

A Statement from the Heart Should Always be Cherished

8 August 2023

Bishop Philip Huggins

ACC&C Scholar



Isn't this a universal wisdom to which we can all say 'yes'?

Isn't this the deepest truth from our own romantic and relational life?

When someone speaks from their heart we want to listen.

And along with their words, don't the things that others have done from their hearts for us shape our own sweetest and most grateful memories?

Not the things of transactional relationships but those moments and events that seemed to have had a pure and kind intent.

Given my vocation, we have moved around a bit over the years. Sometimes life brings me back in touch, even briefly, with people from those earlier times and places.

Looking back I might have thought I did this or that of value in those places. Time and again, these are not the things people seem to remember or want to talk about. Instead it is things like a call, a visit or a conversation at moments of significance in their lives.

And, of course, when I think about it, the same is true for me.

It is those words and gestures from the heart of others that have also meant the most to me.

And when one looks at the gospels, so often it is those Statements from the Heart that the gospel writers have wanted to write down.

For example, Jesus' parables, like the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son.

As well, Jesus' acts of compassion, sometimes in response to people's own cry from their hearts as they seek help for their loved ones- the official with a sick daughter who approaches Jesus and 'pleads with him earnestly'. In response, Jesus changes all his plans [Mark 5.21]. The folk who help their friend find Jesus through the roof [Matthew 9]; those outsiders who call out in pleas from their hearts. 'Sir, if you want to, you can cure me.' To which Jesus responds with a healing touch and says 'Of course I want to! Be healed'. [Luke 5:13-15].

Next week, I am part of a multi faith gathering of religious leaders at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. We are all addressing the question of what constitutes 'religious genius as regards who have inspired us'.

Reading these papers, whatever the tradition, the genius is in those who have touched the heart. Those who have, therefore, awoken others to what really matters and who's own service is purely loving.

On Monday I wrote on our big Church blackboard facing Bay St. Port Melbourne that 'A Statement from the Heart should always be Cherished.'

Obviously the context is public discourse following various polls about the Voice.

After meditation this week we were discussing the insights from a popular book on leadership training.

It is Marshall Goldsmith's book *What Got You Here, Won't Get You There*.

The essence is that bad behavioural habits prevent people reaching their full potential.

The bad behaviors include not listening well; expressing endless negativity about another's ideas: the withholding of any positive and affirming comment; the kind of anger that never apologises and which seems to show little commitment to building better relationships.

Sound familiar?

Those who sing in diverse choirs know you have to listen well in order to harmonise. Goldsmith's critique challenges the negativity of the words and tone which are destroying the reconciling opportunity

offered in the request for a Voice, embedded in the Uluru 'Statement from the Heart'.

Those aspiring to higher office might like to think again about where they are placing themselves.

In its own way Goldsmith's book is also a critique of where we are as a nation.

We are poised and able to offer necessary and outstanding international leadership. We have a robust democracy; a strong economy; a range of substantial intermediaries between the individual and the State including our Universities, our Trade Unions, our faith communities, our artists and our range of non government organisations. We have an appreciation of why there is a separation of powers between the legal and political system and we have a relatively free media.

Everything could be better but where else is there this much that is in place?

Our diverse multicultural and multi-faith population is a reflection of this one human family on this beautiful planet in a vast universe.

We are poised to offer hope and optimism in international leadership.

But what has got us here will not get us there unless the tone and content of national discourse lifts.

That is why the opportunity of the referendum is so crucial.

All it takes, as the above reflection tries to enunciate, is to recall how we have and do cherish Statements from the Heart.

What is true personally can be true nationally. This is a moment like no other in our national life.