritual authority themselves. In John 3:31-36; the Father gives control of all things to the Son, because he loves him. In Jesus there are the components of truth, moral authority and social influence. These are of eternal value and inform Peter on how to make ethical decisions about who to obey.

St George's life and suffering also help us in an application. The current suffering of losing control: how does it make us lose eternal control? Could that lead to escapism or a martyr mentality? Could the fear of losing control be based on the merit and understanding of how we gain eternal rewards or punishment? That could also lead to moral triumphalism.

The balance in the tension is that we need to have self-awareness that would eliminate self-interest in our moral decision making efforts. Recount the confrontation approach of the prophet Nathan with King David after he committed adultery with Bathsheba. The verification process of the truth is to follow a Trinitarian model of selflessness. As we follow this approach and allow God to establish justice, I believe it is truly the Gospel, because no self-interest is brought into the equation of a moral decision, moreover, God represents the ultimate source of eternal truth and righteousness, which he can establish through us in our self-giving to him in obedience. This is not a fundamentalist decision as Jesus warns not to swear by God in heaven or by the temple. But as our yes and no are simple, it is embedded in a moral position of removing self-interest.