

Welcome to the
Parish of St Michael
Thirroul and Wombarra
www.thirroulcatholic.org.au

moving forward as a parish family
One of the Northern Illawarra Parishes



THE HOLIDAY BULLETIN 2018-2019



Holy Family
29/30 December



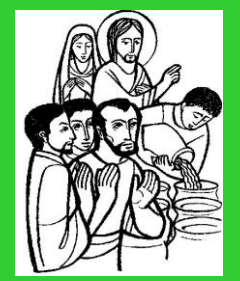
Mary Mother of God
1 January



Epiphany
5/6 January



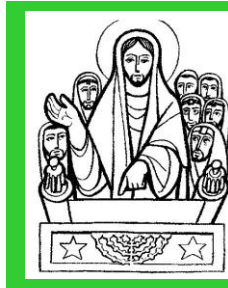
Baptism of the Lord
12/13 January



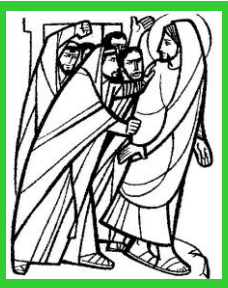
Ordinary 2 C
19/20 January



Australia Day
26 January



Ordinary 3 C
27/28 January



Ordinary 4 C
2/3 February

OTHER FEAST DAYS

- 1 January World Day of Peace
- 2 January St Basil the Great, *bishop, doctor*
St Gregory Nazianzen, *bishop, doctor*
- 7 January St Raymond of Penyafort, *priest, lawyer*
- 17 January St Anthony, *abbot*
- 24 January St Francis de Sales, *bishop, doctor*
- 25 January Conversion of St Paul
- 26 January Australia Day 9:00am Mass**
- 28 January St Thomas Aquinas, *priest, doctor*
- 31 January St John Bosco, *priest*
- 2 February Presentation of the Lord (Candlemas)
- 5 February St Agatha, *virgin, martyr*
- 6 February St Paul Miki & companions, *martyrs*

Australia Day Mass 9:00am

Lent begins on 6 March

Welcome to the "Holiday Bulletin" for January – for avid readers! There will be no "weekly" bulletins until 9/10 February. Enjoy your reading, including Pope Francis' message for World Day of Peace. Thank you to all who have worked for and been of service to our Parish in so many, many ways over the last year. Your responsible, regular service, generosity, cheerfulness, support, hospitality, courtesy, integrity and deep faith are most appreciated. We continue to pray the Spirit will be our guiding Star.

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR SUNDAY MASSES

Holy Family – Year C – 29/30 Dec
1st Reading 1 Samuel 1:20-22,24-28
2nd Reading 1 John 3:1-2,21-24
Gospel Luke 2:41-52

Mary, Mother of God – Year C – 1 Jan
1st Reading Numbers 6:22-27
2nd Reading Galatians 4:4-7
Gospel Luke 2:16-21

Epiphany – Year C – 5/6 Jan
1st Reading Isaiah 60:1-6
2nd Reading Ephesians 3:2-3,5-6
Gospel Matthew 2:1-12

Baptism of the Lord – Year C – 12/13 Jan
1st Reading Isaiah 40:1-5,9-11
2nd Reading Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7
Gospel Luke 3:15-16,21-22

Ordinary 2 – Year C – 19/20 Jan
1st Reading Isaiah 62:1-5
2nd Reading 1 Corinthians 12:4-11
Gospel John 2:1-11

Ordinary 3 – Year C – 27/28 Jan
1st Reading Nehemiah 8:2-6,8-10
2nd Reading 1 Corinthians 12:12-30
Gospel Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21

Ordinary 4 – Year C – 3/4 Feb
1st Reading Jeremiah 1:4-5,17-19
2nd Reading 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13
Gospel Luke 4:21-30

SUNDAY MASS TIMES

Church of St Michael • Thirroul
Saturday – 5:30pm
Sunday – 8:00am

Bulli Sunday 8:30am and 5:30pm
Corrimal Saturday 6pm, Sunday 9:30am

Monday *no liturgies until 4 Feb*
Tuesday Thirroul 5:30pm
Wednesday Thirroul 9:00am
Thursday Thirroul 9:00am
Friday Thirroul 9:30am

Patrick Vaughan • Parish Priest Andrew Granc ofm, Geoff Allen, Ken Cafe ofm

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JANUARY Parish Office Hours – Tuesdays and Wednesdays – 9:00am to 12:30pm and 1:00pm to 3:30pm

FRANCIS, BISHOP OF ROME
52ND MESSAGE FOR
WORLD DAY OF PEACE
1 JANUARY 2019

Good politics
is at the service of peace

1. *“Peace be to this house!”*

In sending his disciples forth on mission, Jesus told them: “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a person of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon them; but if not, it shall return to you” (Luke 10:5-6).

Bringing peace is central to the mission of Christ’s disciples. That peace is offered to all those men and women who long for peace amid the tragedies and violence that mark human history. The “house” of which Jesus speaks is every family, community, country and continent, in all their diversity and history. It is first and foremost each individual person, without distinction or discrimination. But it is also our “common home”: the world in which God has placed us and which we are called to care for and cultivate.

So let this be my greeting at the beginning of the New Year: “Peace be to this house!”



2. *The challenge of good politics*

Peace is like the hope which the poet Charles Péguy celebrated. It is like a delicate flower struggling to blossom on the stony ground of violence. We know that the thirst for power at any price leads to abuses and injustice. Politics is an essential means of building human community and institutions, but when political life is not seen as a form of service to society as a whole, it can become a means of oppression, marginalization and even destruction.



Jesus tells us that, “if anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35). In the words of Pope

Paul VI, “to take politics seriously at its different levels – local, regional, national and worldwide – is to affirm the duty of each individual to acknowledge the reality and value of the freedom offered him to work at one and the same time for the good of the city, the nation and all humankind”.



Political office and political responsibility thus constantly challenge those called to the service of their country to make every effort to protect those who live there and to create the conditions for a worthy and just future. If exercised with basic respect for the life, freedom and dignity of persons, political life can indeed become an outstanding form of charity.

3. *Charity and human virtues: the basis of politics at the service of human rights and peace*

Pope Benedict XVI noted that “every Christian is called to practise charity in a manner corresponding to his or her vocation and according to the degree of influence he or she wields in the *pólis*... When animated by charity, commitment to the common good has greater worth than a merely secular and political stand would have... Humanity’s earthly activity, when inspired and sustained by charity, contributes to the building of the universal city of God, which is the goal of the history of the human family”. This is a program on which all politicians, whatever their culture or religion, can agree, if they wish to work together for the good of the human family and to practise those human virtues that sustain all sound political activity: justice, equality, mutual respect, sincerity, honesty, fidelity.

In this regard, it may be helpful to recall the “Beatitudes of the Politician”, proposed by Vietnamese Cardinal François-Xavier Nguyen Văn Thuan, a faithful witness to the Gospel, who died in 2002:

Blessed be the politician with a lofty sense and deep understanding of his or her role.

Blessed be the politician who personally exemplifies credibility.

Blessed be the politician who works for the common good and not his or her own interest.

Blessed be the politician who remains consistent.

Blessed be the politician who works for unity.

Blessed be the politician who works to accomplish radical change.

Blessed be the politician who is capable of listening.

Blessed be the politician who is without fear.

Every election and re-election, and every stage of public life, is an opportunity to return to the original points of reference that inspire justice and law. One thing is certain: good politics is at the service of peace. It respects and promotes fundamental human rights, which are at the same time mutual obligations, enabling a bond of trust and gratitude to be forged between present and future generations.

4. *Political vices*

Sadly, together with its virtues, politics also has its share of vices, whether due to personal incompetence or to flaws in the system and its institutions. Clearly, these vices detract from the credibility of political life overall, as well as the authority, decisions and actions of those engaged in it. These vices, which undermine the ideal of an authentic democracy, bring disgrace to public life and threaten social harmony. We think of corruption in its varied forms: the misappropriation of public resources, the exploitation of individuals, the denial of rights, the flouting of community rules, dishonest gain, the justification of power by force or the arbitrary appeal to *raison d’état* and the refusal to relinquish power. To which we can add xenophobia, racism, lack of concern for the natural environment, the plundering of natural resources for the sake of quick profit and contempt for those forced into exile.



5. *Good politics promotes the participation of the young and trust in others*

When the exercise of political power aims only at protecting the interests of a few privileged individuals, the future is compromised and young people can be tempted to lose confidence, since they are relegated to the margins of society without the possibility of helping to build the future. But when politics concretely fosters the talents of young people and their aspirations, peace grows in their outlook and on their faces. It becomes a confident assurance that says, “I trust you and with you I believe” that we can all work together for the common good. Politics is at the service of peace if it finds expression in the recognition of the gifts and abilities of each individual. “What could be more beautiful than an outstretched hand? It was meant by God to offer and to receive. God did not want it to kill (cf. Genesis 4:1ff) or to inflict suffering, but to offer care and help in life. Together with our heart and our intelligence, our hands too can become a means of dialogue”.

Everyone can contribute his or her stone to help build the common home. Authentic political life, grounded in law and

in frank and fair relations between individuals, experiences renewal whenever we are convinced that every woman, man and generation bring the promise of new relational, intellectual, cultural and spiritual energies. That kind of trust is never easy to achieve, because human relations are complex, especially in our own times, marked by a climate of mistrust rooted in the fear of others or of strangers, or anxiety about one's personal security. Sadly, it is also seen at the political level, in attitudes of rejection or forms of nationalism that call into question the fraternity of which our globalized world has such great need. Today more than ever, our societies need "artisans of peace" who can be messengers and authentic witnesses of God the Father, who wills the good and the happiness of the human family.



6. No to war and to the strategy of fear

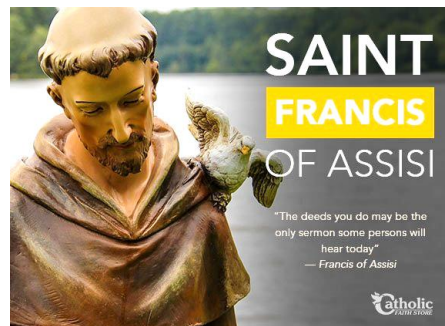
A hundred years after the end of the First World War, as we remember the young people killed in those battles and the civilian populations torn apart, we are more conscious than ever of the terrible lesson taught by fratricidal wars: peace can never be reduced solely to a balance between power and fear. To threaten others is to lower them to the status of objects and to deny their dignity. This is why we state once more that an escalation of intimidation, and the uncontrolled proliferation of arms, is contrary to morality and the search for true peace. Terror exerted over those who are most vulnerable contributes to the exile of entire populations who seek a place of peace. Political addresses that tend to blame every evil on migrants and to deprive the poor of hope are unacceptable. Rather, there is a need to reaffirm that peace is based on respect for each person, whatever his or her background, on respect for the law and the common good, on respect for the environment entrusted to our care and for the richness of the moral tradition inherited from past generations. Our thoughts turn in a particular way to all those children currently living in areas of conflict, and to all those who work to protect their lives and defend their rights. One out of every six children in our world is affected by the violence of war or its effects, even when they are not enrolled as child soldiers or held hostage by armed groups. The witness given by those who work to defend them and their dignity is most precious for the future of humanity.

7. A great project of peace

In these days, we celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in the wake of the Second World War. In this context, let us also remember the observation of Pope John XXIII: "Man's awareness of his rights must inevitably lead him to the recognition of his duties. The possession of rights involves the duty of implementing those rights, for they are the expression of a man's personal dignity. And the possession of rights also involves their recognition and respect by others".

Peace, in effect, is the fruit of a great political project grounded in the mutual responsibility and interdependence of human beings. But it is also a challenge that demands to be taken up ever anew. It entails a conversion of heart and soul; it is both interior and communal; and it has three inseparable aspects:

- peace with oneself, rejecting inflexibility, anger and impatience; in the words of Saint Francis de Sales, showing "a bit of sweetness towards oneself" in order to offer "a bit of sweetness to others";
- peace with others: family members, friends, strangers, the poor and the suffering, being unafraid to encounter them and listen to what they have to say;
- peace with all creation, rediscovering the grandeur of God's gift and our individual and shared responsibility as inhabitants of this world, citizens and builders of the future.



"The deeds you do may be the only sermon some persons will hear today."
– Francis of Assisi

The politics of peace, conscious of and deeply concerned for every situation of human vulnerability, can always draw inspiration from the Magnificat, the hymn that Mary, the Mother of Christ the Saviour and Queen of Peace, sang in the name of all humankind: "He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. He has shown the strength of his arm; he has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones, and has lifted up the lowly; ...for he has remembered his promise of mercy, the promise he made to our fathers, to Abraham and his children for ever" (Luke 1:50-55).

From the Vatican, 8 December 2018

Francis.

Pope Francis: The Call to Holiness

When Saint Francis of Assisi saw that some of his disciples were engaged in teaching, he wanted to avoid the temptation to Gnosticism. He wrote to Saint Anthony of Padua: "I am pleased that you teach sacred theology to the brothers, provided that... you do not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion during study of this kind". Francis recognized the temptation to turn the Christian experience into a set of intellectual exercises that distance us from the freshness of the Gospel. Saint Bonaventure, on the other hand, pointed out that true Christian wisdom can never be separated from mercy towards our neighbour: "The greatest possible wisdom is to share fruitfully what we have to give... Even as mercy is the companion of wisdom, avarice is its enemy". "There are activities that, united to contemplation, do not prevent the latter, but rather facilitate it, such as works of mercy and devotion". ...

I regret that ideologies lead us at times to two harmful errors. On the one hand, there is the error of those Christians who separate these Gospel demands from their personal relationship with the Lord, from their interior union with him, from openness to his grace. Christianity thus becomes a sort of NGO stripped of the luminous mysticism so evident in the lives of Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Teresa of Calcutta, and many others. For these great saints, mental prayer, the love of God and the reading of the Gospel in no way detracted from their passionate and effective commitment to their neighbours; quite the



opposite. ...

A similar approach is found in the Old Testament: "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 22:21). "When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:33-34). This is not a notion invented by some Pope, or a momentary fad. In today's world too, we are called to follow the path of spiritual wisdom proposed by the prophet Isaiah to show what is pleasing to God. "Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn" (58:7-8).

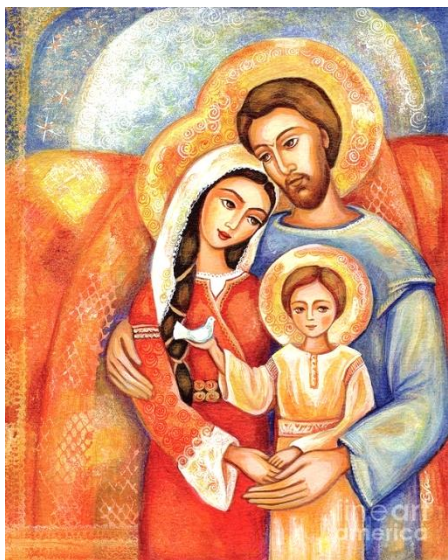
– Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exultate*, The Call to Holiness, 19 March 2018, nn. 46, 100, 102.

THE SUNDAY READINGS

29/30 DECEMBER 2018

HOLY FAMILY

The Saviour has been born to us! The liturgies of the Christmas season invite us to reflect upon this basic truth of Christian faith: the eternal son has become one of us and shared our life experience. He grew up in a family; parental authority shaped his human development; at the age prescribed for Jewish youths, he attended the Passover festival with his parents; a self-reliant lad, he was presumed throughout a whole day to be somewhere else in the caravan returning from Jerusalem.



We speak of family ‘bonds’ and ‘ties’. If they are not transformed into adult-to-adult relationships, as we grow up, these family ties can become a bondage that inhibits personal development. The story Luke hands on to us in today’s gospel reminds us that, as his life choices were made, the relationship Jesus had with Mary and Joseph had to be transformed. The first reading from 1 Samuel recounts an old story of Samuel, the prophetic leader who anointed David as king. Despite similarities between this story and the story told by Luke – a family going up to Jerusalem, a child’s destiny foreshadowed – there are significant differences. The Old Testament story is a legend that serves as an introduction to a collection of historical traditions in which Samuel plays a key role. If we recognise the hand of God in Samuel’s young life of service in the temple, it does not come about through his own choice, but through that of his devout mother. Luke’s story is closer to our common human experience – Mary has to come to terms with intimations of a decision that will lead Jesus to leave home to take up the life of a wanderer, carrying out the mission that will shape his life – and will ultimately lead to his death. She begins to know the ‘sword’ Simeon foretold would pierce her soul’.

Jesus, as the liturgy of Christmas Day has reminded us, is ‘the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart’, came into the world to make the Father known. He

grew up as a dutiful son of his human parents; but as he ‘grew in wisdom’ – through his contact with the faith traditions of his people – he knew in the mysterious depths of his human experience the call to identify with the great mission that had brought him into the world: ‘Why are you looking for me? Did you not know that I must give myself to my Father’s affairs?’ Bringing us this brief narrative, Luke intimates what lies ahead. His gospel narrative moves towards its climax when Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem to meet his fate. Ultimately, it is ‘after three days’ that he is restored to his disciples as their Risen Lord.

As the bonds that unite parent and child mature, they are both blessed. In the background of Luke’s story, we recognise the ongoing fidelity of Mary, as she came to accept and identify with the response of her Son, as the first of all his disciples. The second reading from the first letter of John chimes in with our reflections upon the shared life of the Holy Family. In the end, the mission of Jesus was to open the way to our sharing in his risen life, sharing all things with the Father – sharing in the family life of God, as it were. The choices he made, in the freedom he shares with us, can inspire us to make our life choices, knowing that each of us has a unique place in the Father’s loving plan.

1 JANUARY 2019

MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

The passage from Numbers includes this blessing: “The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!”



Mary was filled with God because she was at peace, and we too should experience peace from God sending forth “into our hearts the spirit of his Son.”

What could be more peaceful than the image of a baby lying in a manger? A prayer for this solemnity refers to Jesus as *Wonderful God, Prince of Peace*.

“We present to the Blessed Virgin difficult individual situations, so that she may place them before her Son, asking that he alleviate and change them. But we also present to her social situations and the international crisis itself, in their worrying aspects of poverty, unemployment, shortage of food, the arms race, contempt for human rights, and situations or dangers of conflict, partial or total.”

– Pope John Paul II,

Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 1987:49

“Let it be done unto me according to your will,” Mary had said.

A real Archangel had appeared, handing out shocking news. What a jolt the Annunciation must have been for someone so unassuming, so self-effacing as Mary. Did she flinch? No. She reacted with calm. She said simply, “I accept. Tell me how this wonderful birth will happen.”

But the series of events that followed do not seem to warrant calm. Mary became a betrothed woman found pregnant. Her husband-to-be had been about to divorce her until an angel explained things in a dream.

And since walking was the usual mode of transportation in those days, sometimes for astonishing distances, the census call did not make her promise easy. It was the last part of her pregnancy—the most difficult time of all to travel from Nazareth in the far north of Israel down to Bethlehem, which is south of Jerusalem. Not an impossible distance, but in the last month of pregnancy, a real challenge. This was God’s will and she had accepted it. Joseph in his kindness got a donkey for Mary to ride.

When they finally got to Bethlehem, a very small village, the inn had no room for them. And there is nothing in Scripture about a cave. The most likely place would have been some kind of barn or stable for domestic animals, since the infant was “lying in a manger.” This birth was not bathed in satin finery, not luxurious. Jesus was born into poverty and discomfort.

We see Mary just days after the gruelling journey and the amazing birth (Gospel). She is carrying out the promise she made to Gabriel. All is well. The child is healthy and cute, and the angels, unable to contain their joy, have once more danced into Mary’s life. Even the animals understand. It is breathtaking.

It would seem that Mary’s calm would now seek some quiet and rest after all that had happened. But no. Unkempt shepherds, straight from the fields, “went in haste” to the shelter, announcing in their craggy voices that they knew who this baby is. Angels had told them. Wise men, or as we now say, kings, found the holy shelter and barged right in, bearing royal gifts.

Does this all impinge on Mary’s peace? No. She is good to her word. The Gospel says that she quietly “kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.”

How could she do this? Part of it was her personality, of course, but even more, it was the presence of God deep within her, so deep that she let her life become one with his, and produced a son. Life on this earth is never free from hazards and setbacks and stunning difficulties, but as Mary let her heart reflect, and as she watched each movement of the newborn baby, she breathed in a holiness, a degree of holiness that even she had not known before.

“May it be done unto me according to your will.” Her acceptance was complete.

As we witness this calm, within a crowded, difficult, surprising stable, as we keep the picture of it within our own hearts, may each of us be able to echo her words, “May it be done unto me according to your will.”

5/6 JANUARY 2019
EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

The Magi appear at the Crib

Through the Incarnation, the generosity and mercy of God have finally appeared among us – in the life of one who is the very expression of the Father’s greatness. And so, from earliest times the Church’s Christmas celebration has made reference the Epiphany, or ‘Manifestation’ of the Lord – symbolised in the story of today’s gospel, but also realised in a special way in the Lord’s baptism, and in the ‘first sign’ he worked at the marriage in Cana. It comes as no surprise, when we hear it read, to find that today’s first reading from Isaiah has a very ancient association with this festival: ‘Arise, shine out Jerusalem. The nations come to your light and kings to your brightness’. This passage – from the writings of the Isaian tradition from the period after the return from the exile – expresses a vision of Israel fulfilling its role as ‘a light to the nations’. Sharing in the ‘glory’ (or incomparable greatness) of the Lord himself, the holy city will attract the wealth of the nations as the kings of the earth share in its rebuilding.



This Old Testament text and its parallels (see Psalm 72:10) may have inspired the story recounted by Matthew in today’s gospel. It is possible that an unusual astronomical event may also have contributed to its inspiration, calling to mind the prophecy of Balaam, ‘a star is emerging from Jacob’ (Numbers 24:17). As it stands, the story is filled with symbolic meaning. The Magi represent the nations of the earth finding the Saviour of the world – in contrast to the scribes of Israel, familiar with the Scriptures but not recognising their fulfilment; the gifts of the Magi are symbolic of the world’s confession of faith in Christ – **gold** for **royalty**, **frankincense** for **priesthood**, **myrrh** for the one who is to **die**; notoriously ruthless Herod reminds us of earthly powers that obstruct the designs of God. We should note, especially, the significance of the words, ‘going in they saw the child with his mother, Mary’. While Luke’s narrative of Christ’s conception and birth has Mary as its central figure, Matthew’s account of the virgin birth is centred on Joseph. The words we have quoted, however, reflect the importance already given to Mary in the community that gave us Matthew’s gospel.

The second reading from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians continues the theme of ‘manifestation’, as it takes us into the depths of Paul’s vision of faith in Christ. For Paul, of course, God’s dealings with the human family have come to a magnificent climax in what God has done for the world in Christ. As we read in the opening lines of the letter to the Ephesians, Paul interprets Christ’s saving work as the revelation of a great ‘mystery’ – the real purpose God has had in mind since the beginning of creation: ‘He has let us know the mystery of his purpose, to bring everything together under Christ as head, everything in the heavens and everything on earth’. Through his ministry, Paul has seen the realisation of what is symbolised in the story of the Magi – the whole human race is called with old Israel, to share ‘the same inheritance’, to be ‘parts of the same body’, to share in ‘promise’ that the ‘gospel’ has brought to the world ‘in Christ Jesus’. The wise in the story are those who are able to welcome the new star as a gift from God and not as a threat; the wise are signs of hope.

12/13 JANUARY 2019
BAPTISM OF THE LORD

After his baptism by John in the Jordan, Jesus emerged from obscurity and began his public ministry. Recalling the humility of the Baptiser – who declared himself unworthy to perform even the slave’s act of loosening the straps of the messiah’s sandals – Luke underlines how amazing is the event that is to take place, as Jesus submits himself to John’s baptism of repentance. ‘I baptize with water’, John declares, ‘He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire’ – Luke’s narrative of the first Pentecost is clearly foreshadowed.



Believers of every generation have been puzzled by this unexpected turn of events. Seeking the reason why, takes us to the heart of God’s plan of salvation. This plan, in the words of the Greek Fathers of the early Church, is an expression of the divine ‘condescension’ – God would open the way to eternal life for a lost world, not by a remote divine edict, but in a way that gives expression to the mystery of God’s active love for the human family. The Father ‘gave his only Son’ (John 3:16); the Son ‘emptied himself, taking the form of a slave’ – he would give expression to God’s compassion and generosity for a world that was lost, by taking upon himself the only way that can lead from our world’s destructive

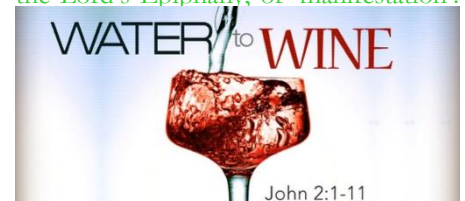
darkness and selfishness, into the light and life for which we were made. By his sharing in that way he consecrates it; and in the Paschal Mystery its mysteriously foreshadowed he is to become our ‘Way’ (John 14:6).

Today’s first reading is the opening passage of ‘The Book of Consolation’ of the Isaian writings. These writings had an encouraging message for God’s people in their exile – a message that resonates with messianic expectations. Though all may seem to be lost, they must trust in the promises brought by their faith. Their returning to their homeland will be like a new Exodus, as the desert wilderness is transformed into a ‘way for the Lord’, the valleys are filled and the mountains laid low; ‘the glory of the Lord’ will lead the way, just as it did in the first Exodus (see Exodus 40:36). (It is not surprising that the New Testament writers associated this passage with the herald ministry of John the Baptiser.)

After foreshadowing how he will make himself the way forward for struggling humanity, Jesus gives himself to prayer, and the tangible presence of the Father and the Spirit point to the full implications of the saving mystery that is to come. There is a symmetry in the gospel story – if the Saviour’s public life ends with the climax of the Paschal Mystery, it begins with a foreshadowing of this same mystery, as Jesus goes into the waters of the world’s sinfulness and emerges into the glory of the Father’s acceptance. Christian baptism has its meaning from both these events. As Paul writes, we ‘were baptized into his death’ that with him we might ‘begin living a new life’. Today’s reading from Paul’s letter to Titus reminds us of the great benefits that are ours through baptism’s ‘cleansing water of rebirth’, now that finally ‘God’s grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race’.

19/20 JANUARY 2019
2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

In today’s liturgy – as we begin the cycle of the Sundays of the Year – the gospel reading from John tells the story of the ‘first sign’ worked by Jesus, in the presence of his disciples, in Cana in Galilee. With it we round off the celebration of the Lord’s Epiphany, or ‘manifestation’.



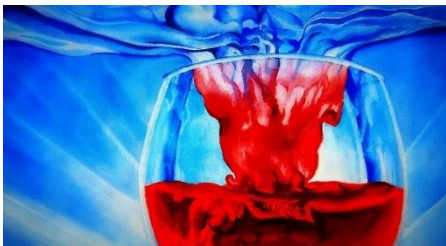
The meditative tradition of the community that gave us this gospel has gathered together several ‘signs’ – miracles or works of Jesus – in which they have found a rich symbolism that nourishes their faith in the Eternal Son who came forth from the Father. As it concludes, this gospel is called a ‘book of signs’, put

26/27 JANUARY 2019

3RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

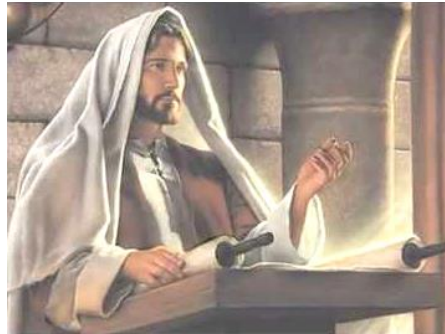
together so that the reader 'may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God', and believing this 'have life through him'. In this 'first' sign, it is solemnly announced, Jesus 'revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him'. We are given notice that we should find here far more than the moving story of a wedding celebration that was saved from disaster by a miracle worked by Jesus.

There are few occasions in our human experience that bring the joy and celebration brought by a wedding. The presence of Jesus and his recently-called disciples has unmistakable overtones. In the gospel's next chapter, John the Baptist will describe himself as 'the bridegroom's friend', who must disappear before Christ, 'the bridegroom who has the bride'. We are reminded that the great prophets of Israel dared to call God, the God of the covenant, the devoted 'Husband' of the Chosen People; reminded also that Jesus referred to himself as 'the Bridegroom' (Matthew 9:15). This theme is taken up in the first reading – like last week's taken from the later writings of the Isaian tradition. Now the forthright message of hope is given to an exiled community struggling to re-establish themselves after their return from Babylon: 'I will not grow weary until Zion's integrity shines out like the dawn'. Past infidelity will not be remembered, as the Lord bestows new names of endearment: 'As the bridegroom rejoices in his bride, so will your God rejoice in you'.



These great promises will be realized, the gospel tells us, with the coming of the Saviour's 'hour'. In the seven days described beforehand, Jesus has called his first disciples. Now they must look forward to something that far surpasses the grandeur of the first Creation – called to mind by the reference to seven days. The abundant wine reminds us of the 'new wine' spoken of by Jesus: the new order of things that he was inaugurating through his Paschal Mystery. In contrast, the water jars of 'the Jews' – representing those who refuse to believe in Christ – are empty. The quantity of wine produced (**600 litres** – far more than required for the occasion!) underlines the abundant generosity of what is to be hoped for. When she makes her request on behalf of God's simple people, Mary – the 'woman' who personifies the Church, the new Bride – is reminded that the generous realization of the hopes of Israel depends entirely upon the will of the Father. In response, she shows herself a model disciple, with words that are meant for all of us: 'Do whatever he tells you.'

Today's gospel reading begins with Luke's famous account of the care with which he has researched the traditions of the first Christian communities; it then omits the account of Christ's infancy, his baptism by John, and his forty days in the wilderness (which feature elsewhere in the year's liturgies); and it continues with a text describing the beginnings of Jesus' ministry, preaching the Kingdom of God in Galilee. Adopting the pattern established by Mark before him, Luke has the ministry in Galilee leading into the courageous journey of Jesus towards Jerusalem to meet his fate, as he prepares his disciples for what lies ahead.



The teaching of Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth, concerning his fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies, and Luke's emphasis upon the traditions of the community, remind us that the world's great religious traditions venerate the writings and teachings that put them in touch with their past. A healthy community keeps alive the memory of what inspired its origins. The first reading from the chronicles of Nehemiah describes a moving moment in the reestablishment of the Jerusalem community, after return from the Exile. The common people, ignorant now of Israel's traditions, are overwhelmed with concern when Ezra, the scribe, reads and explains for them the long-neglected Book of the Law. They are reassured, however, being told that the joy brought by renewed observance of old Israel's traditions will be their 'stronghold'. How much more grateful and responsive should we be, as today's renewal makes available to us the far superior treasures of the New Testament!

Luke tells his readers that the gospel he is introducing is a faithful expression of the faith that has been handed on in the community (a common theme of New Testament writers, see, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 etc.), handed on by 'those who from the outset were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word'; his investigations confirm as 'well founded' the teachings they are familiar with. Prior to the writing of the four gospels that have become the heart of the New Testament, the bulk of the material they were to use was circulating in the many small stories told of Jesus by those who were spreading the Good News. Our four gospels put that material together within the time line of a continuous story leading to the passion, death

and resurrection of the Saviour. As they make use of this material, each of the four brings out themes that are dear to them and the communities they belong to. In his gospel, Luke – a well-educated, Gentile convert, conscious of the needs of his fellow converts – reveals himself as a warm hearted and sensitive interpreter of the faith, bringing out such themes as: the joy of believing, the blessings found in prayer, the central role of the Spirit in our Christian lives, the important place of women in the public life of Jesus, and the privileged place the poor of the world have in the designs of God.

The climax of today's gospel, of course, is the claim of Jesus that he brings 'fulfilment' to the splendid hopes of old Israel. The Christian Church is following the example of Jesus himself, as it treasures the traditions in which the faith of God's people has been expressed.

2/3 FEBRUARY 2019

4TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

The theme of today's liturgy is the role of the prophet. Prophets have always had an important place in the life of the Church. This comes as a surprise to most people – probably because they think of prophets as those who predict future events: something that rarely happened. Prophets are people who – because they are in tune with God – help us to see things as God sees them. They point out the way God is calling us to follow, and remind us of the future God has in store for those who trust in him. At Vatican II, it was recognized that the important contribution such people can make has been neglected in the life of the Church in recent centuries. Every healthy Christian community has its prophets; we should be grateful for them and open to what they have to contribute to our life together. As Vatican II has told us, we are all called – through our baptism – to share in Christ's role as the Father's great Prophet.



The first reading from the prophet Jeremiah reminds us of the importance of the prophets of the Old Testament. In tune with God's ways, they called the people and their rulers to recognize these ways and to live by them. Jeremiah knew that he was called to a difficult role. His life was in constant danger, and he knew great suffering, because he answered God's call. We are all called to stand up for the ways of God. Down through the ages, even to our own day, many Christians have given their lives because they

knew that they were called to challenge the world's selfishness and blindness.

Jesus – sent to give his witness to the ways of his Father – was the greatest of all prophets. In the end, he gave his life for the truth he brought to the world. In today's gospel reading from Luke – a continuation of the passage we heard last Sunday – we see Jesus sharing in the kind of experience many have had, as they have tried to build up the life of a small, closed community. When they heard him speak, the people of his village were filled with surprise and admiration at first; but they found it hard to accept the new role Jesus had assumed – why had he ministered in rival towns before coming to them? In the end, however, Jesus experienced the violent reaction Jeremiah had known. As he challenged them to broaden their horizons and recognize that God's blessings to be given to the gentiles, their mood changed, and they came close to lynching him. It is obvious that this took place when the ministry of Jesus was well established. However, Luke begins the story of the ministry in Galilee with this incident because it provides a kind of summary of what is to follow – the Good News of God's generous ways is rejected by the people of the Synagogue, who seek his death. Luke may well, in the mysterious escape of Jesus, be foreshadowing the final triumph of the Resurrection.

Today's familiar reading from St Paul to the Corinthians is a splendid complement to our main theme. Having 'the gift of prophecy' and an 'understanding of all the mysteries' will achieve nothing if it is not inspired by love. Nothing opens the way to the hearing of a challenging message more effectively than an approach full of good will – if faith, hope and love are the constants in the shared life of the Church, 'the greatest of these is love'.

“The Are Breaking Him”: the Stateless Refugee Australia May Never Release



Asylum seekers on a boat near Christmas Island. Gulistan and her son, Akam, left Indonesia for the island in 2013.

Akam* [*names have been changed for legal reasons*] has not known a day of liberty since arriving on Christmas Island in 2013 aged 16.

“This experience has changed my life completely. Over the years, I have become more depressed and suffer from more anxiety. I really don't understand: the authorities don't really care about refugees.”

In meetings with case workers, healthcare workers, the Commonwealth ombudsman and others, Akam has repeatedly stressed his desire to return to school. During five years in Australia, he has been housed between half a dozen detention centres in various cities.

“When I arrived in Australia, I had just started high school. My education has since been destroyed. I was moved around the country to different detention centres and was not offered any schooling for the first two years, even though I was only young. I was finally allowed to complete Year 10 but have not been permitted to attend school since then.”

He has found the strictures of detention cloying and chafed against its repetitive regulation. At one point Serco guards were mandated to monitor him at arm's length 24 hours a day.

He says he only wants a chance.

“All I want is to be allowed out of detention so that I can contribute to Australian society and help others. My dream is to become a scientist or politician but they are taking away my hope.”

In a Department of Home Affairs record of interview, he accepted his earlier behavioural issues.

“I need to get out to live my life,” Akam said. “I have said things whilst here but this was all due to the frustration of being in detention. I wouldn't do any of the things talked about. In any event, I was a child when I said these things.

“I want to live in Australia, I will not be a threat to the Australian community. I am a good person, I've done nothing wrong – all the incidents that have been recorded against me have not been my fault, other people have either made up stories or provoked me.

“I don't want to be an old man still in detention.”

Gulistan says the ongoing and indefinite detention is damaging her son. Each time she visits, she finds him a little more diminished.

“He is depressed, he is always asking me, ‘Why did you bring us here, you only made life worse?’ He never eats, or he has one meal a day. And he is completely isolated, he is always alone in his room.”

She says he has grown mistrustful and is finding it increasingly hard to relate to the world outside detention.

“He says to me, ‘Are people like this outside? Are they like the guards here, or are they better?’”

Gulistan campaigns furiously for her son: she visits MPs' offices and meets with lawyers and advocates working on his behalf. She drafts letters in support of his case and catches a slow bus to visit him.

“His detention is like jail for all of us,” she says. “I am his mother and I will do anything to help him. But I can't. And I feel helpless.”

Doctors have consistently said detention is harming Akam and that his long period of high-security incarceration will make his integration into society increasingly difficult.

Akam has been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and hyperkinetic conduct disorder, both of which are exacerbated by his detention, and he has been treated in hospital for suicidal ideation.

An International Health and Medical Services report from 2014 states: “The psychiatrist [who examined Akam] advises that remaining in his current confined environment is exacerbating his mental health.”

The Commonwealth ombudsman has written three reports on Akam's incarceration, telling the Australian government a solution must be found – in increasingly frank terms.

The last report, tabled in parliament in October last year, said: “[Akam] is a young, isolated and vulnerable person with detention fatigue, poor social skills, and impulsivity. International Health and Medical Services reports that psychiatrists have continuously advised that [Akam]'s ongoing detention is detrimental to his mental health and recommended that he be released into the community with mental health support and enrolment in an educational course such as TAFE.

“The ombudsman notes with concern the government's duty of care to detainees and the serious risk to physical and mental health prolonged immigration detention may pose.”

The immigration minister's own department recommended, as long ago as June 2014 – after charges had been laid against Akam – that he be allowed to live in the Australian community.

“There is no further information currently before the department that suggests this family would pose a threat to the Australian community if placed in community detention,” the department wrote in a submission to the then minister, Scott Morrison. The recommendation was agreed to but then revoked before Akam was released.

Correspondence from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection dated 2 December 2016 said Akam's case had been referred to the complex cancellations unit within the department (which is now the Department of Home Affairs) and was being dealt with “as a matter of priority”.

Eighteen months later, no decision has been made, or appears imminent.

And the government has the power to hold him, potentially for the rest of his life.

The 2004 Al-Kateb high court judgment found it was lawful to indefinitely detain a non-citizen who could not be removed from Australia. Subsequent governments have appeared anxious not to have the issue revisited by the court – no justices from Al-Kateb remain – and cases involving indefinite detention are often resolved just before they reach the bench.

A Home Affairs spokesman said the department was aware of Akam's circumstance, "however cannot comment on individual cases".

"A non-citizen who does not hold a valid visa will be liable for immigration detention, including while their visa application is assessed against the character test. There are no time frames in which a decision ... must be made."

The spokesman said the time taken to make a decision on visas varies with the specific circumstances of each case but those in held detention are "progressed as a matter of priority".

"Individuals in detention receive medical and specialist treatment commensurate with Australian standards," the spokesman said.

The director of Human Rights for All, Alison Battison, is one of the lawyers representing Akam. She has taken his case to the United Nations' working group on arbitrary detention, which has consistently found Australia's indefinite detention of refugees and asylum seekers is unlawful.

Battison says Australia's treatment of Akam shows a total disregard for its obligations under international law.

"We have signed a contract – the refugees convention – to protect people such as Akam and, further, to treat them with dignity and respect. Instead **we lock children up and then claim there are no children in detention, when the real reason is that they got old.**"

The rigidity of Australia's immigration detention system – Australia is one of the only countries on earth in which asylum seekers are mandatorily detained because of the way in which they arrived in the country – has led to people facing long-term, even limitless, detention, because of the government's inability to resolve people's migration status.

But Battison says Akam's situation is not complex and could be easily resolved.

"A vulnerable young man arrived on our shores seeking asylum, as is his basic human right," she says. "We locked him up. He then, very predictably, acted out. The government then used this teenage behaviour against him."

Battison believes the department has targeted refugees and asylum seekers for character concern visa cancellations but has failed to allocate sufficient resources to deal with the cases, leaving adults and children languishing in detention.

'We need to rebuild him'

In Villawood, Akam faces another day behind the steel fences: everywhere he goes noted, every conversation he has observed, every communication monitored.

"I have been in detention for a very long time – all I want is to be allowed out."

Outside his mother furiously campaigns: "Can we give him his five years back? No. But my son needs to come out, and then we need to make him strong enough to be OK. We need to rebuild him."

– Ben Doherty, *The Guardian*, 4 July 2018

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

This year, **Year C** of the three-year cycle of Scripture readings, the Gospel of Luke is read.

It is clear that Luke sees himself as a historian. He is interested in 'events' and in 'eyewitnesses' and he has investigated everything carefully, including prior written sources. Most scholars agree that the gospel of Mark is the source for about one third of Luke's material.

Today we have strict expectations of the style and method we judge appropriate for historians. We do not expect poetry or drama from them, and, while they should be imaginative in the way they arrange their material, they should present the 'facts' without adornment. No such restrictions were placed on historians in Luke's day. They were not writing fiction, so they were expected to be concerned with events, rather than with creative writing that gave expression to their own fancies. In presenting what they believed to be the real meaning of events, however, they were allowed all the verve and imagination they could muster, to communicate this meaning in the richest and most effective way.

The fact that Luke's gospel was treasured by the Christian community gives us confidence that Luke's fellow Christians judged that he did express valid insights into the person and ministry of Jesus, and into the life of the early Christian communities. We can be confident that, when complemented by the gospels of Mark, Matthew and John, and by the letters and other works of the New Testament, the gospel of Luke preserves for us an authentic portrait of Jesus, which the Church came to treasure as a fruit of divine inspiration and so as a gift of God.

As a first century historian, Luke's desire was to reassure his readers of the truth of what they had learned about Jesus. Therefore, he carefully investigated everything, and then chose the most appropriate way of bringing out for his readers the significance of what he learned. As an historian, Luke is an artist who orders his material in the way he judges will best achieve his goal.

It will become clear from the beginning of his work that Luke is especially interested in what he sees as God's controlling purpose, seen in the ministry of Jesus and carried forward in the ministry of the

apostles and Paul. He therefore divides his work into two volumes: the gospel, which is the object of this present study, and the Acts of the Apostles.

As he says in his introduction, he wants to present the story of Jesus 'from the beginning', that is, from Jesus' first emergence into public life at the baptism. He also wants to trace everything back 'from the very first', an expression better translated 'from its origins'. Permeating both books is the presence and action of God's Holy Spirit. It is this Spirit who is the origin of all that Jesus is and does and who provides the link between the prophets and Jesus, and between Jesus and his apostles. On every step of his journey, Jesus is responding to the powerful and personal influence of God's Spirit. It is the same with those who walk with Jesus and who follow on after him.

Throughout both books Luke is inviting his readers to examine their own religious experience and to discover, especially in their experience of God's forgiveness and in their endurance as disciples, the action of God's Holy Spirit binding them to Jesus and gracing them to persevere as Jesus' disciples, continuing his mission in the world.

– Michael Fallon MSC

<http://mbfallon.com>

NEXT BAPTISMS IN 2019

Baptism, the **first sacrament of initiation**, prepares us to celebrate the Eucharist. Families wishing to prepare their infants for initiation are asked to contact the Parish Office. Baptisms are held on the **third weekend** of each month [except **January** and **Lent**], usually during either of the weekend [Saturday or Sunday] Masses. Baptism forms are obtainable from the Parish Office.

At least one parent is required to attend a **Baptism Preparation Class** before the child's baptism. Classes are usually held **at 7:15pm on the last Thursday of each month** [except December] in preparation for baptisms the following month.

If you want your child baptized on **16/17 February or on Easter Sunday, 21 April 2019** then you need to collect the forms from the Parish Office and **at least one parent** needs to attend the **Baptism Preparation Class, 7:15pm on Thursday, 31 January 2019 or Thursday, 28 February 2019**. Bring the form and photo to the preparation class [or email photo to the Parish Office].

PARISH OFFICE HOURS

The Parish Office will be **closed** between Christmas and New Year. The Office will be open **Tuesdays** and **Wednesdays** during **January, 9:00am to 12:30pm and 1:00pm to 3:30pm**. The Office is **closed on Fridays, reopening** on Fridays from **8 February 2019**. *A Merry Christmas Season from Magda and Maureen, our Parish Secretaries.*