

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

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



THE HOLIDAY BULLETIN 2020-2021



Holy Family
26/27 December



Epiphany
2/3 January



Baptism of the Lord
9/10 January



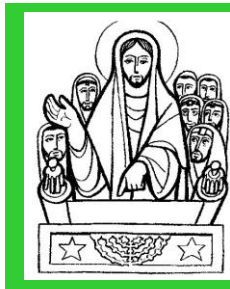
Ordinary 2 B
16/17 January



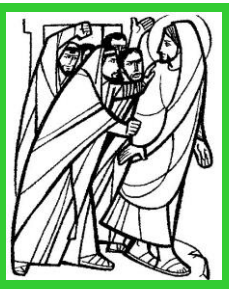
Ordinary 3 B
23/24 January



Australia Day
26 January



Ordinary 4 B
30/31 January



Ordinary 5 B
6/7 February

OTHER FEAST DAYS

- 1 January **Mary, Mother of God** World Day of Peace
- 2 January **St Basil the Great, bishop, doctor**
St Gregory Nazianzen, bishop, doctor
- 7 January **St Raymond of Peñafort, priest, lawyer**
- 24 January **St Francis de Sales, bishop, doctor**
- 25 January **Conversion of St Paul**
- 26 January **Australia Day 9:30am Mass**
- 28 January **St Thomas Aquinas, priest, doctor**
- 2 February **Presentation of the Lord (Candlemas)**
- 5 February **St Agatha, virgin, martyr**
- 6 February **St Paul Miki & companions, martyrs**
- 10 February **St Scholastica, virgin**



Australia Day Mass 9:00am

Lent begins on 17 February

Welcome to the "Holiday Bulletin" for January – for avid readers! There will be no "weekly" bulletins until 13/14 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 B – 26/27 Dec
1st Reading Genesis 15:1-6, 21:1-3
2nd Reading Hebrews 11:8,11-12,17-19
Gospel Luke 2:22-40

Epiphany – Year B – 2/3 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 B – 9/10 Jan
1st Reading Isaiah 55:1-11
2nd Reading 1 John 5:1-9
Gospel Mark 1:7-11

Ordinary 2 – Year B – 16/17 Jan
1st Reading 1 Samuel 3:3-10,19
2nd Reading 1 Corinthians 6:13-15,17-20
Gospel John 1:35-42

Ordinary 3 – Year B – 23/24 Jan
1st Reading Jonah 3:1-5,10
2nd Reading 1 Corinthians 7:29-31
Gospel Mark 1:14-20

Ordinary 4 – Year B – 30/31 Jan
1st Reading Deuteronomy 18:15-20
2nd Reading 1 Corinthians 7:32-35
Gospel Mark 1:21-28

Ordinary 5 – Year B – 6/7 Feb
1st Reading Job 7:1-4,6-7
2nd Reading 1 Corinthians 9:16-19,22-23
Gospel Mark 1:29-39

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 liturgy*
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
54TH MESSAGE FOR
WORLD DAY OF PEACE
1 JANUARY 2021
A Culture of Care
as a Path to Peace

1. At the dawn of a new year, I extend cordial greetings to Heads of State and Government, leaders of International Organizations, spiritual leaders and followers of the different religions, and to men and women of good will. To all I offer my best wishes that the coming year will enable humanity to advance on the path of fraternity, justice and peace between individuals, communities, peoples and nations.

The year 2020 was marked by the massive Covid-19 health crisis, which became a global phenomenon cutting across boundaries, aggravating deeply interrelated crises like those of the climate, food, the economy and migration, and causing great suffering and hardship. I think especially of all those who lost family members or loved ones, and all who lost their jobs. I think too of physicians and nurses, pharmacists, researchers, volunteers, chaplains and the personnel of hospitals and healthcare centres. They have made, and are continuing to make, great sacrifices to be present to the sick, to alleviate their sufferings and to save their lives; indeed, many of them have died in the process. In paying tribute to them, I renew my appeal to political leaders and the private sector to spare no effort to ensure access to Covid-19 vaccines and to the essential technologies needed to care for the sick, the poor and those who are most vulnerable.



Sad to say, alongside all these testimonies of love and solidarity, we have also seen a surge in various forms of nationalism, racism and xenophobia, and wars and conflicts that bring only death and destruction in their wake.

These and other events that marked humanity's path this past year have taught us how important it is to care for one another and for creation in our efforts to build a more fraternal society. That is why I have chosen as the title of this year's Message, **A Culture of Care as a Path to Peace**. A culture of care is a way to combat the culture of indifference, waste and confrontation so prevalent in our time.



2. *God the Creator, the source of our human vocation to care*

Many religious traditions have accounts of the origin of human beings and their relationship with the Creator, with nature and with their fellow men and women. In the Bible, the Book of Genesis shows from its very first pages the importance of care or protection in God's plan for humanity. It highlights the relationship between man ('adam) and the earth ('adamah), and among ourselves as brothers and sisters. In the biblical account of creation, God entrusts the garden "planted in Eden" (cf. Genesis 2:8) to Adam's care, to "till it and keep it" (Genesis 2:15). This entails making the earth productive, while at the same time protecting it and preserving its capacity to support life. The verbs "till" and "keep" describe Adam's relationship to his garden home, but also the trust God placed in him by making him master and guardian of all creation.

The birth of Cain and Abel begins a history of brothers and sisters, whose relationship is understood – even by Cain, however mistakenly – in terms of protection or "keeping". After killing his brother Abel, Cain answers God's question by saying: "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9). Cain, like all of us, was called to be "his brother's keeper". "These ancient stories, full of symbolism, bear witness to a conviction which we today share, that everything is interconnected, and that genuine care for our own lives and our relationship with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others".

3. *God the Creator, a model of care*

Sacred Scripture presents God not only as Creator, but also as one who cares for his creatures, especially Adam, Eve and their offspring. Albeit cursed for the crime he committed, Cain was given a mark of protection by the Creator, so that his life could be spared (cf. Genesis 4:15). While confirming the inviolable dignity of the person created in God's image and likeness, this was also a sign of God's plan to preserve the harmony of his creation, since "peace and violence cannot dwell together".

Care for creation was at the heart of the institution of the Sabbath, which, in addition to ordering divine worship, aimed at the restoration of the social order and concern for the poor (cf. Genesis 1:1-3; Leviticus 25:4). The celebration of the Jubilee every seventh sabbatical year provided a respite for the land, for slaves and

for those in debt. In that year of grace, those in greatest need were cared for and given a new chance in life, so that there would be no poor among the people (cf. Deuteronomy 15:4).

In the prophetic tradition, the biblical understanding of justice found its highest expression in the way a community treats its weakest members. Amos (cf. 2:6-8; 8) and Isaiah (cf. 58), in particular, insistently demand justice for the poor, who, in their vulnerability and powerlessness, cry out and are heard by God, who watches over them (Psalm 34:7; 113:7-8).

4. *Care in the ministry of Jesus*

Jesus' life and ministry represent the supreme revelation of the Father's love for humanity (cf. John 3:16). In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus showed himself to be the one consecrated by the Lord and "sent to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18). These messianic actions, associated with the Jubilee year, bear eloquent witness to the mission he received from the Father. In his compassion, Christ drew near to the sick in body and spirit, and brought them healing; he pardoned sinners and gave them new life. Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares for his sheep (cf. John 10:11-18; Ezekiel 34:1-31). He is the Good Samaritan who stoops to help the injured man, binds his wounds and cares for him (cf. Luke 10:30-37).

At the culmination of his mission, Jesus gave the ultimate proof of his care for us by offering himself on the cross to set us free from the slavery of sin and death. By the sacrificial gift of his life, he opened for us the path of love. To each of us he says, "Follow me; go and do likewise" (cf. Luke 10:37).

5. *A culture of care in the life of Jesus' followers*

The spiritual and corporal works of mercy were at the heart of charity as practised by the early Church. The first generation of Christians shared what they had, so that no one among them would be in need (cf. Acts 4:34-35). They strove to make their community a welcoming home, concerned for every human need and ready to care for those most in need. It became customary to make voluntary offerings in order to feed the poor, bury the dead and care for orphans, the elderly and victims of disasters like shipwrecks. In later times, when the generosity of Christians had lost its initial fervour, some Fathers of the Church insisted that property was meant by God for the common good. For Saint Ambrose, "nature poured out all things for the common use of all... and thus produced a common right for all, but greed has made it a right for only a few". After the persecutions of the first centuries, the Church used her newfound freedom to inspire society and its culture. "The needs of the times called

forth new efforts in the service of Christian charity. History records innumerable examples of practical works of mercy... The Church's work among the poor was to a great extent highly organized. There arose many institutions for the relief of every human need: hospitals, poor houses, orphanages, foundling homes, shelters for travellers ...”

6. *The principles of the Church's social doctrine as the basis for a culture of care*

The diakonia [service/help] of the Church's origins, enriched by the reflection of the Fathers and enlivened over the centuries by the active charity of many luminous witnesses to the faith, became the beating heart of the Church's social doctrine. This doctrine is offered to all people of good will as a precious patrimony of principles, criteria and proposals that can serve as a “grammar” of care: commitment to promoting the dignity of each human person, solidarity with the poor and vulnerable, the pursuit of the common good and concern for protection of creation.

* **Care as promotion of the dignity and rights of each person**

“The very concept of the person, which originated and developed in Christianity, fosters the pursuit of a fully human development. Person always signifies relationship, not individualism; it affirms inclusion, not exclusion, unique and inviolable dignity, not exploitation”. Each human person is an end in himself or herself, and never simply a means to be valued only for his or her usefulness. Persons are created to live together in families, communities and societies, where all are equal in dignity. Human rights derive from this dignity, as do human duties, like the responsibility to welcome and assist the poor, the sick, the excluded, every one of our “neighbours, near or far in space and time”.



* **Care for the common good**

Every aspect of social, political and economic life achieves its fullest end when placed at the service of the common good, in other words, “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily”. Consequently, our plans and projects should always take into account their effects on the entire human family, and consider their consequences for the

present and for coming generations. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us the truth and timeliness of this fact. In the face of the pandemic, “we have realized that we are in the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together”, since “no one reaches salvation by themselves” and no state can ensure the common good of its population if it remains isolated.

* **Care through solidarity**

Solidarity concretely expresses our love for others, not as a vague sentiment but as a “firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all”.^[14] Solidarity helps us to regard others – whether as individuals or, more broadly, as peoples or nations – as more than mere statistics, or as a means to be used and then discarded once no longer useful, but as our neighbours, companions on our journey, called like ourselves to partake of the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God.

* **Care and protection of creation**

The Encyclical *Laudato Si'* is fully aware that all creation is interconnected. It also highlights our need to listen to the cry of the poor and, at the same time, to the cry of creation. Constant and attentive listening leads in turn to effective care for the earth, our common home, and for our brothers and sisters in need. Here I would once again point out that “a sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be authentic if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings”. “Peace, justice and care for creation are three inherently connected questions, which cannot be separated in such a way as to be treated individually, lest we fall back into reductionism”.

7. *A compass pointing to a common path*

At a time dominated by a culture of waste, faced with growing inequalities both within and between nations, I urge government leaders and those of international organizations, business leaders, scientists, communicators and educators, to take up these principles as a “compass” capable of pointing out a common direction and ensuring “a more humane future” in the process of globalization. This will enable us to esteem the value and dignity of every person, to act together in solidarity for the common good, and to bring relief to those suffering from poverty, disease, slavery, armed conflicts, and discrimination. I ask everyone to take this compass in hand and to become a prophetic witness of the culture of care, working to overcome the many existing social inequalities. This can only come about through a widespread and meaningful involvement on the part of women, in the family and in

every social, political and institutional sphere.

The compass of these social principles, so essential for the growth of a culture of care, also points to the need for relationships between nations to be inspired by fraternity, mutual respect, solidarity and the observance of international law. In this regard, we must recognize the need to defend and promote fundamental human rights, which are inalienable, universal and indivisible.

Likewise, urgent is the need to respect humanitarian law, especially at this time when conflicts and wars continue uninterrupted. Tragically, many regions and communities can no longer remember a time when they dwelt in security and peace. Numerous cities have become epicentres of insecurity: citizens struggle to maintain their normal routine in the face of indiscriminate attacks by explosives, artillery and small arms. Children are unable to study. Men and women cannot work to support their families. Famine is spreading in places where it was previously unknown. People are being forced to take flight, leaving behind not only their homes but also their family history and their cultural roots.

While such conflicts have many causes, the result is always the same: destruction and humanitarian crises. We need to stop and ask ourselves what has led our world to see conflict as something normal, and how our hearts can be converted and our ways of thinking changed, in order to work for true peace in solidarity and fraternity.

How many resources are spent on weaponry, especially nuclear weapons, that could be used for more significant priorities such as ensuring the safety of individuals, the promotion of peace and integral human development, the fight against poverty, and the provision of health care. Global problems like the present Covid-19 pandemic and climate change have only made these challenges all the more evident. What a courageous decision it would be to “establish a ‘Global Fund’ with the money spent on weapons and other military expenditures, in order to permanently eliminate hunger and contribute to the development of the poorest countries”!

8. *Educating for a culture of care*

Promoting a culture of care calls for a process of education. The “compass” of social principles can prove useful and reliable in a variety of interrelated contexts. Let me offer a few examples:

– Educating people to care begins in the family, the natural and fundamental nucleus of society, in which we learn how to live and relate to others in a spirit of mutual respect. Yet families need to be empowered to carry out this vital and indispensable task.

– Together with the family, schools and universities – and, in some respects, the

communications media – are also responsible for education. They are called to pass on a system of values based on the recognition of the dignity of each person, each linguistic, ethnic and religious community and each people, as well as the fundamental rights arising from that recognition. Education is one of the pillars of a more just and fraternal society.

– Religions in general, and religious leaders in particular, can play an indispensable role in handing on to their followers, and to society at large, the values of solidarity, respect for differences, and concern for our brothers and sisters in need. Here I think of the words spoken in 1969 by Pope Paul VI to the Ugandan Parliament: “Have no fear of the Church; she honours you, she educates honest and loyal citizens for you, she does not foment rivalries and divisions, she seeks to promote healthy liberty, social justice, and peace. If she has any preference at all, it is for the poor, for the education of little ones and of the people, for the care of the suffering and abandoned”.

– Once more I encourage all those engaged in public service and in international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, and all those others who in various ways are involved in the areas of education and research, to work towards the goal of a “more open and inclusive education, involving patient listening, constructive dialogue and better mutual understanding”. It is my hope that this appeal, made in the context of the Global Compact on Education, will be broadly acknowledged and accepted.

9. *There can be no peace without a culture of care*

The culture of care thus calls for a common, supportive and inclusive commitment to protecting and promoting the dignity and good of all, a willingness to show care and compassion, to work for reconciliation and healing, and to advance mutual respect and acceptance. As such, it represents a privileged path to peace. “In many parts of the world, there is a need for paths of peace to heal open wounds. There is also a need for peacemakers, men and women prepared to work boldly and creatively to initiate processes of healing and renewed encounter”.

At a time like this, when the barque of humanity, tossed by the storm of the current crisis, struggles to advance towards a calmer and more serene horizon, the “rudder” of human dignity and the “compass” of fundamental social principles can enable us together to steer a sure course. As Christians, we should always look to Our Lady, Star of the Sea and Mother of Hope. May we work together to advance towards a new horizon of love and peace, of fraternity and solidarity, of mutual support and acceptance. May we never yield to the temptation to disregard others, especially those in greatest need, and to look the other way; instead, may we strive daily, in concrete and practical

ways, “to form a community composed of brothers and sisters who accept and care for one another”.

From the Vatican, 8 December 2020

FRANCIS.

THE SUNDAY READINGS

26/27 DECEMBER 2020

HOLY FAMILY

The Good of the Family

Today’s liturgy speaks of two families. The first is the family that consists of parents and children: “The shepherds ... found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.” The first two readings are about the qualities of the people who make up such a family, and we pray that God may “unite our families in peace and love.”



We also pray that God may “help us to live as the holy family, united in respect and love.” Here the liturgy concerns the human family, of which the Holy Family is also a model: “we want to live as Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, in peace with you and one another.”

Linking these two families, one’s immediate family and the human family, today’s liturgy prompts us to think of their common welfare. It raises the possibility that our two families rise and fall together.

Perhaps it is no accident that in this age of the universally recognized disintegration of the family, the human family is also experiencing a breakup into rich and poor, developed and underdeveloped, the privileged and the marginal.

Perhaps now more than ever, we need to beg God to “show us the value of family life and help us to live in peace with all men.”

“At a moment in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family, the church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and family, ensuring their full vitality and human and Christian development, and

thus contributing to the renewal of society and of the people of God.”

– Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) 3

Today much is at stake, when what the family stands for is under attack. It is through sharing in family love and responsibilities that we find ourselves as persons. It is normally in the love and support of the family that we find the resources to face the setbacks of life. And what family is there that does not know pain and suffering? Today’s liturgy reminds us that, because ‘he became in every way like us’ (Philippians 2:7), our Saviour has shared in the ups and downs of family life.

Our reading from Genesis reminds us of the strength we can find in family traditions. Taking part in the life of old Israel, the family of Jesus shared in the boundless hopes – as vast as ‘the stars of the heavens’ and ‘the sands on the seashore’ – that found expression in the stories of God’s promises to Abraham. The second reading, from Hebrews shows the first Christians rejoicing in the fulfilment of these hopes. They saw the wanderings of Abraham as making him a model of God’s people, as they come to terms with the fact that their true home is not any earthly city. And they saw, in Isaac, the son Abraham was ready to sacrifice – given back to him from the dead, as it were – a foreshadowing of the Son the Father gave up for our salvation.

The tableau sketched by Luke in today’s gospel text, brings us insights into the life of the Holy Family. Joseph and Mary were faithful to the traditions of Israel. (This is significant, coming from Luke the Gentile convert – pointing to the essential continuity of the two covenants: salvation for old Israel, he implies, comes through fidelity to the authentic traditions of the old covenant.) Though Joseph’s carpenter trade would have given this family some security, they did not find it easy to make ends meet. The offering they made, of doves and pigeons, is the more modest offering permitted to the poor (cf. Leviticus 12:8). Their home was probably a cave dug into the side of a hill, with a small extension in front, and a floor that was simply clay beaten hard by the feet of the household. This family belonged to the ‘*anawim*’, the simple people championed by the prophets who, in the struggle of life, kept alive the true spirit of Israel, through trust in their God.

To create his tableau, Luke has united two separate rituals. The firstborn of a Jewish family – who belonged to the Lord – was ‘redeemed’ through the ritual payment of five silver shekels. This ceremony did not necessarily take place in the temple. In a separate ritual, a Jewish mother, five weeks after the birth of a son, came for ceremonial purification. Luke intends his tableau to show the Lord’s coming to his temple – a beloved

theme of true believers in old Israel, and looked forward to as the fulfilment of the hopes of the nation. ‘Suddenly the Lord whom you seek will come to his temple’, the prophet Malachi foretold, ‘Who will be able to withstand the day of his coming?’ (3:1-2). Luke’s narrative often uses the device of pairing a man and a woman, expressing their equal dignity under the Gospel. Here he sees Simeon and Anna, meeting with the parents of Jesus, as the fulfilment of the longings of the ‘*ananim*’, movingly expressed in the canticle of Simeon, ‘Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace’, and in Anna’s praise and rejoicing.

The ‘salvation’ being inaugurated is universal, ‘for all the nations’, one of Luke’s favourite themes. But it will come through the Cross. The family that returns to the hidden life of Nazareth is very close to the world’s families in their ups and downs.

1 JANUARY 2021
MARY, MOTHER OF GOD
Mary’s Peace

Today’s liturgy invites us to reflect upon Mary’s place in the beginnings of our salvation. Although she played a central part, hers is an unobtrusive presence. Her centrality is so subtly described in the New Testament that in the controversies of the past, Protestants claimed that Catholic tradition’s veneration of Mary had not basis in the Scriptures. Today’s scholarship makes it clear that Mary’s unselfish commitment from the beginning to all that her Son stood for made her a model of discipleship for all Christians.

Today’s gospel presents another of the remarkable scenes created by the genius of Luke. In this tableau, he emphasises the unassuming greatness of Mary by setting up a contrast, in the story of the Saviour’s birth, between the boisterous shepherd messengers and the contemplative silence of the young mother of Jesus. Luke has a special interest, as we know, in ‘the poor’, the ‘*ananim*’, whose trust in God kept alive the true faith of God’s people – though they were looked down upon by those who prided themselves in their ritual observances, because in their struggle to survive they did not have the time or the resources to take part in these many observances. The shepherds are representatives of this group – sometimes disreputable, unwashed strugglers who were the very opposite of the Pharisees with their ritual purity. Luke presents this group as the first human bearers of the Gospel in his narrative; and as the story of Jesus unfolds, he will preach the Good News of the Kingdom to simple folk like this, with all their shortcomings.

Very skilfully, Luke sets up a contrast between the bustle and chatter of the shepherds, as they burst in upon the nativity scene, and the contemplative silence of

Mary, who ‘treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart’. The role of the shepherds – as it is described by Luke – anticipates great themes of the Gospel: Mary’s child is to bring to the world. Like God’s messengers in the past, their commission is given in a meeting with ‘the glory of the Lord’ – the incomparable greatness of God, encountered as a source of blessings. They are made bearers of the good news of God – ‘news of great joy to be shared by all the people’ – ‘in the town of David’ is born ‘Christ the Lord’. This is an astounding declaration: the messiah has finally come; and he is declared to be ‘the Lord’ himself – a title that for Old Testament faith belonged exclusively to God. They are given ‘a sign’; in a manger – a feeding trough – they will find the one who is to call himself ‘the bread come from heaven’, as nourishment for the whole world. And finally, the message the shepherds announce is one of ‘peace for all who enjoy God’s favour’ – it is God’s ‘grace’ that will bring a final wholeness to the human family, because the Saviour will make himself ‘our peace’ (Ephesians 2:14)



The point of the contrast between the chattering shepherds, and the young mother who treasures all that she hears is now clear. It was impossible for the unlettered messengers to understand the full implications of their astounding announcement. Mary, on the other hand, was beginning the journey that – during her earthly life – would lead her into the fullness of faith in all that was being proclaimed. Through this journey, she is given to us all as the model of discipleship, as the Mother of the family of the Lord’s disciples.

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? The second 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

2/3 JANUARY 2021
EPIPHANY OF THE LORD
Perfected Revelation

The “epiphany” of Jesus, his revelation to the world, was accompanied by the offering of three gifts, each of which symbolized a different aspect of the divine/human saviour.

Frankincense is offered to Jesus, the Son of God, the eternal Word of the Father who is worshiped with the Father and the Spirit.

Gold is offered to Jesus the King of the human race, the summit of creation.

Myrrh is offered to the divine/human saviour of the world who suffered and died for the salvation of all.

Jesus is revealed in our own day. He is revealed as the Word of God speaking to us in the marvellous workings of nature, in the achievements of the human spirit, and in the dialogue between Church and world.

He is revealed to us as King in every victory over ignorance, alienation and powerlessness. He is revealed to us as Suffering Messiah in the heart and face of every poor person, every stranger, every wanderer living in a back alley or under a bridge, every person victimized by others.

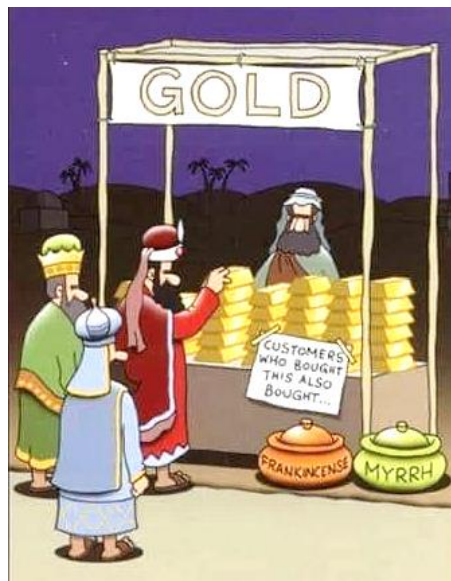
“His glory has shone among us.” We have only to recognize him and to do what the magi did in his presence: “They prostrated themselves and did him homage.”

Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling and manifesting himself: through his words and deeds, his signs and wonders, but especially through his death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth.

– Vatican II, Constitution on Divine Revelation (1965) 4

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’.

9/10 JANUARY 2021 BAPTISM OF THE LORD

The baptism by John in the river Jordan would not have been easy for the first Christians to understand. On the face of it, this undergoing of a ritual of repentance did not seem to make sense. It can only have been included in the gospel tradition because it really happened. However, the account we have in Mark’s gospel shows us that reflection upon this event led to an understanding of its great significance – as the defining inauguration of the mission of Jesus. It was the Father’s authorization of the public role he was about to assume, and a prefiguring of the climax to which his career would lead – the Paschal Mystery – which he was later to look forward to as ‘a baptism’ (Luke 12:50).

The destiny of each of us has its origin in the Father’s decision, before time began, to create us and to call us to a unique place in the divine plan of creation. Our response to God’s call is made as we take up the issues of our lives. Because he ‘has been put to the test in exactly the same way as we ourselves are, apart from sin’ (Hebrews 4:15), the Eternal Son’s life among us followed the same pattern as ours. His baptism by John was a decisive moment in his human life. Come to carry forward the designs of God among the chosen people, Jesus came and mingled with the enthusiastic crowd listening to John’s preaching. Submitting to John’s baptism was a moment of compassionate solidarity that he would have prayerfully shared with the Father. Suddenly, Mark’s account takes an unexpected turn – ‘the heavens are torn open’ and a Trinitarian drama unfolds as the presence of God’s Spirit is made manifest, and the incarnate Son receives a commission from the Eternal Father, indicating what is in store for him in the public mission he will undertake: ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you.

This commission echoes two Old Testament traditions. ‘You are my Son’ – the gospels make it clear that Jesus was sustained throughout his public life by his relationship with his Father. Though the phrase ‘son of God’ meant originally no more than an adoptive sonship (as, for example, in honour of Israel’s kings (e.g. Psalm 2:7), when Mark’s gospel was written, applied to Jesus these words referred to the unique, strictly divine sonship that was one of the basic themes of the New Testament. ‘You are the Beloved; my favour rests on you’, echoes God’s words

to the ‘Suffering Servant’ in Isaiah: ‘here is my servant; the chosen one in whom my soul delights’ (Isaiah 42:1). This remarkable ‘Servant’ tradition takes us to the very threshold of the Christian Gospel. It foretells – in the time of the nation’s exile humiliation – a future triumph of God, through one who will ‘astonish the nations’ as he embodies the nation’s true destiny, ‘a man of sorrows’, ‘led like a lamb to the slaughter house’, bringing ‘healing’ to the people as he ‘bears the sorrows’ of all (cf. Isaiah 52-53). The commission of the Father indicated, therefore, that the compassionate solidarity that led Jesus to undergo John’s baptism would be the pattern of the mission he was about to undertake. Today’s first reading from Isaiah (closely associated with the ‘Servant’ prophecies) celebrates the glorious future the Saviour will inaugurate: God’s banquet, a new exodus, an everlasting covenant, the triumph of God’s Word.

16/17 JANUARY 2021 2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Reflecting Peace

The prayers indicate that peace is a focus of today’s liturgy. The opening prayers ask that God show us the way to peace in the world and that God’s truth reflect peace to those who believe in your love. The prayer after communion asks that the Lord make us one in peace and love.

The first Reading is about the call of Samuel. The key moment is when Samuel learns to open himself up to God’s message: Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.

The Gospel is about another call, the call of the apostles. Jesus challenges the two disciples with the question: What are you looking for?

What are we looking for in our world today? Are we looking for peace? If we are looking for peace, are we listening to what the Lord is telling us about the Spirit of peace dwelling within us?

“Perhaps a radical change must take place within us in order for there to be peace. The changing of Simon’s name could be symbolic of the challenge to change issued by Jesus when he calls us to follow him.” – US Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace* (1983) 230

After his baptism in the Jordan, Jesus set out on his great mission. Throughout this year, we follow the course of his mission in readings from the gospel of Mark. The gospel readings of this Sunday (from John) and next Sunday (from Mark) invite us to set out on this journey of discovery as disciples of the Lord. Just as he called the first disciples, the Saviour has a personal call for each one of us to become his ‘disciple’. The recovery of the long neglected them of ‘discipleship’ is one of the signs of new vitality on today’s Church. The word, ‘disciple’, occurs many times in the New Testament. Why

was it so important for the first Christians? Discipleship, the privileged relationship one can have with a great and inspiring leader, has been an important factor in the shaping of human history. The leader's vision and commitment call forth admiration and confidence – the lives of their followers are changed, and they face life with a new inspiration and hope. Clearly, those who made up the communities of the New Testament experienced this kind of relationship with the Risen Lord. Today's reading from John's gospel helps us to understand how we too can have this kind of relationship with the Saviour.

Many factors are at work, as disciples come to meet and appreciate their leader. Those who met the Saviour in today's reading, we are told, have been 'disciples' of John the Baptist. It is his selfless witness that leads them to 'follow' Jesus. In the gospel story, of course, the Baptist represents the faith and expectations of the Old Testament. Knowledge of the great themes of the old Israel's hopes is fundamental if we are to understand the message and vision of the Saviour. Closer to home, it is often unselfish expressions of faith, hope and love on the part of other members of a vital Christian community that are important in our coming to know the Saviour.

It is important that we seek that incomparable intimacy with the Saviour that is our birthright through baptism – not relating to him as a remote figure, but confidently sharing our lives, in all their complex tangles, with him. Today's story of the two disciples encourages this trust and confidence. Encouraged by the Baptist, they approached Jesus; he gave them a warm welcome – 'Come and see'; and they spent the rest of the day with him.

As disciples of inspiring leaders, many men and women have had the experience of finding themselves, and giving a meaning to their lives. We can look forward to that same experience, if we accept the Lord's invitation to share our lives with him. Today's reading reminds us that Peter found his true self in the new name Jesus gave him. The Scriptures reflect the fact that for many cultures a personal name points to the mysterious identity of each person. For the wisdom of Christian faith, this personal identity has its origin in the eternal designs of God. Samuel was called by name. Simon's unique place in the plan of God was declared in the new name Jesus gave him. He still had much to learn, but the path that was to lead to his eternal glory had been made clear.

23/24 JANUARY 2021

3RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

No Greater Challenge

The kingdom of God is near! The time is short! Reform your lives, just as the people of Nineveh turned from their evil way. Leave behind your attachment to

possessions and security, and come follow Jesus.

There is much for which we have to repent: poverty, hunger, homelessness, discrimination, war, the destruction of the earth and the wasting of its resources. Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed.

The Christian believes what Paul wrote, that the world as we know it is passing away. Ahead lies the kingdom of God, and each of us must choose between solidarity with a world headed for destruction and solidarity with a world ruled by God.

Things can change for us, as they did for Nineveh when they believed God, who shows sinners the way and guides the humble to justice.

"No greater challenge or higher priority can be imagined than the development and perfection of a theology of peace suited to a civilization poised on the brink of self-destruction." – US Bishops, *The Challenge of Peace* (1983) 230

Today's liturgy invites us to take up again the reflections on Christian discipleship that we began last Sunday. Last week we considered what Christian discipleship has in common with the following of inspiring human leaders. The vivid picture painted by Mark in today's gospel reading highlights characteristics of Christian discipleship that have no parallel in the world of human discipleship.

In our common human experience, the decision to become a disciple is first and foremost a decision made by the follower. The decision to become a disciple of the Saviour has its origin in the decision and call of the Lord himself. Mark's brief narrative probably has its basis in a more complex sequence of events – in which the four fishermen have already heard the 'Good News' preached by Jesus, that 'the kingdom of God is close at hand': alluded to in the previous verses. But Mark wishes to emphasise the authoritative call of Jesus as the basis of the relationship they enter into, and the unconditional nature of their response. 'You did not choose me, no. I chose you' – these words of Jesus at the supper, in John's gospel, are addressed to each of us. Our relationship with the Lord is grounded in his decision on our behalf and his eternal fidelity.

Responding to the call of Jesus – like all the great decisions of a full and generous life – is not without its cost. We are reminded of this by Mark's stark narrative – as the four leave behind old securities and their kinsfolk to throw in their lot with Jesus.

The choice of Jesus is not related to any previous formation or qualifications. Mark describes the call as coming to them unexpectedly, in the midst of their daily work. As successful fishermen, with hired labour, they were probably literate and relatively well informed in the faith

of old Israel. But this is of no consequence in Mark's narrative. We who are called together to form the community of the Lord's disciples come from different backgrounds and outlooks, young and old, rich and poor; united in our discipleship of the one Lord we must show the world all that a generous following of Christ has to offer the human family – nothing less than a foretaste of the final Kingdom.

'I will make you fishers of men' – the call to discipleship is an invitation to share in the mission of Jesus, to share his responsibility for the whole human family. If the Church in which we believe is the community of those who have responded to this call, Mark's account presents Jesus as beginning to create the Church at the very outset of his ministry.

The contrast between the relationship entered into by Jewish rabbi of the time of Jesus, and the relationship the Saviour entered into with his disciples has often been remarked upon. 'Follow me' – these words give expression to a decision made from all eternity, a decision that will never be revoked, as he leads us to share in his own eternal destiny.

30/31 JANUARY 2021

4TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

A Specific Responsibility

The readings deal with teaching authority. The first reading deals with the authority of Moses; the third with the authority of Jesus. The response to Psalm 95 speaks of not hardening our hearts when we hear God's voice.

There are several 'voices' that speak to us with authority. One is the Scripture. Another is the hierarchy of the Church, which speaks authoritatively on matters of doctrine as well as on issues of personal morality and social justice.

The first reading speaks of true and false prophets: those who speak the words God puts in their mouths, and those who claim to speak in God's name but speak words God has not commanded them to speak.

Society is often a 'false prophet,' claiming to speak the truth and even to be 'Christian,' but at the same time glorifying war and oppressing the poor.

The Church, in its teaching on personal and social morality, is a true prophet, faithful to God's revealed word

"The Church has the right, indeed the duty, to proclaim justice on the social, national and inter-national level, and to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of man and his very salvation demand it.

"The Church, indeed, is not alone responsible for justice in the world; however, she has a proper and specific responsibility which is identified with her mission of giving witness before the world of the need for love and justice

contained in the Gospel message, a witness to be carried out in Church institutions themselves and in the lives of Christians.” – Synod of Bishops, Justice in the World (1971) 36

The gospel reading of last Sunday showed us Mark’s skill as a narrator – capturing so much with a few words. He shows this same skill in today’s continuation of his gospel’s introductory passage. As Jesus spends the Sabbath with the disciples, he has invited to join him, the events of the day point to significant characteristics of the ministry Jesus is to undertake.

Capernaum, the hometown of Simon Peter, was to become the headquarters of this Galilean ministry. That Jesus regularly took part in the worship of the synagogue had great significance. He had no intention of setting aside the authentic traditions of old Israel; he came to renew them and bring the realisation of all that they foreshadowed. In doing this he identified with the role of Israel’s prophets, as expressed in the first reading from Deuteronomy – a text looked upon as messianic in the time of Jesus. The people recognised that the teaching of the scribes – with their repetitious appeal to the authority of other interpreters of the Law – contrasted with the teaching of Jesus. In the tradition of the prophets, his teaching had a ring of authority, as it gave expression to Jesus’ own convictions. Already there is intimated a contrast and conflict that is to shape the career of the Saviour.

The authority that so impresses the people is expressed, not only in word, but also in action. For the conflict that is to shape the life of Jesus is far more than a squabble about the interpretation of the Law. Sent by the Father as the world’s Saviour, he must do battle with the forces of darkness and evil in the world. In the culture of the times, in which physical and mental illness were common associated with the present of ‘unclean spirits’, Jesus gives expression to his authority by delivering those under the influence of the forces of evil. He delivers the man in the synagogue with a simple word of authority.

Mark emphasises the reaction of the people to this remarkable display of prophetic authority: ‘Here is a teaching that it new, and with authority behind it’. Thus, in describing this eventful Sabbath, Mark alerts us to a subtext that will be present in his telling of the story of Jesus’ ministry: Who is this man? Mark’s gospel will seek to lead the reader beyond inadequate and superficial views of the Saviour, reflecting the challenge Jesus faced as he presented himself to his audiences. Though filled with vivid expectations of a messianic figure, the hopes of the people were crude and nationalistic. Jesus had to lead his followers to understand that his saving mission went far beyond these crude expectations. He would fulfil the hopes of Israel’s faith by showing

himself triumphant over all the forces of evil. In a dialogue with demons who recognise the true role of Jesus, Mark introduces a device he will use more than once to point to the answer that must be given to the question that is his subtext.

6/7 FEBRUARY 2021 5TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Healing Love

On the one hand, there are suffering human beings like Job, slaves longing for the shade. On the other hand, there is God who cares about us, who heals the broken-hearted and sustains the lowly. Jesus comes into this world of suffering as God the healer: Those whom he cured were many.

The community of the followers of Jesus has a calling to bring healing to this world full of suffering. They are to go about this by means of service: just as Simon’s mother-in-law did, they are to use their healing from Jesus as an opening to serve others. They are to be like Paul, making themselves all things to all people, the slaves of all.

The Catholic Church challenges us to hunger and thirst for what is right so that, like God, we might fill the hungry with good things.

“Especially through his life-style and through his actions, Jesus revealed that love is present in the world in which we live—an effective love, a love that addresses itself to man and embraces everything that makes up his humanity.

“This love makes itself particularly noticed in contact with suffering, injustice and poverty—in contact with the whole historical ‘human condition,’ which in various ways manifests man’s limitations and frailty, both physical and moral.” – Pope John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* (1980) Section 3

Concluding the introductory section of Mark’s gospel, today’s reading further clarifies the nature of the mission Jesus means to share with his disciples. As we have seen, the healings and deliverance performed by Jesus are part of his preaching of the Kingdom, signs that God will triumph over all the forces of evil in the world. This is brought out by Mark, as he recalls and contrasts two moments of healing.

There are practically no details in the gospels of the family circumstances of the apostles. The account of the curing of Peter’s mother-in-law is therefore remarkable. It is generally accepted that Mark composed his gospel in Rome about the time of Peter’s martyrdom. If this is true, Peter’s telling of the story of Jesus would have been an important source of his material. In this incident we may well hear echoes of Peter’s voice describing a sequence of events. Peter brings Jesus from the synagogue to his home for a meal; they are surprised to find the old lady ill with fever; Jesus heals

her instantly by taking her hand and helping her up; fully recovered she gives herself to the service of the Lord.

As we have seen, ‘Who is this man?’ is the subtext of Mark’s narrative. There is no doubt that Jesus worked miracles. Miracles, as we all know, have an unhealthy fascination for many people. Mark is concerned that his readers are not carried away by the fact that Jesus was a wonder worker. They must understand that the miracles of Jesus were signs inviting faith in the coming of God’s salvation into the world. True faith in the Saviour will come, in the end, to understand that the greatest wonder in the life of Jesus of Nazareth was the salvation he brought to the world as its crucified Saviour. Thus, as Mark’s narrative continues, we hear echoes of how Peter began to learn this lesson at the end of the eventful Sabbath Mark has described.

By evening, word had spread that there is a miracle worker in town. People came crowding around Peter’s door, bringing their sick and ‘possessed’ for healing. Jesus responded to their appeals; but in his silencing of the ‘devils who knew who he was’ we are reminded that these people still have to learn who he is. In the morning there was consternation when Peter and his companions find that Jesus was nowhere to be found. ‘Everyone is looking for you’, they protest, disappointed that he has not made the most of this instant notoriety. Later they will recognise that Jesus was concerned to lead the people beyond the wonders he worked to a renewed faith in the coming of God’s Kingdom – the great theme of the solitary prayer he shared with his Father. This could only be achieved by his preaching the message of the Kingdom. And so the ministry he was about to undertake ‘all through Galilee’ would combine his ‘preaching’ and his ‘casting out devils’.

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 6 February 2021**. *A Merry Christmas Season from Magda and Maureen, our Parish Secretaries.*

REGISTER FOR MASS

You need to register **BEFOREHAND** to attend Masses on **Saturday evening** or **Sunday morning**. Register online or phone the Parish Office.

<http://thirroulcatholic.eventbrite.com.au>

