

**Homily – Signing of the Covenant
Anglican Diocese of Newcastle and Catholic Dioceses of
Maitland -Newcastle and Broken Bay**

**Wednesday 2 April 2008
Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle**

As a Dominican Woman, I call upon my Brother Dominic, founder of my Order, and my Sister Catherine of Siena to intercede for me, that with the power of the Spirit I may be a worthy preacher of the word this night.

Tonight we gather from different lands, countries, regions and religious traditions. We gather as a people of God

We know the Churches gather for the Liturgical signing of the Diocesan Covenant.

Why do we as individuals choose to be here tonight?

Are we here because our community leaders urged us to come?

Are we here as onlookers - to see what happens? To hear what happens?

Or, do we come because we believe in a God who calls us IN Love, and FOR Love, the God, who from our birth has invited us into relationship; the same God who at our Baptism gifted us with the Spirit and invited us into deeper relationship.

Do we come responding to the stirrings of that Spirit at the core of our being?

Situated within the context of our society how timely this significant event should take place less than a week after we were invited to commit to Earth hour. Last year Sydney led the way for the world in introducing the 'Earth Hour' concept, and this year the rest of our Nation and the World volunteered to join in. Tonight, we as the Anglican and Catholic Dioceses of Maitland, Newcastle and Broken Bay take a small and significant step which we hope will lead the way for others, not only locally within our Nation, but globally.

How timely this significant event should take place within the Easter season of our Church's year – the time which offers so many signs of hope and new life. That time when we welcome new members into our churches through the gift of Baptism; the time when we ourselves are invited to reflect on what it means to be a baptised people, an Easter people

Tonight we come to witness to the signing of a Covenant between our Anglican and Catholic Churches. We know that in civil law a covenant is an agreement

between two parties, something that sets boundaries, and unless the boundary is broken, could be said to be static.

On the other hand if we search the scriptures we find a different sense of the word covenant. God made a Covenant with chosen people on many occasions, - a covenant inviting them into relationship. It's as if each covenant has flesh and bones. To Abraham God said, 'look up and see the heavens and count the stars if you can; to others, 'you shall be my chosen people, I will be your God.'

Tonight our Covenant invites us into Relationship – with our God and with each other - beyond the signatures on the page, of those chosen to sign this significant document. The Covenant must take on flesh and bones and we the people of God are those flesh and bones.

Why do we choose to enter into this *covenantal relationship*?

We come responding to the stirrings of the Spirit at the core of our beings with a desire that others may come to know the God who calls us in love, and for love. We come not for ourselves, rather for the kingdom!

And if we should be anxious as to how we might fulfil this covenantal relationship, we have a blue print in our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles:

- The whole group who believed were of one heart and soul.
- With great power the apostles willingly gave testimony to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus.
- Great GRACE was upon them all.
- No one was in need, and they laid their gifts at the feet of the apostles to be distributed as needed.

Let us reflect on that model for a moment by considering some questions:

- Do I/we truly believe in God who calls us in love and in the Son – Jesus – the Risen one?
- Do we profess and proclaim what we believe?
- There is not one of us here who has not been graced by our loving God. We have all received Grace upon grace – That being the case, the challenge is before us to be more daring, together; to take risks for the kingdom, together; to be a presence that disturbs, together. This moment is a graced moment. Let us seize this moment through, with and in our God.
- Time does not allow here, but in the days ahead each of us might take the time to reflect on what gifts we bring to life this Covenant relationship.

Let us draw on the courage and example of that first community of believers who overcame their fears.

In the Gospel we are reminded: 'The wind blows where it pleases' – the Spirit moves where the Spirit pleases – the Spirit has moved and will continue to move among the communities of people gathered here tonight, drawing us into Covenantal relationship.

Tonight is the night to let go of the wounds of the past, whatever they be, because of earlier divisions between our Churches. Let go of the hurt that might have come as a result of a mixed marriage; of not being able to attend a family members wedding or funeral because their faith denomination was different to ours. What a gift we are being offered tonight! Tonight is the night to *transfer all that is fearful into boldness of heart – for the kingdom.*

Tonight, the signing of the covenant symbolises the fact that together, in a common cause, individuals can make a difference, for the kingdom, God's kingdom.

Last Saturday's Editorial in the Sydney Morning Herald concluded as follows: 'The earth is changing; we must change with it. Tonight it's time to switch off.'

May I conclude by saying:

The Church is changing; we are the Church; we are the change.

Tonight, it's time to switch ON together for the reign of God.

Earth Hour! – Church Hour! - Now is the hour!!!

2nd April, 2008

Sr. Jenny Gerathy op