

**Presentation by  
The Most Reverend Roger Herft  
Archbishop of Perth**

to the

**Cathedral Centre for Spirituality  
Wasting Time with God Series**

**Wednesday 9 May 2012**

The New Reality (Easter – The Resurrection of Christ)

Do we get it?

The people who inhabit the pages the scripture just don't seem to get it. Rescued from slavery, challenged to be a chosen race, a holy nation – they do not get it.

This year we have journeyed with the disciples in Mark's Gospel – they just don't seem to get it. In fact, Mark suggests that they are stubborn, obdurate and unwilling to hear the truths of the Gospel.

Mark's Gospel is a contrast to the many books published to honour the worship and witness of people in parish communities who celebrate a special anniversary are so commending of all who have gone before us.

St Mark is so disillusioned with the band of followers that he finishes half way through a sentence in Greek – “gar”.

The women are confronted with the empty tomb; they are told to go and tell the disciples and Peter that the Risen Jesus is going ahead of them to Galilee – they flee the scene in terror and tell nothing to anyone for they are afraid (Mark 1:1-8).

In Mark there is no apostolic witness to the Resurrection. In fact, the “lost” ending of Mark is the subject of much discussion. Was Mark stopped half way through a sentence, arrested and imprisoned? Did the original parchment tear away at this point? Are the other suggested endings a part of Mark's original script? Or did Mark stop in mid-stream – a theological challenge that invited the Church to be witnesses of the Resurrection to the world?

Is it another pointer to the truth that they just did not get it?

We – do we get it?

Hidden almost as a distraction in Mark's Gospel is an event:

Mark 14:1-11

It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, 'Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.'

While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. But some were there who said to one another in anger, 'Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.' And they scolded her. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.'

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

We spend a lot of time on the betrayal of Judas. In fact our liturgy of the Eucharist has this particular action remembered "On the same night that Jesus was betrayed/handed over – he took bread". Books have been written on the statement "The poor you always have with you". In the midst of all of this we miss out on Mark's reference to a resurrection disciple.

The disciples do not get it, because they see their call to follow, to participate in the reign of God as an entitlement. The Church does not seem to get it because it sees its place in the Gospel as entitlement.

The journey to Jerusalem begins in Caesarea Philippi with Peter's confession:

He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

*Mark 8:29-30*

The injunction to "shut up" in Mark is one that suggests "You have it wrong – you just don't get it – keep silent". To witness to the truth, says Jesus, requires you "to get it".

The Passion Resurrection prediction follows:

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

*Mark 8:31-32a*