

The Revd. John Barge, priest, sent from England

Sr Margery Brenchley, nursing sister, sent from Queensland

Mr John Duffill, builder, sent from Queensland

Leslie Gariardi, evangelist and teacher, from Papua

May Hayman, nursing sister, sent from Victoria

The Revd. Henry Holland, priest, sent from New South Walea

Miss Lilla Lashmar, teacher, sent from Adelaide[6]

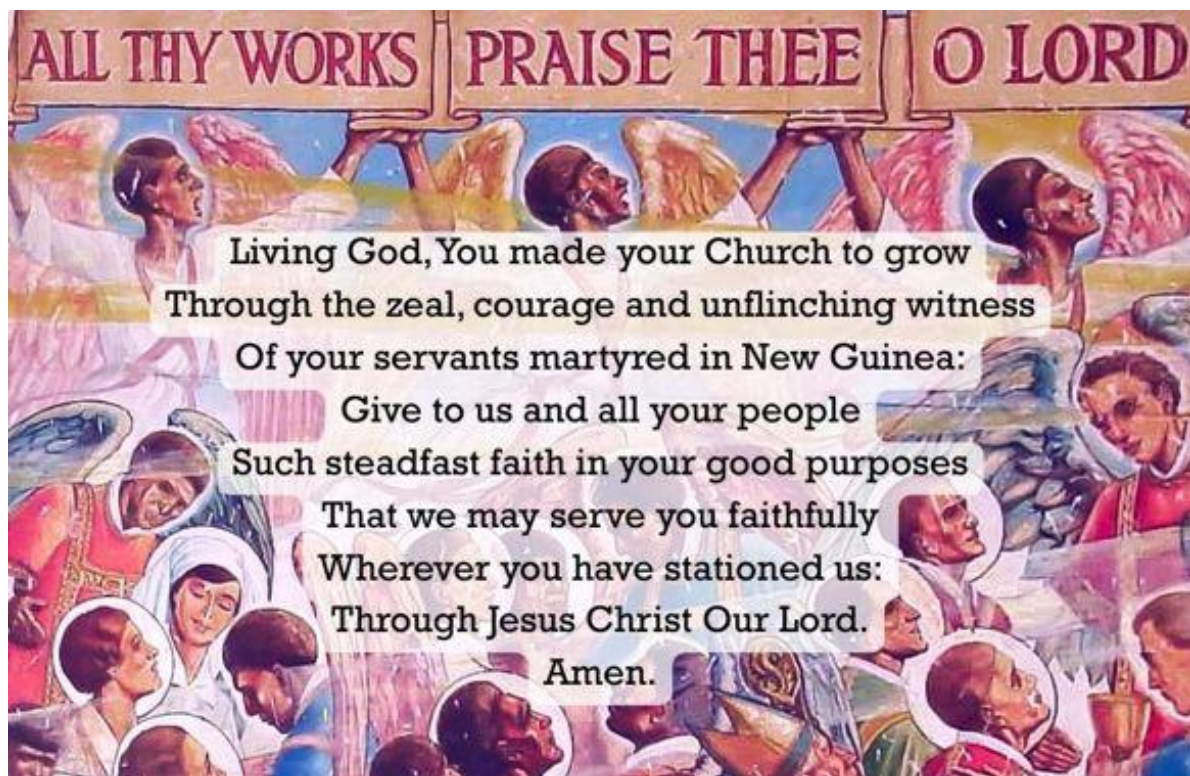
The Revd Henry Matthews, priest, sent from Queensland, born in Victoria

The Revd Bernard Moore, priest, sent from England

Miss Mavis Parkinson, teacher, sent from Queensland

The Revd Vivian Redlich, priest, sent from South Africa, born in England

Mr Lucian Tapiedi, evangelist and teacher, from Papua



Martyr's Day Sermon – 2-9-25 (Delivered at St Cuthbet's Church, Adelaide, home parish of Lilla Lashmar.

We gather to commemorate the martyrs.

**Names....**

We gather to celebrate and pray for the church they helped found – the Anglican Church of PNG.

I hope we gather to be inspired by the story of ordinary people who – caught up in extraordinary events – chose compassion and faithfulness (to God and their friends), courage and kindness, love of the other and the unknown.

We remember them because they made choices that set them apart as people of integrity and love, choices that determined their fate, but have also seen them remembered both here and across Australia, each year since they died.

Over eighty years ago, Lilla Lashmar possibly sat where you are sitting now.

She attended this church, and she came to love God, and she chose to offer to become part of the missionary movement from Australia to PNG. I can't tell you exactly why she did that or what she thought she'd find. I don't really know if she was driven more by a sense of adventure or a deep desire to share the Gospel. Not that the two are incompatible. Not at all.

What we do know is that Lilla chose to serve the people of Papua New Guinea at a time when they needed her – and many like her – to help make the step into a wider world.

She was serving on the North coast of PNG and she – and the other Martyrs – knew the Japanese were coming. They'd have heard the terrible stories, the propaganda, the reputation of the enemy. They would have been terrified. But they stayed. They knew it was dangerous, but they believed that, if they left, all

their talk about love and commitment would mean very little to those they left behind.

And the Japanese did come, the invading forces. And Lilla and the others sought to hide and to survive. They were cared for by local people, at least one of whom we also remember as a martyr – Lucien Tapiedi - and they were caught, and they were killed.

This was a result of their decision to care for people they were not related to, people who were foreign, people who were ‘other’, people who they did not fully understand.

People they knew were equal members of the family of God. Equally important. Equally valuable. Equally in need of love and care.

They died because they truly believed that the message of Christ, living, crucified and resurrected was true and real and has the capacity to change the world for the better.

It is impossible to speak of such loving commitment to the ‘other’ this evening without recognising what has been happening in our country in the last week or so – and especially on the weekend.

In Victoria, police are risking their lives to bring to justice, a man who has, allegedly, shot dead two police officers. A man who has accepted and benefitted from the education, health and social services provided by our imperfect but generous country. A man who has decided to call himself a ‘sovereign citizen’, renouncing any allegiance or commitment or responsibility to the wider community. A man who – it would appear – has placed himself as the highest authority and the only person worthy of caring about.

In our capital cities, we witnessed massed protests against immigration, once again ignoring the fact that we – other than the Indigenous people of this land – are all immigrants. And

while many who attended were not neo-fascists, there was the horrific sight of young Australian men and women dressed in black and identifying as Nazis. Men and women who would probably shed a tear on ANZAC day, ignoring the irony that they are marching under a flag so many Australian servicepeople – in PNG and elsewhere - died to defeat.

Then attack on an Indigenous gathering place. A place elders are remembered. An attack by young men wielding sticks, kicking over signs and attacking women.

Contrast these events with the sacrifice and intentions of the PNG Martyrs.

To consider this is to raise the question – how do we want to live? What sort of people are we? What sort of country do we want to belong to? What do we want our lives to stand for? In what way would we choose to be remembered?

For those of you who are younger, these questions might sound a bit vague, but you are already being asked to make these decisions.

When you see injustice, perhaps in the community, at home or in your school, how do you choose to act?

How do you respond?

It's scary to step in. To speak up. To put yourself on the side of those being targeted. And it's not always safe. These things require judgement. And often, they need you to run and tell someone who can intervene safely.

But nothing happens to make things right if no-one does anything at all.

Living in this world actually requires courage to do what is right. I'd love to tell you that it's easy, or that – if you do stand up for people who are being unfairly or unjustly treated – it'll all end nicely, but I can't. It might not.

It didn't for the New Guinea Martyrs.

But it did make a difference.

After the war, the story of the Martyrs spread across the planet, inspiring many more people of faith to involve themselves in a country that – until then – they might not even have heard of. And their decisions made a difference.

The ACPNG is now lively, locally led, still reaching out. It has its troubles, just as we in the Anglican Church of Australia have ours. But the sacrifice of the Martyrs is still remembered as foundational to the life of the church. And the church continues to reach out to those who need companionship and care.

Through education. Through skills training. By providing opportunities for those who have been left behind – especially women.

And by preaching the Gospel – the transforming power of which continues to change the world.

The values and the faith that fired the missionaries – both the expats and the local martyrs – remains the same. It remains powerful and transformational. It welcomes people in and loves them instead of pushing them away and hating them.

So, each Martyrs Day we are asked to think about who we are, in the reflected light of these people of faith.

And what we want to do.

Of course I'm going to say that a financial gift through ABM to the church in PNG will do good. Because it truly will. Be it you or your school or your business, generosity will change lives.

But even more than that, the Martyrs would ask that we – you and I – commit our lives to outcomes that enrich all life – not just our own. That we reject selfish living. That we honour God and honour each other.

That we love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

That we love our neighbours as we love ourselves.

Amen.