

Sprediķis 2004. gada iesvētes dievkalpojumā
“The Vision of Your Life”
Confirmation service sermon

This day began a long time ago. It began when your parents started having their own visions of your life – when they started dreaming, imagining, hoping and anxiously worrying about the life of their children.

This day also began a long time ago, when our church began having visions of your life within the congregation. The church saw you as children in our Sunday school, at worship together, as active participants at the summer camp at Saulaine. The church saw you grow up in our midst, and had a vision of your life within this body of believers.

This day began a long time ago, when our Latvian community in Toronto had a vision of your life within our rapidly changing Latvian community throughout the world – and in Latvia itself. And collectively, our community wondered how you will face the challenges of the future, while still honouring the heritage of the past.

This day began a long time ago, when your friends and neighbours, this city and this land had a vision of your life – as all societies have visions of the potential- filled lives of their next generations. What contributions will you make to the common-wealth of this land? How will you mold its future?

Most importantly, this day began a long time ago, when each of you, - David, Paul, Žanna, Emīlija, Gustavs, Dāniels, Larisa, Erik and Pēters – began to have a vision of *your* life – and think of your own hopes and fears, the challenges and promise ahead of you.

2004. gadā iesvētītie jaunieši / 2004 Confirmation class



(no kreisas puses / from left : *Žanna Flude, Paul Henry Flude, David Aleksander Flude, Rolands William Pēters Skrastiņš, Dāniels Arnis Liepiņš, Emīlija Ārija Jansone, Larisa Sarma Liepiņa, Erik Ernest Oestreicher, Gustavs Kārlis Kalniņš*)

For some of you, the vision of your life has at times been clouded by great difficulties. For some, it has been viewed from the perspective of another land and culture far removed from all that had been familiar. For all of you the vision of your life has also been in and out of focus through a wonderfully chaotic adolescence.

That vision – the vision of your own life – is still incomplete, a bit blurry, coming to you in moments of recognition and awareness.

And whether we call it a „vision” and „plan,” or just a decision to study one subject instead of another – the vision of your life is also God’s way of talking to you – and to each one of us – about His purpose for us and the potential of our life within the providence of His grace.

Confirmation retreat at Saulaine 2004



Our Bible texts for today give us a glimpse of that kind of gracious potential.

In our first reading from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, St. Paul receives a vision which compels him to go where he had not expected to go. He had not intended to preach the gospel in Greece, but the vision of his life literally opened new horizons for him. So he went to the town of Philippi. There he met a remarkable woman named Lydia. Lydia also seemed to have had a radical vision of her life because Lydia was a successful merchant woman – a business woman in a male dominated culture. Maybe she had had a vision of her life in which she realized the same radical truth that Paul himself would later write in one of his letters, that, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male*

nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal 3:28) Lydia’s vision of the potential of her own life had opened new opportunities for her. And when she heard Paul’s preaching, she responded with an open heart, knowing that her own life experience had affirmed the truth of new life, new possibilities and a new vision for all through God’s liberating power in Jesus Christ.

The vision of St. John in the reading from the Book of Revelation is filled with the poetically rich images of glorious light, rivers of waters of life, and a new holy city as the image of God dwelling among His people. And behind these wonderfully evocative visionary images is a basic and simple truth: the true centre of our life is God, and we should not allow other influences to take His place.

That can happen. And it happens all too often in our lives, when we give in to everything and everyone who would seek to take the place of God in our lives – and who would rob us of the vision of our life. Mother Teresa knew that and she wrote a few comments on the necessity of keeping true to God’s vision of our life. She wrote:

*People are often unreasonable, illogical and self-centered; Forgive them anyway.
If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; Be kind anyway.
If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies; Succeed anyway!
If you are honest and direct, people may cheat you; Be honest and direct anyway.
What you spend years building, someone may destroy overnight; Build anyway!
If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous; Be happy anyway.
The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow. Do good anyway.
Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough; Give the world the best you’ve got anyway!*

*You see, - writes Mother Teresa - in the final analysis, it is all between **you** and **God**;
It was **never** between **you** and **them** anyway.*

The vision of your life is ultimately something between you and God. It will be found and fulfilled through your trusting – if at times turbulent – relationship with God. It will be found and fulfilled in a relationship governed by God's peace.

In our Gospel text, when Jesus leave us *His peace*, he is not just wishing us an absence of turmoil in our lives, but is offering us a relationship with God, in which our true humanity is secured, and life-destroying falsehood is abandoned. He is offering us a *true* life, in which our visions for our life can be realized.

Through Jesus Christ, God gives us this life affirming relationship with Him, but he gives it, as Jesus said, “not as the world gives.”

False visions are offered to us daily – in the disturbing images of power driven nations, in the empty sound bites of politicians, in the vacuous images of pop idols and pseudo-personalities. The visions they offer us come and go; they have no real *life in them*.

One observer of modern spirituality noted that:

Nothing that is *real* can be threatened;
Nothing that is *false* can live.
Therein lies the peace of God.

If the vision of your life is real, nothing can threaten it. If the vision of your life is false, it will not live.

It may seem incongruous to many to speak of a “vision” as real, but I think that the hopes and dreams we have for others and ourselves are the most real things we can have, for they define who we are and what we want to become.

David, Paul, Žanna, Emīlija, Gustavs, Dāniels, Larisa, Erik and Pēters – today is about your vision of your life. The rest of us – your family, your friends, this church, community and country – can only offer our best efforts to help you fulfill your vision. And we will do so, encouraging and supporting, (your parents, in particular, will be writing a lot of cheques!) – and helping you to follow and fulfill the vision of your life.

Amen.

Confirmation, May 16th, 2004

St. John's Latvian Lutheran Church of Toronto