

It's a great honour to preach at Tony's funeral mass and I would like to thank Fr Brian McCoy for inviting me. Our three Scripture readings—of which the passage from Romans and from John's Gospel were chosen by Tony himself, while the passage from Isaiah was chosen by myself, Nicole Rotaru and Chris Willcock—provide a rich context for us to reflect on and celebrate the life of our friend and brother, in particular his life as a member of the Society of Jesus. His calling to be a Jesuit involved moving from his home country of New Zealand to Australia, and to our proud but currently sad city of Melbourne. I can imagine that, in wrestling with his response to God's call, Tony may well have said something like Nathanael in John's Gospel—Can any good come out of Melbourne? Like Nathanael he was a man without deceit and remained a man without deceit throughout out his life, as many of us can testify. Tony always strove to present as accurate an understanding of something or someone as he could, including himself. But whatever Tony may have honestly thought and said about Australia and Melbourne, God saw him under the NZ equivalent of a fig tree and called him. Despite questions and reservations about this 'God forsaken country' (the opinion of a 19<sup>th</sup> century English visitor), he came and, like the biblical Nathanael, became a loyal disciple of Jesus and of Ignatius of Loyola for the rest of his life.

The first reading from Isaiah offers us a point of entry for reflecting on what was probably a key aspect of Tony's vocation as a Jesuit priest, and a key focus of his mission to the church and the world. I'm sure Tony would have gladly echoed the declaration of the servant in the passage from Isaiah, 'The Lord has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word'. And not only the weary but also the wretched. As a loyal disciple of Jesus and Ignatius, Tony was able to bring much good out of miserable Melbourne in both word and deed. His words took two forms; the oral form in those stimulating lectures and seminars that he gave at Jesuit Theological College and the United Faculty of Theology, as well as at other places, and the written form in his many publications that achieved not only local but international recognition and acclaim. His deeds or achievements may be identified in the many students that he helped to educate, both within and outside his order, and who, with his help, acquired the knowledge and confidence to further the work of Christian discipleship. He did not teach them to be images of himself or only reflect his thinking; he taught them to be disciples of Christ, no matter what the cost.

The understanding of Christian discipleship that he fostered by his teaching and the example of his own life was above all marked by that pervasive honesty that won Jesus' praise of Nathanael. May I offer an example from my own period of being taught by Tony. When he was supervising my doctoral thesis, I assembled what I thought was an acceptable penultimate draft and sent it to him for review. His response arrived a short time later; it was brief but hit the nail right on the head. 'That's a good description of what scholars are saying O'Brien, but where's your thesis?' Now while this made me feel rather weary of the task ahead, it also sustained me in that I knew—when he was satisfied that I had a thesis to present, it would pass the toughest examination because it had already passed his scrutiny.

This leads me to make another point about Tony Campbell, and one that draws on our second reading from Paul's letter to the Romans. This is his commitment to his order, his brother Jesuits, the church, his students, and indeed society at large. I believe it was because Tony sincerely believed Paul's declaration, 'neither death, nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor heights, nor depths, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord' that he was able to devote himself

completely to his vocation as a Jesuit and Teacher of Scripture. I know from my own experience that he was completely committed to me as a student and that an important factor in this commitment was his fond hope that, once I was trained, we would become co-workers in the teaching vocation, collaborators in research and writing. That is, I myself could become a teacher in the service of those who are taught. I am sure many other students of his would confirm this. This commitment did not mean that Tony was unfailingly nice and flattering to me or other students; he was too honest for that. Rather, his commitment meant that he felt obliged to tell you how he honestly thought you were doing, or not doing. In doing so he was of course imitating in his own human way the portrayal of the God of the Older Testament, whose unswerving commitment to Israel was often expressed in the form of blunt confrontation about its sins. But no matter how bad the sins, and according to some texts they were at times very bad, and no matter how severe the punishment decreed for such sins, God never gives up on God's commitment to Israel and its mission to mediate blessing to the world. In our terms, we would say that God hates sin but loves the sinner unconditionally. And, may I say, this includes the devil. Jesus never destroys a demon in the Gospels; instead he orders them to clear off so that the possessed person may be free.

I hope I am right in this next point, but my preceding one about God's commitment to a flawed people touches on a key factor in Tony's theology and it is captured succinctly by that famous statement in our responsorial psalm; 'When I look at the heavens the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them little less than God, and crowned them with glory and honour'. He continually wrestled with the great question posed by the psalmist here. How can this often unreliable, even evil creature that lives a few years and then dies and rots in the earth be described as godlike or divine, and so be a, or the, key sign of the presence of God in our world? I think Tony knew that he would probably never come up with a satisfactory answer in this life but he never gave up the quest. Even when mortally ill in Nazareth House and his voice fading to a whisper, he would still, when able to, engage this great debate. It was an expression of his commitment to the faith and a further example of this man as a disciple in whom there was no deceit. In a way he was like Job, pursuing God for an answer to pressing questions that in a way became more urgent the more pain and suffering he had to endure. But his questioning was always done in a way that acknowledged God as God, the completely other, the ultimate mystery that is forever unfolding in our world of thought and feeling. The commitment to live one's life in loyalty to God despite such an awareness is surely one of the factors that contributes to the glory and honour with which God has crowned the human being—according to Psalm 8. Tony's attitude is also a further example of Paul's declaration in our reading from Romans. Nothing, not even the experience of 'the dark night of the soul' could ever separate Tony from God. He could confidently and even aggressively ask all kinds of questions of God because of his conviction of 'the love of God in Christ Jesus'.

One of the key factors that helped shape the man we fondly remember and celebrate today was of course his study of the Sacred Scriptures, especially the Older Testament. As a student of the Sacred Texts he joined the Master Class of theology and was taught not only by the one whom we believe is the ultimate author of Scripture, God, but also by God's disciples who had been entrusted with the task of teaching the world about God and God's purpose, and of living out that purpose themselves to the best of their ability. I refer here to the chosen people Israel, and in particular to those Israelites who, according to the Bible, were sent to teach and instruct Israel

at strategic points in its history. Chief among these are prophets such as Moses, Samuel, Elijah, as well as those who shaped and edited the stories about them. By listening carefully to the speeches attributed to the prophets and the stories about them, Tony learned how the human being who is obedient to God and God's ways also becomes the most creative of human beings. These biblical characters emerge from the biblical text as examples of the human being made in the divine image and likeness. As such they were and are creative in a powerful yet human way, and in being obedient in a creative way, God crowns them with glory and honour, despite accounts that at times they failed their vocation. They become enduring models for readers of any generation to emulate in their own lives.

Their disciple and God's disciple, our brother Tony, was inspired by reading about them to also become creative as an interpreter and teacher of the Scriptures. In my judgement, one of his most creative contributions was the proposal of what he called 'the reported story'. By paying careful attention to narrative texts he became convinced that they are not a word-for-word record but rather the outline or report of stories that served as a basis and guide for a live performance before an audience. People in biblical times did not read silently as we tend to do. In fact, many could not read and so the written text provided a base for an oral proclamation of a story, one that would have been suitably dramatic and theatrical in order to engage and challenge an audience. Hence, scribes skilfully recorded what they heard in a way that provided opportunities for a storyteller to develop in the course of oral performance, or that provided options for a storyteller to choose from, depending on the audience. Thus, there are three ways in which the garden of Eden story can be told, two ways in which the story of David and Goliath can be told. Insights like these were then transformed into a more technical form in Tony's study of the dramatic relationship between prophets and kings in his ground breaking 1986 study *Of Prophets and Kings* and in his subsequent commentary on the books of Samuel and other books.

The hypothesis of the reported story, along with other insights into the nature of the biblical text, convinced Tony that one of God's aims in providing the Scriptures is to stimulate us to be creative listeners and readers, albeit in an authentic way that respects the text, and so to become authors and teachers like the characters presented in the Bible, like our servant in the first reading from the book of Isaiah. We believe the Bible is the Word of God but it is expressed in human words and therefore limited like all human words. It invites and indeed needs to be expounded on and explained in creative yet authentic ways. In this way the biblical word lives on in the spoken and written words of disciples throughout the generations.

But while encouraging readers and listeners to become loyal authors and teachers like the biblical characters Moses and Elijah, the Bible also reminds us that we never stop being students who need to be taught. This is a key mark of the disciple who is without guile. And given that we are godlike and always growing in the image and likeness of God, then these dual roles of the teacher who needs to be taught continue for all eternity. After all there is no end to the unfolding mystery that is God. Hence, I am sure that our beloved Tony Campbell is now gladly taking part in the heavenly seminar, the perfect form of the many seminars and classes that he conducted during his earthly life. I am also sure that this Nathanael, in whom there was and still is of course no deceit, is giving as good as he gets, is teaching as well as being taught, in the most friendly and supportive environment of course.

Mark O'Brien op