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MARCH 2025



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TOGETHER
IN THE DIOCESE OF WAGGA WAGGA

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Dear sisters and brothers,

A fortnight ago we learned with joy that Pope Francis has appointed Fr Peter Murphy to be the eleventh bishop of Armidale.

The Jubilee Year is a time of grace and renewal and I am confident that Bishop Elect Murphy will be an agent of God's blessings and lead Armidale to being an even more beautiful and faithful diocese. His dedication to his priestly vocation has been evident in his faithful work in Lockhart, Tumbarumba, Lavington and (ever so briefly) at the Cathedral.

This appointment, as well as being a cause of joy in two dioceses, is an opportunity to reflect on the meaning and purpose of a bishop. The biblical images that the Church uses to try to capture the role of bishop are servant, shepherd, head and spouse.

Bishop Elect Peter is a man of prayer and he places the needs and good of people at the heart of his ministry. *"You call me Master and Lord, and rightly"*, Jesus once said to his disciples. *"If I then, your master and Lord, have washed your feet, then you must wash each other's feet"*. Bishop Elect Peter exercised his knees, both in prayer and in humble and unassuming service to others. This is the way of Jesus, and it must become our way too. I presume that it is these qualities that Pope Francis has

recognized in him and wants exercised in this new role of leadership within the Church.

The bishop, as a successor to the apostles, is entrusted with the duty to shepherd the people of God, guiding them toward holiness. His life, preaching, joy, trust in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and in other modes are some of the means by which he will be a shepherd and his life be a faithful mirroring of the life and ministry of Jesus.

Bishop Elect Peter is called and will be ordained to lead Christ's flock safely and bravely through the shadows of the valley of death. Appropriately in this year when we reflect on being pilgrims of hope, his ministry will be to guide them along the right paths and bring them to safe pastures. Letting Christ minister in him, he will stand with them in their moments of confusion and fear and work to keep them united and bring them to the Father.

During his ordination, Bishop Elect Murphy will receive the episcopal ring. Among other things, this reminds us of St Paul's insight that the love of a husband for his wife should reflect the love of Christ for the Church which is his bride. In Bishop Elect Peter's episcopal ministry, he is to reflect this spousal love for his people so that they can capture something of the generous and self-sacrificing

love of Christ for us all. Jesus loves with tenderness, with sensitivity, with patience, and with courage. This is the way of Jesus, and it must become the way of all of us too.

"We are all pilgrims on the road of life, and we are all called to be pilgrims of hope." (Pope Francis in his message for the Jubilee Year) Bishop Elect Murphy's life and ministry is to be a demonstration that our hope is not a vague wish but a sure and certain trust in God's promises. It is this hope that

will sustain us through the trials and tribulations of life, just as it will sustain our new bishop as he takes on the responsibility of leading his people in faith.

Please pause for a minute and pray for Bishop Elect Murphy and the people of Armidale diocese that they will be close to Christ and guided by him. Mary, please pray for all of us.

***Yours in Jesus Christ
and Mary Immaculate
Mark Edwards OMI***



PRAYER INTENTION FOR MARCH - PRAY WITH POPE FRANCIS

For families in crisis.

Let us pray that broken families might discover the cure for their wounds through forgiveness, rediscovering each other's gifts, even in their differences.

Visit this link to hear the Pope deliver his monthly prayer:

<https://thepopevideo.org/>



**Pope's Worldwide
Prayer Network**

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

<https://www.popesprayer.va/>

People usually come to therapy, "broken", in some way or another. Whether it's a break up, a loss, life transition, or overwhelming symptoms of depression or anxiety, something feels broken, or they themselves feel broken.

As a mental health therapist, this is the work I am blessed to do, to be with and love people who courageously show up to share their broken hearts. It seems ironic, that relationship is both the cause of and the cure to our deepest wounds. It is in the rupture, loss, or absence of relationship where we experience the most profound pain. And when someone loves us, shows us kindness, or witnesses to our suffering, we can experience a restoration that can soothe the pain, though its mark can never be completely erased from our story.

I have found that as I start to see my own brokenness as the reality of my humanity and a way to receive love, rather than a shameful barrier to love, my heart has expanded and my relationship with Jesus has deepened. It is in the painful,

and beautiful vulnerability of being received with love in our brokenness that we can encounter the deepest truth, goodness, and beauty of our Lord, who allowed himself to be broken like us, and for us.

So, as we pray for broken families, for our broken human family, and as we ourselves feel the ache of our brokenness and long for the fullness of being with a perfect and heavenly family, let us not fear the brokenness. Let us face the reality of it with faith, hope, and with bold confidence in our Savior who was broken for us, who redeemed suffering so that the evil of sin and death could be transformed into beauty and life. Let us start with ourselves and ask Him for the grace we need. Let us forgive and ask for forgiveness. Let us see the gifts in ourselves and in each other. Let us see, even in our differences and across divides, that we belong to each other. That our deepest identity is not our brokenness, but our belovedness.

NIGHT OF MERCY

Many people would like to be reconciled to God but they don't know how to do it, or they don't feel worthy, or they don't want to admit it, not even to themselves. This Lent is a time of reconciliation for everyone.

I invite you to experience Reconciliation at our annual Night of Mercy.

On Friday March 28 from 6pm-midnight across the diocese priests will be available to help you honestly share with your God what your major problems are, your sorrow for your sins, and your desire to change. Come to Sacred Heart Church, Griffith, St Patrick's Church, Albury and St Michael's Cathedral, Wagga and in various other Churches to experience God's forgiveness.

God has never failed to offer his forgiveness to us. Often we believe that our sins distance the Lord from us. It is true that in sinning we may distance ourselves from him, but, seeing

us in danger, he tries all the harder to find us. God never gives in to the possibility we could stay estranged from his love. All he needs is sign of repentance from us for our wrongdoings.

Jesus comes to find us like a good shepherd who is not content until he has found the lost sheep, as we read in the Gospel (cf. Lk 15:4-6). He rebuilds the bridge that connects us to the Father and allows us to rediscover our dignity as children. By the offering of his life he has reconciled us to the Father and given us eternal life (cf. Jn 10:15).

Let us be reconciled to God!



Come and take a chance on God and on the depth of his love for you

A Night of Reconciliation

An Invitation to Experience the Sacrament of Confession

You are invited to come to Confession this Lent on the night of **28th March 2025** to experience the power, freedom and love of God and God's grace.

**Your priests will be waiting for you
Friday 28 March 2025 – 6pm to midnight at:**

- St Michael's Cathedral, Johnston St, Wagga Wagga
- St Patrick's Church, Smollett St, Albury
- Sacred Heart Church, Warrambool St, Griffith

And other churches around the Diocese.
Contact your local Parish for information.

'Begin again with Hope... This Jubilee is a possibility for everyone to start anew from God' - Pope Francis



UNITE AGAINST POVERTY THIS LENT

Each year, Caritas Australia's Project Compassion brings together thousands of Australians in schools, parishes and the community to stand in solidarity with the world's most vulnerable communities, to help end poverty, promote justice and uphold dignity.

For Project Compassion, let's *Unite Against Poverty this Lent*. Let's become a profound force for change. A force that partners with the world's most vulnerable to stand against poverty. As individuals we can have a powerful impact – but when we come together as a community through Project Compassion, our good becomes great. Our combined kindness becomes amplified. And when we unite with each other – and with people living in poverty – we can create BIG, lasting change.

WELCOME from Michael McGirr



Let's all *Unite Against Poverty!* There is no time like 2025! This year is an exciting time in the life of the church.

A Jubilee year only comes around once every quarter of a century, and it brings with it a special invitation for each one of us. That invitation is close to the heart of Caritas

Australia's Project Compassion. The theme of Jubilee 2025 is *Pilgrims of Hope*. It is hope which calls us to come together and *Unite Against Poverty*.

The idea of a jubilee goes right back to biblical times and is closely linked to our call to a faith that does justice. It stems from the idea of a Sabbath. Once a week, from the beginning of our relationship with God, we stopped work to rest. Every seven years, at least part of the land was allowed to rest and recover, something that modern science happens to appreciate as part of caring for Earth. During a jubilee year, all the land was allowed to lie fallow and debts were called off. It was seen as a fresh start. The word jubilee shares its origin with our word jubilation.

In Chapter 4 of Luke's Gospel, when Jesus returns to his hometown, he announces the 'year of the Lord's favor.' This is the meaning of jubilee: 'he has sent me to bring good news to the poor and freedom for those in captivity'.

Inaugurating the Holy Year, Pope Francis

wrote:

We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision...

This will indeed be the case if we are capable of recovering a sense of universal fraternity and refuse to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a manner worthy of our human dignity.

During Lent, we are called to be good news for the poor. Project Compassion is a wonderful way to do this. This year, as always, we will be sharing several stories. They represent just a fraction of the work you support through Project Compassion. We will meet Toefuata'iga in Samoa, Lam from rural Vietnam, and Irene from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I am sure you will find them challenging and inspiring.

Caritas Australia reminds us of our Christian vocation to Unite Against Poverty. Pope Francis has spoken about the culture of indifference. We are so very grateful that our Catholic community is far from indifferent to our sisters and brothers around the world. Even with the rising cost of living and other

pressures, Catholics in Australia are so generous. For this we are deeply thankful.

On the night before he died, Jesus prayed 'may they all be one.' (John 17:21). Let us come together once again in this Year of Jubilee and *Unite Against Poverty!*

Peace and blessing to all!

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read 'Michael McGirr'.

Michael McGirr
Mission Facilitator, Caritas Australia



Caritas
AUSTRALIA

PROJECT
COMPASSION

UNITE
AGAINST
POVERTY
this Lent



DONATE NOW

We're Supporting Project Compassion

Toefuata'iga from Samoa

Toefuata'iga, a 13-year-old student in Samoa, faced severe challenges and disruptions to her learning due to water scarcity. After Caritas Australia's partner Caritas Samoa installed a 10,000 litre water tank at her school, Toefuata'iga and her classmates saw improved health and more consistent class attendance.



"School would finish early, so we wouldn't finish our lessons because when there wasn't any water, we wouldn't have classes."

Toefuata'iga



Toefuata'iga experienced water scarcity at her school in Samoa.

Toefuata'iga and her classmates faced frequent early school dismissals and missed lessons due to a lack of clean water. Teachers often had to leave the school to fetch water from nearby homes, adding strain to the staff and local community. The absence of a reliable water source also led to compromised hygiene, increasing the risk of dehydration and waterborne diseases, which affected students' health.

Despite being surrounded by water, many Samoans struggle with

consistent access to clean drinking water, and resort to relying on rainwater or neighbours who have access to a water pipeline.

Climate change is leading to longer, drier periods. The Samoan Water Authority pipeline frequently needs to be shut down due to natural disasters and maintenance.

The situation changed dramatically when Caritas Samoa, a partner of Caritas Australia, installed a 10,000 litre water tank at the school.

This new water source enabled the school to maintain regular class schedules, improving both educational

outcomes and student health.

Attendance and enrolment numbers surged, as parents no longer worried about sending their children to a school without access to clean water.

"When we opened our water tank, the parents were really happy, they were over the moon... And now they don't have any problems," shared Principal Ada. "Now we don't need to send the children home early, and we can keep up with our lessons. It's made such a difference."

The tank also alleviated financial and logistical burdens on teachers and nearby families, allowing the school community to focus on education rather than the constant struggle for water.

Access to water is about more than convenience. It is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty, and to helping students like Toefuata'iga fulfil her dreams.

"I would like to become a good teacher. To teach the children so they will have a brighter future," Toefuata'iga said.

Toefuata'iga's school is now in a better position to provide a stable learning environment. However, with the burgeoning impacts of climate change-induced drought, Toefuata'iga and her peers still have concerns about the future of their water supply.

With your ongoing support, Caritas Australia continues to provide practical solutions for communities like Toefuata'iga's, ensuring that clean water and education are not just dreams but realities.

Watch Toefuata'iga story at:
<https://youtu.be/03ksUeCX1ME>



A NEW CHAPTER: THE LIFE AND CALLING OF MOST REVEREND PETER MURPHY

Reverend Dr Peter Murphy is preparing to bid farewell to his cherished Wagga as he steps into a new role as Bishop of Armidale.

BY KARENE EGGLETON
Together Editor

Most Reverend Peter Mel Murphy, born in 1961 in Benalla, Victoria, is a man whose life and vocation have been shaped by a deep faith, dedication to service, and a profound sense of calling. After a diverse professional journey, including time spent in banking, agriculture, and horticulture, he followed a spiritual path that led him to the priesthood and, most recently, to his appointment as the eleventh Catholic Bishop of Armidale. We explore his remarkable journey, from his early life in Victoria to his new role as bishop, and reflect on the deep gratitude and humility that have marked his service to the Church.

Early Life & Education

Peter Murphy grew up as one of six children in Benalla, Victoria. His formative years were spent at Saint Joseph's Primary School, where the FCJ Sisters nurtured his early education. He went on to complete his secondary schooling at Assumption College in Kilmore, under the guidance of the Marist Brothers. His academic journey initially took him in a different direction; after working in the banking sector and other occupations, he attended Dookie College, earning a degree in Agriculture. His work as a field agronomist in horticulture marked a significant phase in his life, but God had other plans for him.

Responding to the Call

In 1985, Father Murphy felt a calling to the priesthood. After discerning this vocation, he was accepted as a seminarian for the Wagga Wagga Diocese. Under the guidance of Bishop William Brennan, he embarked on theological studies in Rome at the Propaganda Fide College. There, he earned a Bachelor of Sacred Theology (STB) in Philosophy from the Angelicum and a Licentiate from the Urban University. Upon completion of his studies, Father Murphy was ordained to the priesthood on July 11, 1992, at St. Michael's Cathedral in Wagga Wagga.

A Life of Service

Following his ordination, Father Murphy served in various pastoral and academic roles. His first appointment as parish vicar was in South Wagga (1992-1994). He then served as vice rector of the Wagga Wagga Seminary (1994-1997) and as parish priest in Lockhart (1997-2000). He continued his studies in Rome and worked at the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (2000-2002), further strengthening his international perspective and commitment to the Church.

Upon his return to Australia, Father Murphy held numerous roles, including parish priest in Tumbarumba (2002-2007), lecturer in philosophy and moral



Above and below: Most Reverend Peter Murphy, at St Michael's Cathedral, has been appointed Bishop of Armidale. Pictures by Bernard Humphreys.

theology at the Wagga Wagga Seminary (since 2002), and parish priest in Albury-Lavington (since 2007). He was also a member of various diocesan boards, councils, and committees, including the College of Consultors, the Personnel Board, and the Presbyteral Council. His leadership and commitment to the Diocese of Wagga Wagga continued to grow, culminating in his appointment as vicar general in 2022, in addition to serving on the diocesan Council for Economic Affairs and the Committee for Safeguarding.

In 2022, Father Murphy was honored to participate in the Fifth Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Australia. His involvement in this pivotal moment for the Church in Australia further underscores his dedication to the broader mission of the Catholic faith.

The Appointment to Bishop

In February 2025, Father Murphy received the news that he had been appointed by Pope Francis to serve as the eleventh Bishop of Armidale. This appointment, while deeply humbling, marked the beginning of a new chapter in his life. In a letter expressing his gratitude, Father Murphy spoke of the support and guidance he received from Bishop Mark Edwards, the Bishop of Wagga Wagga, and the chancery staff, especially the ever capable Chancellor, Karen Williams. The generosity and prayers of the faithful, particularly those from the towns and cities where he had served, provided him with strength and encouragement as he prepared for this transition.

Father Murphy reflected on the bittersweet nature of the appointment, acknowledging the emotional challenge of leaving behind Wagga

Wagga, a place where he has deep connections and fond memories. However, he also recognised that this call to serve as Bishop was a vocation, one that he could not choose for himself but had been chosen for him by God.

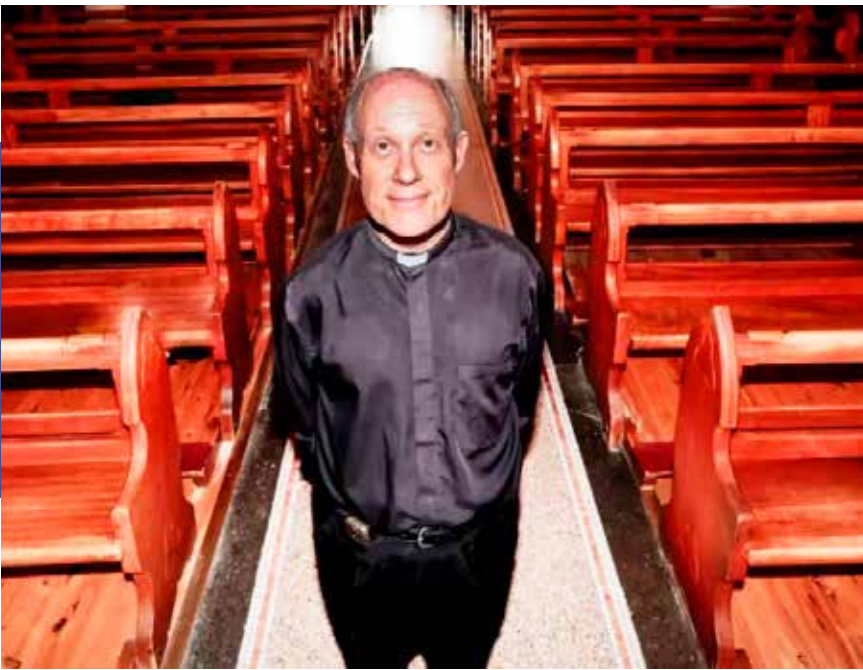
Looking Ahead

As Father Murphy prepares for his Episcopal Ordination on May 8, 2025, and subsequent move to Armidale, he remains mindful of the weight and responsibility of his new role. His heartfelt gratitude for the support he has received, both from the Church and from the faithful, is evident in his words of thanks. As he embarks on this new journey, he continues to pray for the physical and spiritual well-being of Pope Francis, acknowledging the Pope's ongoing health struggles.

Father Murphy's story is one of faith, dedication, and humility. His journey from a field agronomist to the Bishop of Armidale is a testament to the power of God's call and the willingness to respond. As he steps into this new role, the Diocese of Armidale will undoubtedly be blessed by his wisdom, pastoral care, and unwavering commitment to serving the people of God.

Legacy of Service

The life of Most Reverend Peter Mel Murphy serves as a reminder of the transformative power of vocation and the strength found in answering God's call. His path, marked by study, service, and prayer, is a beautiful example of the journey of faith that all priests and bishops must undertake. **As he begins his episcopal ministry in Armidale, the Diocese of Wagga Wagga will always remember his legacy of service, and the wider Church will continue to benefit from his guidance and leadership.**



THE SHOCK OF FAITH: IT'S NOTHING LIKE I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE

The following is a condensed version of an article by David Brooks, originally published in The New York Times. It is a poignant and thought-provoking piece, and the full article is available on the Together website.

BY DAVID BROOKS

Originally published in the New York Times – 19 December 2024

When I was an agnostic, I thought faith was fundamentally about belief. To be religious meant having a firm and unwavering conviction that God existed and that the stories in the Bible were true. For me, faith was about finding arguments, books, or logical reasoning that would definitively settle whether God existed or not. I believed that belief itself was the essence of religion, and if I could only find enough evidence or compelling reasons, then I could arrive at the conclusion that I was seeking.

There are those who describe themselves as spiritual but not religious, but during that time, I would have considered myself religious but not spiritual. I was raised in a Jewish home where the experience of being Jewish was more about a sense of peoplehood and tradition than about actual faith. Our Jewish identity was something deeply embedded in family and culture, with rituals, celebrations, and a strong sense of community. I attended a Christian school and camp, where I learned the hymns and enjoyed them, but I sang them more out of habit and tradition rather than from any profound belief. Despite living a Jewish life throughout my adulthood - keeping a kosher home, sending my children to Jewish schools, and attending synagogue - the core of belief still eluded me. I was close to it, but I wasn't quite there. I could be surrounded by the trappings of religion, but I lacked the conviction that what I was doing had a deeper, divine meaning.

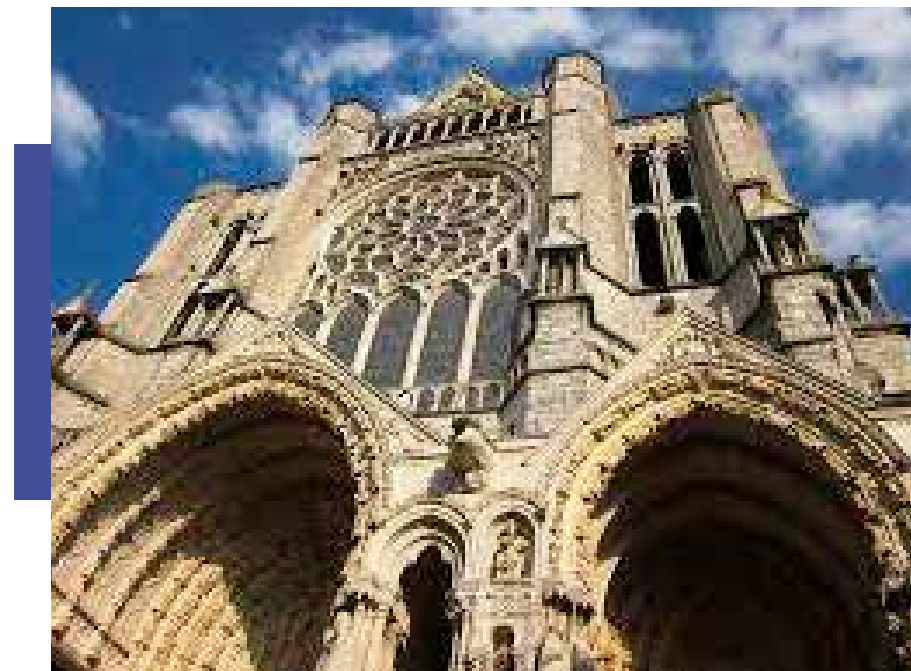
When faith finally began to take root in my life, it did not come through reason, argument, or evidence. It came, almost imperceptibly at first, through moments of numinous experiences - those fleeting, mysterious moments when we encounter something so awe-inspiring and beyond comprehension that it stops us in our tracks. I now realize these are the rare and profound instances of wonder that most of us experience unexpectedly from time to time. Looking back over

the years, I can recall several of these transcendent moments: standing at the foot of a mountain in New England at dawn, visiting Chartres Cathedral in France, gazing at distant images of the universe, and marveling at the intricate life in a womb. In those rare moments, time seems to blur, and you feel as if you are in the presence of something greater and more mysterious than you can fully grasp. These were not moments of intellectual understanding, but of pure, unmediated awe. In them, I felt bliss, joy, and a profound sense of connection to something vast and incomprehensible.

I was not alone in having these experiences. The art historian Kenneth Clark, who himself was not religious, described something similar after visiting an Italian church. He said, "I can only say that for a few minutes my whole being was irradiated by a kind of heavenly joy, far more intense than anything I had known before." There are countless others who have had comparable experiences, including one man quoted by psychologist William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. He spoke of a moment in which "nothing but an ineffable joy and exultation remained," describing it as an overwhelming, harmonious sensation that elevated his soul, leaving him with a feeling of connection to something vast and divine.

For me, these experiences did not immediately answer my deepest questions or settle my intellectual uncertainties about faith. If anything, they opened up more mysteries. They introduced dimensions of existence that I had never considered before. These moments of awe and wonder aroused a longing to understand more and to experience more of this transcendent reality. In those moments, I began to feel that there was something much bigger than myself - something infinitely mysterious and beautiful, just beyond the grasp of human understanding.

Christian Wiman, in his book *My*



Bright Abyss, writes poignantly about the nature of faith and these moments. He describes religion as not just being made of these awe-filled experiences but as a way to incorporate these fleeting moments into a continuous part of our lives. He suggests that religion offers a way to make sense of these profound experiences, rather than letting them remain as isolated, unacknowledged intrusions.

In 2013, I began to experience a deepening of these moments, not just as random flashes of awe but as illuminations - experiences that revealed something profound about the meaning of life and changed the way I saw the world. One morning in New York City, while riding a crowded subway car, I had a profound realization. As I looked around at the people around me, I suddenly saw them in a new light. Each person, I realized, had a soul—something intangible and infinite that gave them value beyond their physical existence. It was an awareness that transcended race, gender, or socioeconomic status, something deep inside each of us that connects us all as human beings.

That realization reshaped my perspective on the world, especially in relation to my work as a journalist. I had always approached journalism with a vague understanding of human dignity, the belief that everyone deserves respect because of their basic humanity. But now, seeing people not just as individuals but as souls, I began to see them more deeply - not as simply individuals with their flaws and struggles but as complex beings with inherent value. This perspective helped me approach people with both greater compassion and greater realism. I could see their potential and their brokenness simultaneously.

The thought also led me to question further: If each person has a soul, then does that imply there is a Soul-Giver? Once I accepted the possibility that there is a spiritual element to each person, it wasn't a huge leap to consider that the universe itself might be suffused with spiritual significance. C.S. Lewis, in his reflections on atheism and belief, pointed out that it's difficult for an atheist to guard their faith in nothing too closely. The smallest spark of spiritual awareness can unravel the belief that nothing exists beyond the material world.

That year, in June, I was hiking alone in Colorado and found myself at a mountain lake surrounded by towering peaks. As I sat quietly by the water, a small animal scurried by, and I opened a book of Puritan prayers that I had brought with me. One prayer began, "Lord, high and holy, meek and lowly, Thou hast brought me to the valley of vision..." The words seemed to speak directly to my circumstances. They resonated with the sense of being small in the vastness of nature but also connected to something far greater. The words that followed echoed the paradox of spiritual life: "Let me learn by paradox that the way down is the way up, That to be low is to be high, That the broken heart is the healed heart..." This paradoxical logic, so different from the straightforward thinking I was accustomed to, seemed to reveal an aspect of divine truth that was radical and beautiful. It spoke of an eternal moral order, where humility, love, and sacrifice are the highest virtues—things that transcend the mere logic of cause and effect.

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VENUE SECURED FOR 2025 AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL

The Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne is pleased to announce the securing of top-tier event venue – the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre (MCEC) for the 2025 Australian Catholic Youth Festival.

Located within Melbourne’s vibrant city centre, MCEC is conveniently situated along the banks of the Yarra River, a short walk from two major city train stations as well as accessible by tram and other modes of transport.

The announcement is an important step in the ongoing preparations for the Festival, with groups from across Victoria and Australia able to seek accommodation with the venue location in mind. Archbishop Peter A Comensoli, Archbishop of Melbourne, welcomed the news.

“The Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre is one of the largest of its kind in Australia, attracting millions of visitors each year. It holds a variety of spaces that we look forward to utilising during the Festival

as we welcome thousands of pilgrims to Melbourne this November,” Archbishop Comensoli said.

The Festival is a national event established by the Australian Bishops over ten years ago. It seeks to provide young people from all across Australia with the opportunity to come together to connect, deepen their relationship with Jesus, be empowered to live their faith in the world and experience the breadth of the Church.

Held from 30 November – 2 December this year, the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne is excited to be hosting the Festival during the Church’s Jubilee Year. The Archdiocese looks forward to welcoming thousands of pilgrims from Year 9 – 25 years of age, together with their accompanying leaders, teachers and clergy.



Further information about the Festival will be released in the months ahead. A new website was recently launched and will provide key resources and updates as the year progresses.

The website can be accessed via:
www.acyf.org.au



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC YOUTH FESTIVAL

DEEPEN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

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HARMONY WEEK

Harmony Week is an annual celebration of Australia's cultural diversity and the benefits it brings to the Australian community.

This year Harmony Week will be held from 17 to 23 March. This includes the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (IDERD) on Friday 21 March. It is an Australian Government initiative led by the Department of Home Affairs.

Since 1999, more than 80,000 Harmony Week events have been held across Australia in:

- childcare centres
- schools
- community groups
- churches
- businesses and
- federal, state and local government agencies.

Harmony Week

Harmony Week is a time to celebrate that Australia is one of the most successful multicultural societies in the world. It is about inclusiveness, respect and belonging for all Australians, regardless of cultural or linguistic background, united by a set of core Australian values.

Our cultural diversity

Our cultural diversity is one of our greatest strengths and is at the heart of who we are. It makes Australia a great place to live.

Building on over 65,000 years of First Nations cultures, Australia has become home to migrants from nearly 300 different ancestries. Australia's immigration history has helped build our modern nation.

An integrated multicultural Australia is an integral part of our national identity. All people who migrate to Australia bring with them some of their own cultural and religious traditions. They also take on many new traditions. Collectively, these traditions have enriched our nation.

Facts and figures

There are some fascinating statistics about Australia's diversity that can be good conversation-starters:

- More than half (51.5 per cent) of Australian residents were born overseas or have at least one parent who was.
- Since 1945, more than 7.6 million people have migrated to Australia.
- Nearly every single country from around the world was represented in Australia's population in 2020.
- More than 150 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander languages are spoken in Australia
- Apart from English, the most common languages spoken in Australia are Mandarin, Arabic, Vietnamese,



Cantonese and Punjabi.

- We identify with over 300 ancestries.

This information has been taken from ABS 2021 Census Data. For more information visit the Australian Bureau of Statistics website.

Celebrating our diversity

Let's come together with friends and family and through schools, workplaces and our wider communities to celebrate our diversity.

To show your support for cultural

diversity and an inclusive Australia you can also wear something orange, the official colour of Harmony Week.

Orange for Harmony Week

Orange is the colour chosen to represent Harmony Week. Traditionally, orange signifies social communication and meaningful conversations. It also relates to the freedom of ideas and encouragement of mutual respect. Australians can choose to wear something orange during Harmony Week to show their support for cultural diversity and an inclusive Australia.



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ACN AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND

Diocesan Outreach Assistants

Aid to the Church in Need – Wagga Wagga

Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) is an international Catholic Charity offering spiritual and pastoral support to suffering and persecuted Christians. ACN is looking for Diocesan Outreach Assistants (DOAs) to help spread the news of this work in Catholic parishes in 2024.

The Diocesan Outreach Assistant role is a part time position which consists of delivering 12 weekends of parish presentations across a year. The role also requires the capacity to undertake administrative work (pertaining to booking presentations in parishes e.g. phone calls, emails, etc.)

The primary tasks of the Diocesan Outreach Assistant are:

- To raise awareness of the suffering and persecuted Church by sharing the stories of our brothers and sisters who suffer or are persecuted for their faith. The DOA will encourage parishioners to sign up to receive the ACN's Newsletter.
- To invite parishioners to pray for the persecuted and suffering Church.
- To inspire parishioners to take action to support the suffering Church and to join ACN in its journey to keep the faith alive.

For more information and to view the full job ad go to
www.aidtochurch.org/work or scan



Great Saints of Italy

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Commences 28 August 2025. 10 Days.

With Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers & Fr Dan Maxwell. Join us on a magnificent faith journey from Budapest to Prague passing through Polish heartlands steeped in the graces of our Catholic heritage of past and present. Featuring Divine Mercy, Sts Faustina & Maximilian Kolbe.

Medjugorje

& Rome Jubilee Pilgrimage



Air & Land from \$8590

Departs 30 September 2025. 16 Days.

With Fr Andrew Grace. Visit this remarkable place where Our Lady appears daily and be blessed by the grace of this holy village. Our Lady Queen of Peace calls the world to reconcile with God. Don't miss witnessing these miracles. Continue to Rome for the Jubilee of Marian Spirituality.



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LOVE AND FAITH AS FIDELITY

Several years ago a friend of mine made a very unromantic type of marriage proposal to his fiancé.

BY RON ROLHEISER
www.ronrolheiser.com

He was in his mid-forties and had suffered several disillusioning heartbreaks, some of which by his own admission were his fault, the result of feelings shifting unexpectedly on his part. Now, in mid-life, struggling not to be disillusioned about love and romance, he met a woman whom he much respected, much admired, and with whom he felt he would like to build a life. But, unsure of himself, he was humble in his proposal.

In essence, this was his proposal: I'd like to ask you to marry me but I need to put my cards on the table. I don't pretend to know what love means. There was a time in my life when I thought I did, but I've seen my own feelings and the feelings of others shift too often in ways that have made me lose confidence in my understanding of love. So, I'll be honest, I can't promise that I will always feel in love with you. But I can promise that I'll always be faithful, that I'll always treat you with respect, that I'll always do everything in my power to be there for you to help further your own dreams, and that I'll always be an honest partner in trying to build a life together. I can't guarantee how I will always feel, but I can promise that I won't betray you in infidelity.

That's not exactly the type of marriage proposal we see in our romantic movies and novels, predicated as they mostly are on the naïve belief that the passion and excitement we initially experience when we fall in love will remain that way forever. His is a mature proposal, one that doesn't naively promise something it can't deliver.

Moreover, beyond pointing us toward a more mature understanding of love, this is also a good image for how faith works. Faith too, in the end, is more about fidelity in our actions than it is about fervor in our feelings. Here's an example.

When I was in the seminary, a classmate of mine set off one summer to make a thirty-day retreat. His aim was to try to acquire a faith that he would feel with more fervor, which would more affectively warm his heart. He suffered from what he described as a "stoic" faith, a gut-sense of God's reality and love, but one which didn't much translate into warm feelings of security about God's existence and love. By his own admission, he lacked affectivity, fire, emotion, and warmth about his faith and he went off in search of that.

He returned from the retreat still



stoic, though changed nonetheless: "I never got what I asked for," he said, "but I got something else. I learned to accept that my faith might always be stoic, and I learned too that this is okay. I don't necessarily have to have warm and imaginative feelings about my faith. I don't need to be full of emotion and fire. I only need to be faithful in my actions, to not betray what I believe in. Faith for me now means that I need to live my life in charity, respect, patience, chastity, and generosity. I just need to do it; I don't need to always feel it."

Faith and love are too easily identified with emotional feelings, passion, fervor, affectivity, and romantic fire. And those feelings are part of love's mystery, a part we are meant to embrace and enjoy. But, wonderful as these feelings can be, they are, as experience shows, fragile and ephemeral. Our world can change in fifteen seconds because we can fall in or out of love in that time. Passionate and romantic feelings are part of love and faith, though not the deepest part, and not a part over which we have much emotional control.

Thus, unromantic though it is, I like the stoic approach that's expressed in the marriage proposal of my friend, particularly as it applies to faith. For some of us, faith will never be, other than for short periods of time, something that fires our emotions and fills us with warmth. We know how ephemeral feelings can be.

Like my colleague with the "stoic" faith, some of us might have to settle for a faith that says to God, to others, and to ourselves: I can't guarantee how I will feel on any given day. I can't promise I will always have emotional passion about my faith, but I can promise I'll always be faithful, I'll always act with respect, and I will always do everything in my power, as far as my human weakness allows, to help others and God.

Love and faith are shown more in fidelity than in feelings. **We can't guarantee how we will always feel, but we can live in the firm resolve to never betray what we believe in!**



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EDUCATION AT ERINEARTH

The recent opening of the Sustainability Trail at ErinEarth embodied all that is great about our unique patch of Wagga Wagga!

BY BEN COOPER

ErinEarth Education Leader

ErinEarth's core values of community, respect, inspiration and sustainability were on clear display for all to witness and it was a joy to see the pride on the faces of all involved.

People from all walks of life converged on the Nagle Room to be a part of the official opening of a project that had been a year in the making. It was a lovely ceremony hosted by the students from Koorinal High School. The students outlined their vision, hard work, teamwork and determination to give back to ErinEarth. It was an honour to have ErinEarth founders Sr Kaye and Sr Carmel, Dr Joe McGirr and Deputy Mayor Georgie Davies join members of our ErinEarth community to celebrate the culmination of 7A's hard work.

The 7A class from Koorinal High School, have been regular visitors to our garden throughout 2024 and their idea to create a Sustainability Trail throughout the garden will be their lasting legacy. Students worked hard to discover sustainable

features of the ErinEarth site and to then inform others about them through the creation of a QR sign discovery trail. Students designed and created a brochure to show visitors features of the ErinEarth site.

7A's vision to create a Sustainability Trail 'for kids, by kids' has inspired us to generate a Habitat Trail brochure highlighting some of the habitat features of our garden. 2024 has demonstrated the importance of establishing and nurturing collaborative relationships with our great local schools. By working together we can establish meaningful and productive relationships that enhance environmental understanding and promote positive wellbeing.

The entire ErinEarth team are proud to have

been a small part of the 7A journey throughout 2024 and a big congratulations to Kate, Brad and all the teachers from Koorinal High School who worked so hard on this project. What an honour for this project to remain a very special part of ErinEarth. Nothing brings us more joy then seeing visitors grab a brochure on arrival and navigating their path of discovery by following the map of one or sometimes both paths.

I would like to conclude by thanking all the wonderful students who help us to maintain our site. Without their dedication, and the huge efforts from our Thursday volunteers, ErinEarth would not be the amazing place that it is. **It has been a pleasure to be a part of the ErinEarth community.**



When was the last time you felt **really alive?**

What: Men ALIVE conference

When: 5th (8:00 am – 9:00 pm)
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and the Diocese of Wagga Wagga

invite you to attend the

Ordination to the Priesthood

of

Reverend John Baptist Van Thuy Nguyen

and

the Ordination to the Diaconate

of

Br Joseph Hoat Nguyen, Michael Pham and

Xavier Nguyen

on

Saturday 15 March 2025 at 10:00am

at St Michael's Cathedral Wagga Wagga

Refreshments to follow at the Parish Centre.



SYNOD ON SYNODALITY STUDY GROUPS DISCUSS PROGRESS AT VATICAN MEETING

Leaders of the 10 study groups formed out of the 2021–2024 Synod on Synodality met on 17 February morning to discuss open questions, methodology, challenges, and the delivery of reports, according to a communication from the synod office.

BY HANNAH BROCKHAUS
Originally published in www.catholicnewsagency.com

Formed in 2024 at Pope Francis' request, the study groups are intended to deepen the theological, pastoral, and canonical reflections on 10 themes from the first session of the Synod on Synodality held in October 2023.

The study groups, which are made up of priests, bishops, and experts from around the world, are examining the theological and canonical issues surrounding Church ministries, the reform of seminary education, relations between bishops and consecrated men and women, the figure and ministry of the bishop, ecumenical relations, and how to have a synodal approach to controversial doctrinal issues.

According to the General Secretariat of the Synod, on Feb. 18, the coordinators and secretaries of the study groups met to present the progress of each group, including a timeline for the delivery of their final reports, expected in summer 2025.

The morning included a time of prayer, including for Pope Francis' quick recovery from the respiratory illness that has hospitalized him.

Group coordinators were informed that they can make use of a canonical commission to help with questions of Church law if needed, and Jesuit Father Giacomo Costa, a consultor in the synod office, gave directions on the drafting and delivery of reports



Above: Pope Francis meets with other delegates of the Synod on Synodality at a roundtable discussion in Paul VI Hall at the Vatican on Oct. 17, 2024. Credit: Vatican Media

so they will have a certain level of uniformity.

Cardinal Mario Grech, secretary-general of the synod office, reminded the groups to take into consideration any feedback they have received by email. Anyone may share their thoughts with the synod and its study groups via the email address synodus@synod.va until March 31.

“New contributions will be forwarded to the secretaries of the groups concerned in a timely manner,” the press release said.

Apart from the original 10 study

groups, an additional five study groups were created in 2024 to provide deeper theological analysis of “five perspectives” ahead of the second session of the synod, held at the Vatican from Oct. 2–27, 2024.

An October 2024 Vatican assembly marked the end of the discernment phase of the Synod on Synodality, which began in 2021.

The current phase is focused on implementation, with the study groups expected to continue their work through June.

To the people of the Church in Australia, for the Holy Land Collection 2025

As many of you are aware, for 800 years the Franciscan Friars have shared the difficult lives of Christians in the countries that make up the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land: Israel and Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Rhodes and Cyprus. The people of these countries face their own difficulties, but particularly Christians due to their minority status. Among them, the friars have never ceased offering their pastoral care.

Over the last five years the people of the Holy Land have had so much turmoil in their lives. My prayer as I write this letter is that the ceasefire in Palestine, Gaza and Israel will be honoured by all the leaders. Already the Christian church leaders are encouraging people to come back on pilgrimage. Pilgrims are vital because they generate income that allows the Friars and the local Church to fulfil their mission of caring for the Holy Places (which also gives work to the local people), as well as

running parishes, schools and caring for orphans, refugees, the homeless, and more.

Brothers and sisters, I am amazed at the determination of the people of this area of unrest. I read with interest in January about the consecration of the new Church of the Baptism of the Lord at Al-Mughtas, Jordan. I remember visiting this site in 2015 when it was just a concrete shell of a building. Despite the challenges of the last 10 years, the people in the Holy Land (including many pilgrim sites in Jordan) have stayed strong in faith and the opening of a new church must bring about a great hope for the future.

In Dec 2024, Fr Francesco Patton ofm, the Franciscan leader of the Holy Land Custody wrote the following, which reminds us of the need to continue to support the Holy Land...

We provide more than 400 apartments for local Christians in Jerusalem. In this way, we are able to preserve the Christian character of

the Christian Quarter in the Old City. We provide more than 200 houses in Bethlehem and the surrounding areas. We also have a major project starting soon in Jaffa and a joint project with the agricultural sector to build an efficient compound near the wall that encloses Bethlehem. This is one way we provide job opportunities. We provide jobs for more or less 2,000 people, which is a great effort because it means every month we have to pay a lot of salaries.

For me, the most important social activity is our schools. We have 18 schools in the Holy Land. These schools are crucial because they provide not only cultural education but also human and religious education. We stress the importance of living together and the values of (papal encyclical) “Fratelli Tutti.” Our Magnificat music school is a rare example of coexistence: Most of the teachers are Jewish and most of the students are Muslim and Christian. Through these efforts, we hope to foster a mentality of living together

and counter the polarization fueled by politics and ideology. (Patton, Dec 2024)

Brothers and sisters, as is always the case, the Good Friday Holy Land Collection is extremely important, and a mission that we all can assist with. The hope is that our Australian parishioners, Parish Priests and Bishops will again be as generous as they have always been. Our donation is a direct way to make a difference in the lives of people who are keeping alive the Christian presence in the land of Jesus, often in the face of great difficulty in recent years. **On their behalf, I humbly and wholeheartedly thank you all.**

Friar Bernie Thomas ofm
Commissary of the Holy Land
(Australia)

holylandfranciscansaustralia.org



DAVID ENEVER'S THIRD ALBUM: BE THE STRENGTH

Sacred Heart, Koorungal parishioner, teacher and singer-songwriter David Enever's third album, *Be the Strength*, was released in late 2024.

Be the Light, Be the Hope, Be the Strength, Be Kind!

After releasing his first album *'Be the Light'* at the start of 2020 and his second *'Be the Hope'* in 2022, David Enever was able to keep the music flowing, with his third album *'Be the Strength'* released in October, 2024. The names of all three albums (along with an anticipated fourth) have come from the chorus of his popular worship anthem *Be the Light*.

Taking a leap of faith and stepping back from full-time primary school teaching a few years ago, David has found a balance between doing some part-time contract and casual teaching, songwriting and performing concerts. Originally just performing his Contemporary Christian music concerts to primary and infant aged audiences at schools, in recent years, he has also been pivoting towards 'Community Concerts' where he works with schools to have students perform his music and act out a script between songs, in an attempt to celebrate and reflect on our rich Catholic faith, evangelising to the whole school community along the way. His Christmas themed community concerts have been particularly popular for this, traveling to a variety of Catholic schools from Melbourne up to Sydney over the past few years. He has also worked with numerous schools on Lenten, Easter and *Be the Light* themed community concerts.

David's third album, *'Be the Strength'*, has a mix of scripture based songs, along with two covers of classic hymns (What a Friend We Have in Jesus and How Great



Thou Art) and finishes off with a cheeky reflection on how smartphones are impacting our world.

David was helped with the album by: Grant Luhrs in the studio, Matt Swan on bass, Colin Anderson on lead guitar, Riley McPherson on the drums along with Marie Dewhirst and Amanda Watson singing backings. A big thank you also to Caitlin Enever (David's wife) who designed the cover art for the album and many of his singles (if only his muscles were that big in real life!)

God willing, it is Dave's hope that the songs serve you well. It is available on most music streaming platforms and can also be downloaded digitally from his website. A limited supply of CDs were also printed and can also be purchased through David's website via the contact us section: www.davidenever.com/contact-us

Sale profits from CDs will be donated to Wagga

Wagga's Esencia Life Centre.

For schools and youth ministry groups that are interested in Dave performing or working with them, please also contact him via his website. In addition to his community concerts, he is offering a *'Pilgrims of Hope'* themed concert this year to help celebrate the Jubilee Year. Please keep his musical ministry and family in your prayers.



To follow Dave on his socials or to check out his latest news from davidenever.com scan the QR code.



Henschke Primary celebrated their Opening School Mass on 21 February with Fr Paul Hart as they remembered Bishop Henschke and all the wonderful visionaries who inspired the school. The Mass brought together students, staff, and families in a spirit of gratitude and reflection on the strong foundation of faith and community that continues to guide the school.



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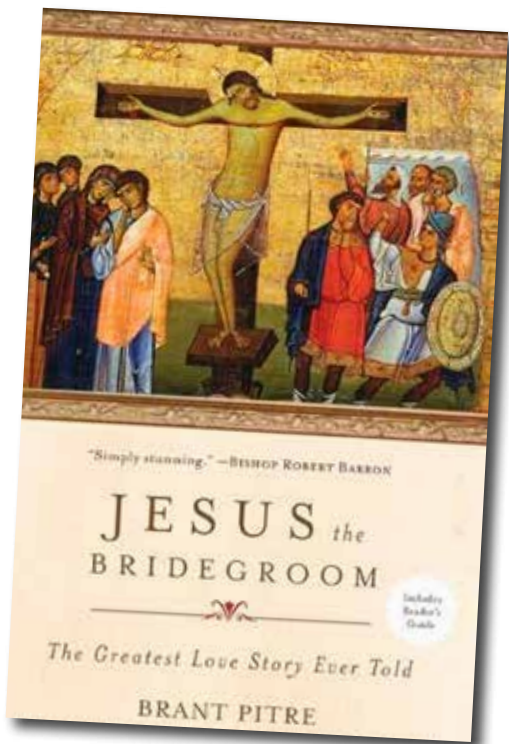
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STARTING OFF 2025 THE RIGHT WAY

On Saturday February 8, the Virtue Ministry Team attended at retreat day at St Mary's Chapel, Vianney College.

BY EMILY SHAW
Virtue Ministry Writer and Graphic Designer



This is the first time the VM team have kicked off the year with a retreat day, previously they have been held later in the year. It was roundly appreciated as a great way to kick off another year of ministry.

In addition to Mass, Confession and Adoration and Benediction, the day featured meditations and talks by Fathers Rick Micallef and Father Sean Byrnes which covered topics including: being called to love and receive love; human formation and it's end goal – union with God; Docility to the Holy Spirit and; Mission.

Attended by most of the team – Grace Feltoe, who currently resides in Portugal, had a credible unattendance – and baby Bede, the retreat proved a centring and ultimately energising one for all.

Launch deeper into your inheritance as a child of God with these resources:

Read:

Jesus, The Bridegroom: The Greatest Love Story Ever Told by Brant Pitre

Read it, underline it, tab it. Or if you're more chill than me you can just simply read it. And meditate on it.

Then read it again. If you really want to understand Our Lord's love, His covenant with us, and so much more besides, this is the book for you. It doesn't jump out as being a 'Lenten' book per se, but given that we are heading towards Good Friday, which Pitre argues is His wedding day – to us, the Church ie. Bride of Christ - it might just provide much spiritual food for thought. And it may just get you thinking about salvation on another level.

I'm not going to lie. I devoured this book, and a packet of page tabs, in about a week. I learned so much about Jewish culture which enhanced my understanding of the layered Gospel readings. I shared, and possibly bored, people around me with things I had picked up from it because I literally could not stop thinking about it.

I remember gushing about the book to Stina, who admitted she'd read and loved it too. And why wouldn't she? Bishop Robert Barron, he of the Word on Fire conglomerate, describes it as "Simply stunning".

Sing along to:

I'm so blessed by Cain

This song came to my notice when my two eldest children returned home from the Immaculata Mission School in Armidale this year. It's probably been around since Adam – ok, maybe not quite that long – and given its upbeat praise and worship feel it may not be for everyone.

But the lyrics guys, the lyrics:

*'Cause on my best day,
I'm a child of God*

*On my worst day, I'm a child of God
Oh, every day is a good day
And You're the reason why
I'm so blessed, I'm so blessed*

*Got this heartbeat in my chest
No, it doesn't matter about the rest
If I got You Lord, I'm so blessed*

The tune is catchy, some might call it an ear worm, but singing that chorus when you're feeling less than, is a prayer of gratitude and thanksgiving to a loving Father.

NB. This song does use the word Hallelujah so it's best saved for outside of Lent.

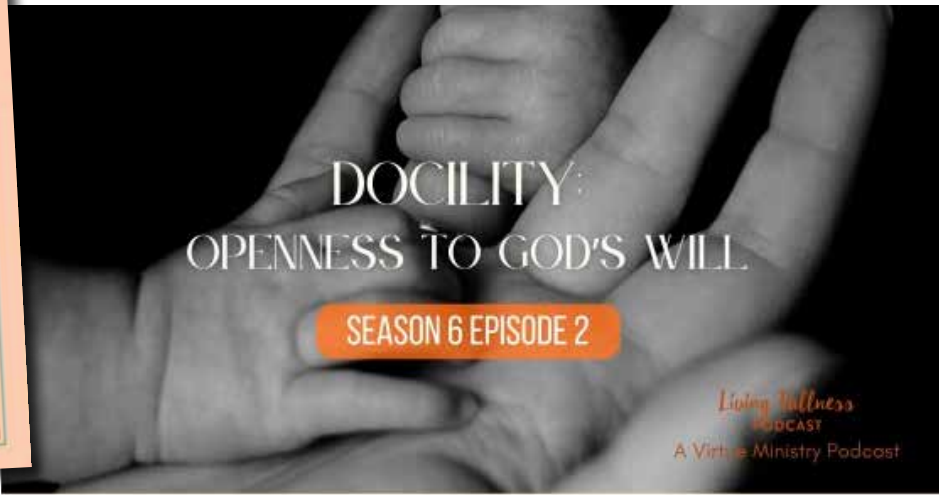
Listen to:

Living Fullness Podcast S06 Ep02 – Docility: Openness to God's Will

Living Fullness hosts Father Sean Byrnes and Stina Constantine explore the often misunderstood virtue of docility.

Far from being a sign of weakness or passivity, docility is a vital characteristic for any Christian seeking to deepen their relationship with God. Stina and Padre discuss how docility, rooted in the Latin word "docilis," meaning "easily taught," is essential for spiritual growth and aligning our lives with God's will.

Throughout the episode, they share personal experiences, scriptural insights, and practical advice on how to cultivate docility in daily life. Whether you're struggling with discerning God's voice or seeking to be more open to His will, this episode offers valuable lessons on the importance of being teachable and responsive to the Holy Spirit.



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JOHN WAS THE BELOVED DISCIPLE, AND SO ARE YOU

Like me, you might have initially considered that Saint John the Evangelist was almost boastful in his descriptions of himself as the disciple Jesus loved. I mean, Jesus loved all of the disciples, right?

BY EMILY SHAW

Virtue Ministry Writer and Graphic Designer



Yes, He did. And does.

John's description of himself is not so much as boasting or pride, but rather, his identity statement. He is the disciple Jesus loved. He is loved by Jesus and it is through that lens that he can see his own worth in the eyes of God.

No other part of his identity is so important. Yes, he is the son of Zebedee, the brother of James. He's one of the sons of Thunder, a fisherman

turned disciple. A former follower of Saint John the Baptist, who found the Messiah.

And the Messiah loves him.

Identity: truth or lie?

Identity statements can be tricky.

In the realm of human formation, particularly when we're trying to heal our inner wounds, we consider our identity. The sad thing is that for many of us, our identity is not as fruitful as John's is. For most of us, our identity has been corroded by our sinful human nature, and those around us.

This consequence of our fallen nature means that the way we see ourselves is skewed. Our perception of our worthiness, or unworthiness as the case may be, is not rooted in our true identity as a child of God.

We find ourselves triggered by certain situations, or actions of others, often without understanding why what happened was so hurtful.

Part of this problem is that most of us never take the time to consider our true identity, our core belief about ourselves. Until recently, I was one of those people. Thankfully formation inside of Virtue Ministry has changed that.

Honestly though, in order to uncover your identity statement or belief, you will need to be vulnerable and honest. And patient with yourself.

Then, you'll see how the Master of Lies has confused you.

Instead of seeing ourselves as a child of God, in a more that surface level way, we might consider that: 'I am only loved because of what I do', 'I am not worthy because I carry the shame of a trauma that happened to me long ago,' and many others besides. The major problem here is that we start considering our self-worth as something that we have to earn, or forfeit as the case may be. We question how much God could love us when we are so full of shame.

These identity statements are lies. There's no other way to describe them.

You cannot possibly do 'all the things' and make people, and/or God love and understand you. You are not unloveable because you are flawed, or have been broken by other people's treatment of you. You, in all of your flawed humanity are loved.

Like John, you are beloved.

Yes, you are the disciple that God loves. Present tense.

What you must understand, is that there is nothing you do to 'earn' God's love, just as there is nothing you can do to 'lose' God's love.

I'm not kidding.

Certainly, you can reject God's love, He will not 'make' you love Him.

He extends His love to you, and you have the free will to accept it, or not.

He desires you to love Him so much that He gave His only Son to die for you – yes, you – on the cross. He's given you an apostolic Church with its associated liturgies, prayers and sacraments so that you can acquire the graces you need to fully accept your place as belonging to Him.

As kick off Lent, I'd like to turn your gaze to the depth of His love for you, with the help of Saint Teresa of Calcutta: **"When you look at the crucifix, you understand how much Jesus loved you. When you look at the Sacred Host you understand how much Jesus loves you now."**



MARCH VIRTUE CHALLENGE:

gratitude
Virtue
MINISTRY

GOALS

WRITE DOWN:

3 practical and realistic ways in which you can grow in this virtue
as well as
3 obstacles you can foresee to growing in this virtue

EVALUATE:

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Your progress with an accountability partner or with us on our Facebook page - we're doing this challenge too!





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ADDRESSING GROWING EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE IS AN ISSUE FOR ALL SCHOOL SECTORS

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) is calling for a broader discussion on educational disadvantage in Australia, highlighting that it is a challenge faced across all schooling sectors, not just government schools.

NCEC Executive Director Jacinta Collins said despite the often-skewed analysis presented by some groups, disadvantage is a growing issue for all sectors, particularly Catholic schools.

“With approximately two-thirds of Australian students enrolled in government schools, it is expected that these schools will have the highest number of students experiencing disadvantage,” Ms Collins said. “However, Catholic and other non-government schools also educate a substantial and growing proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds and play a critical role in ensuring educational equity.

Catholic Education has been included as a part of a cross-sectoral reference group on the UTS + Ramsay Foundation fellowship project led by Dr Michele Bruniges AM into

concentrations of disadvantage. This project confirms that disadvantage has increased in all school sectors across Australia in recent years. The research also shows there have been significant improvements made by targeting support to students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Catholic Education looks forward to receiving the detailed analysis from Dr Bruniges and recommendations for supporting students across all sectors.

The number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in Catholic schools is increasing, with over 42 per cent of students falling into the bottom two quartiles of socio-educational advantage. For government schools, 57 per cent of students are in the bottom two quartiles and 30 per cent for other non-government schools.

“Unlike government schools, parents in Catholic schools are required



to contribute at least the minimum of 10 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS),” Ms Collins said. “For families experiencing severe financial hardship, these contributions are often out of reach, yet Catholic schools remain committed to providing high-quality education to all students, regardless of their background through financial hardship provisions and other affordability measures.

“Catholic schools serve some of the most disadvantaged communities in Australia, with nearly 40 per cent of schools in rural, regional and remote

areas where they are sometimes the only schooling option for families,” Ms Collins said.

“Catholic schools add enormous value to their communities, working alongside government to support student learning and wellbeing.

“It is essential that discussions around funding and support for disadvantaged students include all sectors so that every child, no matter where they live or what school they attend, has the opportunity to succeed.”



St Joseph's Primary, Junee held their Opening Mass on Friday 4th February, which included the induction of their new student leaders and staff members. Many parents and community members attended to make this a wonderful start to the school year.

St Joseph's also have a lovely Kindergarten class of 25 new students being taught by Mrs Bianca Brady and Mrs Katrina Halliburton.

THE LEGION OF MARY – BASSENDEAN PRAESIDIUM

January 1999

A group of young adults in Perth Western Australia decided to join the legion and inspired by Frank Duff, the founder, wanted to come up with different outreach approaches to get people, specifically the youth back to the faith.

Whilst they were discerning what to do JJJ advertised the Big Day Out Concert on the radio that would be occurring in January and the lead act would be Marilyn Manson, a professed satanist. (All members of his band choose a dead celebrity and a serial killer for their stage names.) During their concerts the group use shock and scandal to draw attention to themselves and curse the crowd.

The legion wanted to do something to combat him so prayed to Our Lady for guidance but knew that if they went to the press or held a prayer vigil outside the oval, it would be the attention Manson was seeking.

Not long after one of the legionaries had a dream of a gold Rosary surrounding the whole oval and when he awoke envisioned the members creating a 15 decade Rosary using miraculous medals as the hail Mary beads, St Benedict's medals as the Our Father beads and Holy Salt as the chain.

With the help of the local priest

and spiritual director of the legion, Fr Alex Morohan, the members went to work. Two of the legionaries went to the oval at night, covert ops, with blessed medals, salt, and a screwdriver to create the envisioned rosary. They nailed a St Benedict's crucifix to a tree and then proceeded to make holes in the ground to place the medals in whilst using the holy salt as the chain between the medals.

On the day of the concert Fr Morohan exposed the Blessed Sacrament and opened the doors of his church as this meant the Blessed Sacrament was facing the oval/stage. Members of the parish came to say the Rosary with the intention for Our Lady to fight the battle inspired by the Catena that the Legion say at each meeting. The legionaries realised that they should come under Our Lady's banner so she could fight the spiritual battle against the demons. (Eph 6:12)

The concert proceeded and Marilyn Manson came on stage as the lead act. The crowd booed him and threw water bottles at him and

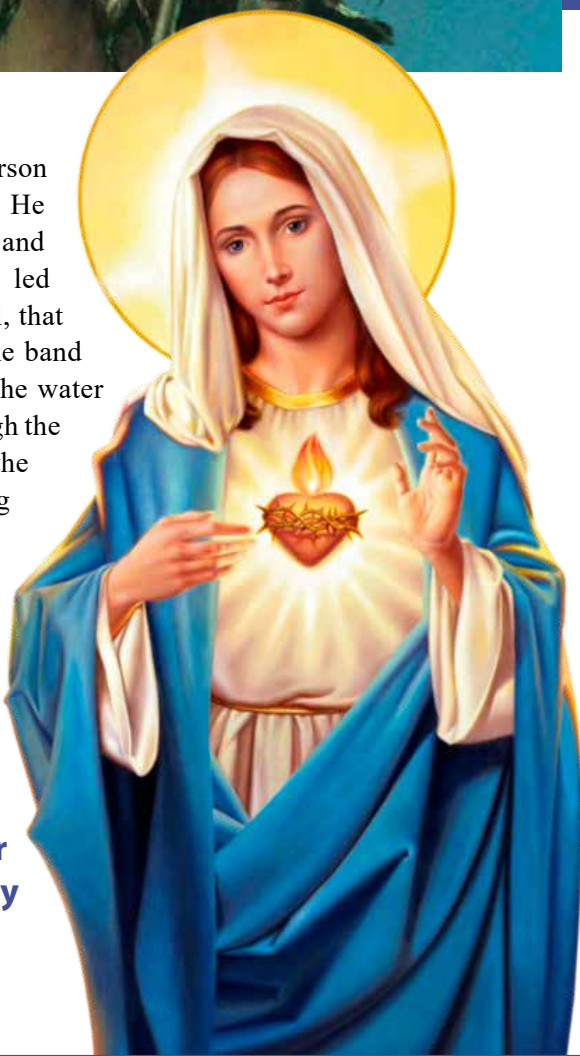


he even challenged one person in the audience to a fight. He ended up leaving the stage and throwing a tantrum which led him to kick the wading pool, that was out the back to keep the band members cool, causing all the water to escape and running through the whole electrical system of the concert henceforth shutting the whole event down. He left immediately heading to the airport and catching a flight out of Australia vowing never to come back to Australia again.

Ave Maria!!

If you'd like to find out more about your local Legion of Mary contact

**Caronne Vella
on 0413 801 616.**



Help make Together the best newspaper it can be...

**Let us know what is
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Together relies upon your stories to make it relevant and meaningful. We want to know what is happening in your local area so that we can share that news with the rest of the diocese.

We are always looking for local contributors who can write 250 to 350 words about local church projects, initiatives or school events. Include a couple of high resolution photos and you are well on your way to being published in Together.

For more information about making contributions to Together or to submit your article contact us at: together@wagga.catholic.org.au



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Jubilee 2025

Diocese of Wagga Wagga Calendar of Events



MARCH

13 March
Year of Hope MIA Deanery
Opening Mass - Griffith

15 March
Jubilee Year Ordinations
Ordination to the Priesthood -
John Baptist Van Thuy Nguyen
Ordinations to the Diaconate

28 March
Jubilee of Hope - Night of
Mercy

APRIL

15 April
Chrism Mass

28 April
Jubilee of Teenagers

MAY

4 May
Jubilee of Workers and
Entrepreneurs

25 May
Jubilee of Children

30 May
Jubilee of Families,
Grandparents and the Elderly

JUNE

24 June
Jubilee of Seminarians

26 June
Jubilee of Priests

JULY

3 July
Jubilee of Parish Secretaries

SEPTEMBER

26-28 September
Jubilee of Catechists

29 September - 12 October
Pilgrimage of Hope to Italy
with Fr Paddy Sykes

OCTOBER

9 October
Jubilee of Consecrated Life

12 October
Jubilee of Marian Spirituality

20-24 October
Diocesan All-Clergy Retreat

30 October - 2 November
Jubilee of World of Education

NOVEMBER

23 November
Jubilee of Choirs

DECEMBER

14 December
Jubilee of Prisoners (June &
Mannus)



THANKS TO AND FROM ANNA

Recently, the entire parish community of Sacred Heart, Griffith, gathered in the parish centre to show appreciation to Mrs Anna Rossetto, the former parish secretary who retired after thirteen years on the job.

BY FR HENRY IBE

Administrator of St. Mary's Parish, Lockhart

Anna served as Parish Secretary from June 2011 to October 2024, and at her farewell event, everyone praised her unwavering work ethic and dedication, rooted in her deep faith. Fr. Henry Ibe, the Parish Priest, shared that although Anna had retired, she continued to support the parish in various ways. In her speech, Anna expressed her gratitude for the love she received and reflected on her childhood faith as the foundation for her lifelong dedication to the Church.

Anna began by thanking God for the gift of faith that had guided her. She shared memories from her early life, particularly her mother's influence and her upbringing as a market gardener in Forbes. Despite challenges like the loss of her father at a young age, she grew up with a strong Catholic faith, which

included never missing Mass even while working hard on Sundays. She recalled spending time in the church as a child, finding peace there amid her struggles.

Anna's faith journey continued after she married Paul in 1985, and the couple settled in Yenda before moving to Griffith in 2002. In 2008, Anna's involvement in organizing the World Youth Day Cross & Icon reception led to her connection with Sacred Heart Parish, which she and her family later chose as their parish home.

Anna began her role as Parish Secretary in 2011, initially as a relief worker, with plans to stay briefly. However, she ended up serving for thirteen years, starting with the parish's 90th anniversary celebrations. Over time, she also took on other roles, such as housekeeper, cook, and assistant to Fr. Beltrame. During the centenary



Anna Rossetto with her husband (Paul) and children (Jamie-Anne and Matthew).

celebrations, she contributed to the creation of a book on the parish's history.

Throughout her tenure, Anna was deeply grateful for the support of the priests, volunteers, and parishioners. She expressed special thanks to her family for their unwavering support, particularly through her battle with cancer. She acknowledged the parish team's dedication, including the many behind-the-scenes workers who helped the parish function smoothly.

In her closing remarks, Anna thanked everyone for their kindness, support, and prayers, and wished the best for her successor, Sia, encouraging the parish to extend the same support to her. While stepping down from the position of secretary, she assured everyone she would remain part of the community. **Anna's words ended with a heartfelt "thank you" and a blessing for all.**

ONLINE COURSE: INTRODUCTION TO MISSION

Catholic Mission, in collaboration with BBI, The Australian Institute of Theological Education, is pleased to announce the upcoming course, *Introduction to Mission*.

This eight-week online course offers the opportunity to delve deeper into the essence of mission and how to align it with God's dream for all creation.

Facilitated by Patrick Fox, an expert in the field of mission and intercultural dialogue, the course will benefit from his wealth of experience, including his time with the indigenous Q'eqchi' people in Guatemala and his current role at Catholic Mission. This course promises to be both insightful and enriching.

Course Overview

Format: Eight weekly sessions, each approximately 60 minutes long, with preparatory readings and additional articles for deeper understanding.

Topics:

- The Mission of Jesus and the early Church
- Evolution of the Church's understanding of mission throughout history
- Contemporary teaching on Mission focusing on God's mission, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit
- Personal mission and alignment with one's baptismal calling
- Mission in today's context, including ecological conversion, justice, and dialogue with First Nations peoples, migrants, and other faiths.



Dates: Modules are available weekly from Monday 17 March till May 12, with a break the week of April 14.

Cost: \$330 + GST (AUD)

This course is taught entirely online, offering flexibility to adapt to your specific needs and schedules. We believe it could be particularly beneficial for those in leadership roles within mission-related fields, such as school leaders, teachers, and staff and volunteers of Catholic agencies.

Why Join?

- Enhance your understanding of mission in the contemporary world.
- Engage in meaningful discussions and reflections

with peers globally.

- Gain practical insights to apply in your personal and professional life.

If you are interested or have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Professor Gerard Moore, Principal of BBI-TAITE, at 0491 201 214 or gmoore@bbi.catholic.edu.au



COUNSELLING SERVICES

Faith based
Counselling
Services

Centacare South West NSW is a Catholic Social Service Agency who exists to make a positive difference in people's lives. Our psychology, counselling, NDIS, school wellbeing, and education programs support children, individuals, and families.

Are you looking for a therapist who will incorporate your Christian faith?

Our faith-based counsellor can support clients across the Wagga Wagga Catholic Diocese. We currently offer individual, and couples (including pre-marriage) counselling to adults. Together, we'll explore strategies and skills for managing stressors or challenges in your life and foster personal and relationship growth. Sessions can be in-person, by phone, or video conferencing.

What Is Faith Based Counselling:

Counselling is a supportive process where individuals and couples can confide in trained professionals who have a deep understanding of emotions, thoughts, behaviours, and relationships. It provides a safe space to navigate challenges, foster personal development, and enhance mental and emotional wellbeing.

Counselling takes a holistic approach to your mental health, and faith based counselling intentionally incorporates faith into the therapeutic journey. Faith based counselling incorporates an additional pillar into generalist counselling, including a special interest in your Christian faith that informs your sense of self, relationships with others and integration into the world.

About our counsellor:

Stina Constantine is an AASW accredited Social Worker with qualifications in Psychology and Social work. She has close to 10 years' experience working with families of high conflict and family break downs and is trained in couple's therapy. Her passion points in practice are working with couples and trauma counselling.

Stina is a practicing Christian who has been actively involved in her church community. Her extensive experience in Church ministry has allowed her to meet and work with a variety people including clergy, adults, children, and families.

Want to know more? Our website: www.centacareswsw.org.au or call 1300 619 379 or email your enquiry to: info@centacareswsw.org.au



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To find out
more scan
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COUNSELLING SERVICES

Pre-
Marriage
Counselling
Program

Centacare South West NSW is a Catholic Social Service Agency who exists to make a positive difference in people's lives. Our psychology, counselling, NDIS, school wellbeing, and education programs support children, individuals, and families.

Are you getting married? Congratulations! It's an exciting time that comes with making a legal, emotional, and spiritual commitment. Pre-marriage counselling provides you and your partner an encouraging, unbiased space for genuine connection and open dialogue on the many aspects of your growing relationship.

Centacare South West NSW's pre-marriage counselling will encourage you as a couple to harness the strengths in your relationship as well support growth areas, giving you tools to manage many of the challenges that naturally comes with sharing a life with another person. Using the PREPARE & ENRICH inventory, our faith-based couples counsellor hopes to help provide you with some useful skills and tools that are tailored to YOUR specific relationship.

This program focuses on:

- Determining your shared goals & values.
- Learning to manage conflict with respect and compassion
- Increasing emotional connection and intimacy.
- Negotiating commitments, responsibilities, and boundaries.
- Strengthening communication and listening skills.
- Working on trust, communication, and other areas of concern.

The sessions can cover a variety of themes including partner style and habits, financial management, leisure activities, affection and sex, family and friends, relationship expectations and children & parenting.

The sessions can be provided face to face (in Wagga), or via video conference across the South West Region of NSW.

Cost: \$450 (this includes access to your individual PREPARE & ENRICH Questionnaire, as well as 3 Sessions with our counsellor – further sessions available upon request).



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Centacare South West NSW



TAKING CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

We place a high value on mental health and recovery at Centacare. We offer a range of psychological services to people across the southern and western parts of region.

Centacare South West NSW is registered with Medicare Australia to provide services under the Medicare Benefits Scheme. Our professional team of psychologists provide assessment and treatment for people with mental health problems.

Referral by a general practitioner under a Mental Health Plan is required.

Psychological Services are available in Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Albury and Mulwala. We specialise in areas including:

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THERAPEUTIC Depending on the individual's needs and preferences, our team use a variety of evidence-based approaches including:

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- Narrative therapy
- Motivational interviewing
- Positive psychology
- Strengths based approaches



OUR GENERALIST COUNSELLING SERVICES

Throughout our lives we are all faced with stressful situations and difficult events, such as relationship problems (including family breakdown and separation), parenting stressors, the death of a loved one, school or work issues, mental health concerns and so on. We know that it can be helpful to talk to someone, such as a counsellor, who can support you through these challenging times.

At Centacare South West NSW we have professional and qualified counsellors at our sites in Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Albury and Mulwala. They work across the lifespan with individuals, couples and families with the overall aim of empowering people to achieve their goals and to improve their functioning and wellbeing.



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Individual Parenting Support

Our Individual Parent Support Services helps parents understand their child's developmental, social and emotional needs by learning to navigate pivotal transitional phases throughout their child's life.

Family Group Conferencing

Family group conferencing aids in the family-led decision making process to develop a plan of support for a child or young person.

Children & Youth Support Services

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THE RED HAND FILES

My dad is dying. It's cancer. I'm spending as much time with him as I can, but in the absolute terror of it all, I can't help but crack jokes. And then the guilt takes over. Do you or Susie ever joke or laugh in your grief? - Roger, Vancouver, Canada

BY NICK CAVE
redhandfiles.com

Dear Roger,

I'm sorry to hear about your dad. It seems that there is genuine love between you. If this is so, I would say that he wouldn't need you to be anything other than who you are – your authentic self. I doubt your dad wants you on your best behaviour. If you are the kind of person who uses humour to alleviate tension – I certainly am – then do so. I can't think of a more poignant and binding act than to be able to laugh together in this most tragic of circumstances. The thing that you don't need in this dynamic is guilt. Dispense with it. You have nothing to feel guilty for.

For Susie and me, humour is as necessary as breathing – without it, the darkness becomes unbearable. I find there is no more heartening sound than laughter, and in particular, the

laughter of my wife. There is a gentle defiance to it, a bell-like musicality that gives grounds for hope. Grief is the expansion of the essential substance upon which we order our lives. It is an unfolding of our complete nature. This inevitable and natural condition of being is something that you will soon encounter, and ultimately, you will find that humour is the leavening component in this transformation.

Joke with your dad in the dark, Roger, incautiously, even grimly, for what more profound and honest response to these sorrowful moments can there be? When your father has gone, you will know there was that – love and foolish laughter, made with a full and caring heart, in the face of eternity. Love and gently laugh your dad goodbye, Roger. There will be time enough for silence



Sunset & Flowers– Lechuza Beach by Thomas Houseago, 2022.

and crying.

You are in our thoughts.

Love, Nick

PS. For Christmas, I was given

Byung-Chul Han's *The Spirit of Hope*, a beautiful book on the nature of hope. It greatly informed this answer, and I highly recommend it.



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Lean on
the locals.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

This experience led me to a deeper understanding of the concept of joy versus happiness. Happiness is the feeling we get when we celebrate something we've earned or accomplished. Joy, on the other hand, is not created by us; it is something we encounter when we feel the presence of something transcendent - something that moves us beyond ourselves. It is a feeling that rises up within us when we touch a truth greater than our own limited understanding. It is a glimpse of divine goodness that, for a moment, feels so real that we can't help but be overwhelmed by it.

Psychologists have a term for this kind of experience: moral elevation. It's the emotional state that arises when we witness acts of moral beauty, of selfless love, or of pure goodness. In my case, standing by that mountain lake, I felt overwhelmed by an understanding of moral beauty that reshaped my vision of the world. This wasn't an intellectual insight; it was an emotional and spiritual awakening.

Through these moments, I began to feel something important clicking into place in my life, as if I had discovered an eternal moral compass that guided the way we should live. It wasn't just

a matter of personal preference; there was a moral order to the universe, one that transcended individual desires and cultural norms. There were things that were always wrong - slavery, cruelty, injustice - and things that were always right - love, mercy, and justice. These values, which had seemed abstract or theoretical before, now felt deeply real and worth orienting my life toward.

In my journey of faith, I came to realize that faith isn't so much about the possession of knowledge as it is about yearning. It's about desiring something beautiful and transcendent, something beyond what we can fully understand. This desire is the driving force in faith, not just the ability to make logical arguments or arrive at certain conclusions. In the end, faith is a yearning that pulls us toward a deeper connection with the divine.

To put it simply, faith is a kind of longing - an open, ongoing search for something greater. It's about walking toward the divine, even when you can't fully see it or grasp it. As I continue on this journey, I realize that the most significant moments of faith come not from intellectual conclusions but from the deep, transformative longing that shapes my life.

Find the full version at
wagga.catholic.org.au/together-paper

SCHOOLS IN OUR DIOCESE

St Peter's Primary, Coleambally



On February 28, St Peter's had a visit from the CEDWW Director, Dr Andrew Watson. Dr Watson visited the childrens classrooms and enjoyed lunch with the staff.

St Patrick's Primary, Holbrook



St. Patrick's Primary School on Ash Wednesday, March 5.

Sacred Heart Primary, Tocumwal



Sacred Heart Primary had a beautiful graduation celebration for the Year 6 students late last year. They reminisced on their time at Sacred Heart over the last seven years and picked out highlights of memorable moments that they will take with them into secondary school.

St Joseph's Primary, Narrandera



Ash Wednesday Mass. Thank you Mrs Spina, Mrs Flynn and 3/4S for preparing and leading the Mass for us.



Kildare Catholic College, Wagga



Happy International Women's Day! Our student leaders attended Dr. Joe McGirr's morning tea, supported by Women in Business. They were lucky to hear from a panel of amazing local women on issues relating to caring responsibilities and structural change needed to support men and women.



All schools enrolling now

St Anne's Primary, North Albury



Years 4-6 attended Sacred Heart Parish to take part in the Ash Wednesday Mass. Some of our Year 6 leaders took part in the Mass, while our captains and vice captains placed the ashes on the foreheads of our students and parishioners.



St Francis De Sales Regional College, Leeton

Year 8 Retreat - Students had the pleasure on spending a day with Az Hamilton. Az has an incredible ability to connect through stories and personal experiences spent both overseas and within Australian communities that inspires students to live a life worth getting excited about. Just Motivation exists to educate, motivate and stir the hearts of individuals to connect with small ideas that can bring about BIG change in the world.



Henschke Primary School, Wagga

On March 4 Kindergarten participated in the NRMA Bus Safety Talk. It was a great opportunity for students to learn, share their ideas, ask questions and take a ride on a bus.



St Patrick's Primary, Griffith

St Patrick's students enjoyed their pancakes on Shrove Tuesday.



Marian Catholic College, Griffith

Clean Up Australia Day with Marian Year 8 students on March 7.



SCHOOLS IN OUR DIOCESE

DISCERNMENT IS LIFE-LONG, GOD IS ALWAYS INVITING US DEEPER

She might be a familiar face in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga due to Virtue Ministry, but there was a time not so long ago that Stina Constantine had packed up her life up into two suitcases and a box, flown to New Zealand and waited on God to reveal where she was headed next.

BY EMILY SHAW

Vocations Committee Wagga Wagga

International travel is not unfamiliar to Stina. She was born and raised in Norway by Sri Lanken immigrants who had fled their own country just prior to the eruption of civil war. When she was 10, her family visited Australia and decided to take advantage of the private Catholic Schools that did not exist in Lutheran Norway.

Her parents valued their Catholic faith had made the most of the few opportunities in Norway to help form their three daughters in the faith. The girls attended Sunday school before Mass, and Stina’s mother often recounted stories from the Old Testament.

In addition to this, the family had numerous familial and personal devotions. These remain a witness she treasures when she returns to the family home in Norway.

“I sleep in the room next to where the family altar is,” she explains, “and when I walk past and see a candle alight, I know that Mum or Dad has been there praying while I’ve been in the shower or out doing something else. It’s their silent witness.”

Her own spirituality was harder to pin down. She felt closest to God in nature, especially in the forests of Norway. And though she had been told that Jesus wanted to be her friend, she didn’t know this in her heart.

Dilemma and detachment

After Stina completed her high school studies, her family moved back to Norway. She felt the ‘pull’ to return to Australia and considers this to be the first time in her life that she had to

discern.

Despite this, Stina experienced was she calls a ‘crisis of faith’. She asked herself: “Is the Christian faith for me? Could I leave Christianity for another religion?”

In the end she decided that she could only leave Christianity if she knew what she was going to reject. She was not expecting to ask questions of the Church, and have them answered in such a way that it firmed up her faith.

Stina then took it upon herself to learn more about the Christian faith. Her Sunday Mass attendance continued, and included music ministry, and she attended daily Mass and Adoration where possible.

But there was little community. For the most part it was her and Jesus. With no family close by and a long-term relationship recently ended, it was Stina, her ‘house mother’ and Jesus.

It was in the midst of helping organise a parish mission that Stina was blindsided by Visa issues and needed to travel to New Zealand.

“I had to purchase a return ticket out of New Zealand but didn’t know if it would be to Norway or if I could go back to Australia,” she admits.

“It took me 5 days to find a café that had internet to find that I had been granted a visa within 24 hours of application. It was very clear that God had wanted to remove me from everything so that I would learn to trust Him.”

She spent the rest of her time in New Zealand holidaying and: “Learning to love everyday being in the presence



Above: Stina spent the rest of her time in New Zealand holidaying and: “Learning to love everyday being in the presence of God”.

of God”. She credits this time with teaching her true detachment, literally and spiritually.

It was not the only take home from this period. “I learned what He feels like. What it feels like to prompted by the Spirit. And what it feels like to have my own emotions go haywire and have my own brain get overexcited and euphoric and how to determine the difference between the two.”

She returned to Australia, literally living out of a suitcase and, providentially was able to attend the parish mission that she had helped to organise. It was the preaching of Fr Wade Menezes CPM that had Stina discerning again.

“5 nights in a row, what stood out to me was literally his words around virtue.” She says, “It is screaming at me from the pulpit.”

Despite feeling terrified and unsure, Stina realised that God was asking something of her. She started simply.

“Discern. We start with us. We have to grow in virtue.”

The conclusion she came to was this: virtue is the ‘way of love’.

“We have all of this beautiful theology around what love is but then when it comes to how do we live love we have all these rules.” She says, “We go from this beautiful relationship to these are the rules that you uphold. Instead of going, this is a beautiful relationship and these are the pillars and the platforms that we use to love well,

and that’s what virtue does.”

“It gives you a way. And it shows you that the only way forward is through Christ, who is the way, right?”

Discourse and discovery

At first Stina’s foray into virtue was a personal one. Her transformation, she assures me, was obvious to those around her. It wasn’t rapid, but it was tangible. Beginning with a Virtue Challenge, a regular feature of her ongoing ministry, she began to consider the concept of striving to be more like Christ, but in a feminine way.

“I need to ask Mary; how did she love Christ? How did she reciprocate that love? And that will teach me.” she concluded.

“She pondered these things in her heart – she had discourse with God in her heart!”

The fruit of this concept led to a ‘Yes Year’ where Stina, along with other young women, to say ‘fiat’ to any good opportunities that did not conflict with preexisting commitments or responsibilities.

As time progressed, Stina found that her ‘Yes year’ had become a ‘Yes life.’ And it unfolded in a very different way to what she had expected.

Part 2 of this article will be published in the April issue of Together.

MASS TIMES IN OUR DIOCESE

WAGGA WAGGA - CATHEDRAL

St Michael's Cathedral
Church Street, Wagga Wagga
Monday - Friday 7:00am, 12:45pm
Weekend Masses
Saturday - 12:15pm
Saturday Vigil - 5:00pm
Sunday - 8:00am, 10:00am and 5:30pm
Confessions
Monday - Thursday 12:30pm - 12:40pm
Friday 12:00-12:40pm & 6:30pm-6:45pm
Saturday 11:00am-12:00noon & 4:30pm-5:30pm
Rosary times
Monday to Thursday 12:25pm and Saturday 11:55am (before Mass)
St Mary's Chapel
Vianney College, 17 Durack Circuit
Sunday - 9:00am
Mt Erin Chapel
Kildare Catholic College
Edmondson Street, Wagga Wagga
Sunday - 11:30am (1962 Missal Mass)
Confessions before and after Mass.

WAGGA WAGGA - KOORINGAL

Sacred Heart
Lake Albert Road, Kooringal
Weekend Masses
Saturday Vigil - 5:30pm
Sunday - 9:00am
Weekday Masses
Monday, Wednesday, Friday - 5:30pm
Tuesday and Thursday - 7:00am
Saturday - 9:30am
Reconciliation
Saturday - 10:00am - 10:30am
Changes to times will be on the Chapel door.
Anointing Mass:
Every second Thursday of the month at 10am in the Parish Church/Chapel
Mass at Caloola Court:
Every first Thursday of the month at 11:00am

WAGGA WAGGA - SOUTH WAGGA

Our Lady of Fatima
Bourke Street, Wagga Wagga
Weekend Masses
Saturday Vigil - 5:00pm
Sunday - 8:30am, 10:30am & 5:30pm (Syro-Malabar Rite)
Weekday Masses - Our Lady of Fatima
Monday to Friday 6:00pm (Weds & Thurs Syro-Malabar)
Wednesday - 10:00am

Weekday Masses - Calvary Hospital
Monday-Friday - 8:00am (except public holidays)
Aged Care Facility Masses Forrest Centre
Every Thursday - 11:00am

Monthly Masses
1st Tuesday 11:00am Signature Wagga Community Aged Care
2nd Tuesday 10:30am RSL Village
3rd Tuesday 11:00am Nan Roberts - The Haven
4th Tuesday 10:30am Anointing Mass Henschke Hall
Confessions
Saturday - 10:30-11:30am

WAGGA WAGGA - WEST WAGGA

Holy Trinity Church
Bardia Street, Ashmont
Monday to Saturday - 7:00am
Sunday - 9:00am, 10:30am & 5:30pm
Our Lady of the Blessed Eucharist Church
Benedict Avenue, San Isidore
Saturday - 6:00pm
Home of Compassion
Tuesday - 10:30am

ALBURY

St Patrick's 515 Smollett St, Albury
Weekend Mass Times
Vigil (Saturday) - 5:00pm
Sunday - 8:00am, 10.00am & 5:30pm
1962 Missal Mass - Sunday 12 noon
Weekday Mass Times
Monday to Friday - 7:00am
Tuesday - 5:30pm
Thursday - 9:30am
1962 Missal Mass - Monday 5:30pm in the Adoration Chapel
1962 Missal Mass - Wednesday 7:00pm in the Adoration Chapel
First Friday - 5:30pm
Saturday - 9:30am
Confessions
Saturday: 8:20 - 9:20am and 4:00 - 4:45pm
Every first Thursday: 9:00am - 9:25am
Sunday: 30 mins prior to all Sunday Masses.
Weekday Masses: Fifteen minutes prior to all Masses (ends 5 mins prior to Mass)
Any other time on request.

ALBURY - NORTH ALBURY

Sacred Heart
Mate St, Nth Albury
Saturday Vigil - 6.00 pm
Sunday - 9.30 am
Weekday Masses
Wednesday & Fridays 9.30am or as printed in the weekly newsletter.
Confessions
Saturday - 5.15 - 5.45 pm

ALBURY - LAVINGTON

Holy Spirit
Saturday Vigil - 6.00pm
Sunday - 8.00am, 10.00am
St Mary's Jindera - 9.00am
Weekday Masses
Monday - Friday - 7.00am
Saturday - 9.15am
Confessions
Saturday - 8.15am, 5.00pm
St Mary's Jindera - Sunday 8.30am

ALBURY - THURGOONA

Immaculate Heart of Mary
20 Hartigan Street
Thurgoona
Weekend Masses
Saturday Vigil - 5:30pm
Sunday - 9:30am
Weekday Masses
Monday - 8:00am
Tuesday - 10:00am
Wednesday - 8:00am
Thursday – 5:30pm (with Holy Hour at 4:30-5:25pm including Exposition and Benediction)
Friday and Saturday - 8:00am
Confessions
Saturday 8:30 to 9:00am after Mass
Saturday 5:00-5:25pm before Mass
Sunday 9:00-9:25am before Mass
Thursday - 4:45-5:15pm (during Holy Hour) Or anytime – just ask the priest
Baptisms and Marriages by appt.

BERRIGAN

St Columba's
4 Corcoran Street, Berrigan
1st, 3rd, 5th Saturday Vigil 6:00pm
2nd, 4th Sunday - 10:00am
Weekday Masses refer to parish notices.
Confessions before weekend Masses.

COOLAMON

St Michael's
Saturday 6.00pm
Sunday - 8.00am
Confessions
Saturday - 4.45 - 5.15pm
Weekday Masses
Wednesday - 8.00am

Thursday - 8.00am
Friday -10.15am
Marrar
Saturday Vigil - 6.00pm
Confessions 1st Saturday - 5.30pm
Allawah Village
First Thursday of each month.
Mass at 9.15am

COROWA

St Mary's Star of the Sea
Saturday Vigil - 6:00pm
Sunday - 9:00am
Weekday Masses
Refer to Parish Bulletin available in the Church or on the parish website
Confessions/ Reconciliation
Saturday - 11:00am-12:00, 5:30-6:00pm
St Pius X, Coreen,
1st, 3rd Sunday - 10:45am Mass

CULCAIRN

St Patrick's Culcairn
1st, 4th Sunday - 8:00am
2nd, 3rd Sunday - 10:00am
5th Sunday - Vigil Mass 6:00pm (Saturday)
Henty
2nd, 4th Saturday Vigil - 6:00pm
1st Sunday - 10:00am
3rd, 5th Sunday - 8:00am
Walla Walla
1st & 4th Sunday - 6:00pm (Sunday)
Weekday Masses
Vary according to needs and are announced in the Sunday bulletin.
Anointing of the Sick within Mass every 1st First Friday of the Month at 10:00am.
Confessions
30 minutes before each weekend Mass.

DARLINGTON POINT

DARLINGTON POINT
St Oliver Plunkett
Hay Road
1st, 3rd, 5th Sunday - 8.30am
2nd, 4th Sunday - 5pm (Saturday Vigil)
Weekday Masses
Mon-Fri - 8.30am
COLEAMBALLY
St Peter's
Cnr of Currawong Crescent & Kingfisher Avenue
1st, 3rd, 5th Sunday - 10.30am
2nd, 4th Sunday - 8.00am
Confessions 15 minutes before any Mass or anytime by request.

FINLEY

St Mary's
1 Denison Street Finley
Saturday - 9:30am
Sunday - 10.15am
Weekday Masses
Wednesday - 12:30pm
Friday - 5:30pm
Rosary and Confession before every Mass.
Adoration-Benediction:
Friday - 4:30 - 5:30pm
Saturday - 10:00 - 10:30am

GANMAIN

St. Brendan's Ganmain
Sunday Mass 10:00am
Weekday Masses
Monday - 5.30pm
Tuesday - 5.30pm
Saturday - 8.00am & 6.00pm
Confessions:
30 min. before all Masses.
Confessions:
30 min. before Mass

GRIFFITH

Sacred Heart
Warrambool St, Griffith
Weekend Masses
Saturday - 8.00am
Sunday - 7.30am, 9.00am, (Italian), 10.30am, 5.30pm

Weekday Masses
Monday - Friday - 7.00am, 5.30pm
Saturday Vigil - 5.30pm
Confessions
Friday - 4.30pm to 5.30pm
Saturday - 11.30am to 12.30pm
Marian Catholic College Chapel
185 Wakaden Street Griffith
Sunday - 9.00am

HOLBROOK

Our Lady of Sorrows
145 Albury Street, Holbrook
1st & 3rd Sunday - Saturday Vigil 5.30pm
2nd Sunday - 8.00 am
4th & 5th Sunday - 10.00am
Weekday Masses
Vary according to needs and are announced in the Sunday bulletin.
Confessions
30 mins before Mass and/or by requests.
Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament every Thursday at 9:00am
Anointing of the Sick within Mass every 1st Thursday of the Month at 10:00am.
St Francis De Sales Church of the Pioneers
Hume Highway, Bowna
2nd Sunday - 11:30am

HOWLONG

St Brigid's
Hovell St, Howlong
Church of the Good Shepherd
Queen Street, Walbundrie
Weekend Mass Times
Saturday - 6:00pm Vigil Howlong
Sunday - 9:00am Walbundrie

JERILDERIE

St Joseph's
Coreen Street, Jerilderie
Sunday Mass - 8:30am
Weekday Masses
Wednesday - 9:15am
Thursday - 5:30pm
Friday - 5:30pm
Confessions Before all Masses.
Adoration 30 minutes before weekday masses.

JUNEE

St Joseph's
21 Kitchener Street, Junee
Saturday Vigil - 6:00pm
Sunday - 9:30am
Weekday Masses
Tuesday - 10.00am Junee
Correctional Centre
Wednesday - 9:00am
Thursday - 7:00am
Friday - 9:30am
Confessions
Saturday - 10:30-11:00am;
Illabo and Junee Reefs Alternate
Sundays - 8:00am

KHANCOBAN

Church of St Joseph the Worker
Contact Tumbarumba Parish for Mass times.

LEETON

St Joseph's Leeton
Wade Avenue, Leeton
Saturday Vigil - 5:00pm Standard time
6:00pm Daylight Saving time
Sunday - 10:00am (First Sunday of the month is Italian)
St Patrick's Yanco
Sunday - 8:00am
Tuesday - 9:00am
Weekday Masses in Leeton
Tuesday (Yanco) - 9:00am
Wednesday - 9:00am
Thursday - 9:00am
Friday - 9:15am and 5:30pm
Sacrament of Penance
Friday - 4:45-5:15pm
Saturday - 4:20pm-4:45pm
Eucharistic Adoration
St Joseph's Church Leeton
Friday - 4:30pm

LOCKHART

St Mary's Church
55 Ferrier St, Lockhart
Weekend Masses
1st, 3rd & 5th Sundays - 6:00pm
Saturday Vigil
2nd & 4th Sundays - 7:45am
Weekday Masses
Tuesday - 9:00am
Friday - 10:00am
(Weekday Mass times are subject to change. Contact the Parish Priest.)
Confessions
Before Mass and any time upon request.

MULWALA

St Brigid's
Havelock Street, Mulwala
Weekend Masses
1st, 3rd & 5th Sunday - 8:00am
2nd, 4th Sunday - 6:00pm
Saturday Vigil
Weekday Masses
Refer to parish notices
St Joseph's
Barooga
Weekend Masses
1st, 3rd, 5th Sunday - 10:00am
2nd, 4th Sunday - 8:00am
Weekday Masses
Refer to parish notices
Confessions Before weekend Masses

NARRANDERA

St Mel's Church,
Audley St
Saturday Vigil - 6.00pm
Sunday - 9:30am
Weekday Masses
Tuesday - 5:30pm
Wednesday & Thursday - 7:30am
Friday - 5:30pm
Saturday - 8:00am
(subject to changes announced in the Sunday bulletin)
Confessions
Saturday - 8:30 - 9.30am
Grong Grong
1st, 3rd, 5th Sunday - 8.00am
Galore
St Kevin's Church
2nd & 4th Sunday - 8:00am

TARCUTTA

St Francis Xavier
Sydney St, Tarcutta
Saturday Vigil - 5:00pm
Confessions
Before all Masses.

THE ROCK

St Mary's
96-102 Urana Street, The Rock
Weekend Masses
Saturday - 8:30am
Sunday - 8:00am (1962 Missal Mass)
Sunday - 10:00am
Weekday Masses
Monday - 7:00am
Tuesday - 6:00pm
Wednesday - 7:00am
Thursday - 8:30am
Friday - 6:00pm
Confessions:
Saturday 4:30-5:30pm, and before all Masses.

TOCUMWAL

St Peter's
Charlotte Street, Tocumwal
Saturday Vigil - 5.30pm
Sunday - 8.30am
Weekday Masses
Tuesday - 5:30pm
Thursday - 9.15am
Confessions
Before all Masses.
Adoration Benediction
1st Sunday each month 3pm to 4pm

TUMBARUMBA

All Saints'
40 Murray Street, Tumbarumba
Saturday Vigil - 6.00pm
Sunday - 9.00am
Weekday Masses
Monday & Tuesday - 7:30am
Wednesday-Friday - 5.30pm
Saturday 9.15am
Confessions
Friday 4.30pm - 5.15pm
Saturday - 8.00am - 9.00am
And 30 mins before weekend Holy Masses
Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Tooma
4th Sunday - 7.30am
Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament
Friday - 4.30pm & Saturday - 8.00am

URANA

St Fiacre's Church 5 End St, Urana
Weekend Masses
1st, 3rd & 5th Sunday - 8:00am
2nd & 4th Saturday - 6:00pm Vigil
Weekday Masses
Posted on church notice board each week.
Oaklands - St Columba's Church
1st, 3rd & 5th Sundays - 10:00am
2nd & 4th Sundays - 10:15am

Confessions
Urana - Saturday 5:00-5:30pm
and 20 minutes prior to each weekend
Mass (Urana & Oaklands)

YENDA - YOOGALI - HANWOOD

Our Lady of the Rosary of Pompeii
17 Edon Street, Yoogali
Friday - 9:30am
Sunday - 10:00am
St Anthony's - Hanwood
Wednesday - 8:00am
Saturday Vigil - 5:00pm
Good Shepherd Chapel - Yoogali
Thursday - 11:30am
Saturday - 10:30am
St Therese's - Yenda
Tuesday - 5:15pm
Sunday - 8:00am
Confessions
Hanwood - Saturday - 4:30pm
Yenda - Sunday - 7:30am
Yoogali - Sunday - 9:30am

Please note that Mass times were true and correct at the time of printing. For further clarification, please check parish bulletins and noticeboards closer to the date.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THOSE PRIESTS WHOSE ANNIVERSARY OF DEATH OCCURS IN: March

*These faithful
servants, Lord, put
their wholehearted
trust in you - Grant
that they may live
in your love.*

1 March 1982	Fr Richard Walter O'Donovan
4 March 1989	Mgr John Desmond Lane
6 March 1996	Fr Edward (Tony) Fitzgerald
7 March 2001	Fr Peter O'Leary
17 March 1949	Mgr William Slattery



Junior Legion

Every Wednesday afternoon at 3:30pm
at St Mary MacKillop Colleges.

Senior Legion

Every Thursday evening at 7:30pm at
Bishop's House.

All welcome!

Come and join Our Lady's Army and
help your Priest serve his parish!

Contact:
Caronne 0413 801 616



FAMILY REFLECTIONS

16th March 2025
Second Sunday of Lent, Cycle C

In today's Gospel, the voice from heaven speaks to the disciples saying, "Listen to him." The Transfiguration was a focused moment for the disciples when they heard God speaking to them and experienced Jesus in glory. They most certainly left this focused moment with a new appreciation for the importance of Jesus' words even if they did not yet understand everything that he had taught them. During Lent, we are invited to consider our attentiveness to Jesus and to one another. In the pace and noise that often characterizes family life, how well do we listen to one another? What opportunities do we have for quiet prayer?

As you gather as a family, count the number of pieces of equipment in your home that produce sound: televisions, radios, CD players, computers, video games, etc. Observe if sometimes more than one piece of equipment is playing simultaneously and how this might affect communication. Discuss the question: What is it like to try to talk with one another when this equipment is on?

Read aloud today's Gospel, Luke 9:28-36. Consider whether the noise and pace of your family life allows family members opportunities for quiet prayer. During Lent, it may be appropriate for your family to choose a time for quiet in the household by turning off televisions, radios, and CD players. Consider whether your family would like to establish such a time during this Season of Lent and suggest that it might allow you the opportunity to listen more attentively to one another and to find time for quiet prayer. Spend a few such moments as a family, asking God to help you listen well to one another and to Jesus.

Genesis 15:5-12,17-18 Psalm 27:1,7-8,8-9,13-14

Philippians 3:17-4:1 Luke 9:28b-36

23rd March 2025
Third Sunday of Lent, Cycle C

Now into the third week of the Season of Lent, our Sunday Gospel prepares us to hear Lent's call to conversion and repentance. Today's reading is found in the chapters of Luke's Gospel that describe Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. During this journey, Jesus teaches and heals. He must also respond to those who question and challenge his authority and actions. There is no parallel in Mark's or Matthew's Gospels for today's reading from Luke. While Mark and Matthew describe an incident in which Jesus curses the fig tree, today's reading makes the barren fig tree the subject of a parable.

Luke tells us that some among the crowds report to Jesus a massacre of Galileans by Pilate. The intention of the crowd seems to be to ask Jesus

to explain why these people suffered. It was commonplace to render people's suffering as evidence of their sinfulness. Jesus challenges this interpretation. Those who were massacred were no more or less sinful than the ones who report the situation to Jesus. Jesus replies that even a fatal accident, a natural disaster, ought not to be interpreted as punishment for sin.

Jesus' words at first appear to have a fire-and-brimstone quality. Jesus says in essence, "Repent or perish as these people did; all are sinful before God and deserving of God's punishment." The tone changes, however, in the parable that follows. The parable of the barren fig tree contrasts the patience and hopefulness of the gardener with the practicality of the property owner. When told to cut down the fig tree because it is not producing fruit, the gardener counsels patience. If properly tended, the barren fig tree may yet bear fruit.

Throughout his journey to Jerusalem, Jesus has been teaching about the Kingdom of God. In this parable, we find an image of God's patience and hopefulness as he prepares his Kingdom. God calls us to repent, and it is within his power to punish us for our failure to turn from our sinfulness. And yet God is merciful. He delays punishment and tends to us so that we may yet bear the fruit he desires from us.

This, then, is our reason for hope: Not only does God refuse to abandon us, he chooses to attend to us even when we show no evidence of his efforts. Next week's Gospel will give an even clearer picture of the kind of mercy that God shows to us.

Exodus 3:1-8a,13-15 Psalm 103:1-4,6-7,8,11

1 Corinthians 10:1-6,10-12

30th March 2025
Fourth Sunday of Lent, Cycle C

"Hey, that's not fair!" How many times have we heard this spoken in our family? Family members challenge one another's generosity, operating from the perspective of limited resources. If we have given to one, perhaps there won't be enough for the other. Jesus wants us to understand that this is not how it is with God's mercy and forgiveness. God offers his love to all of us in abundance. The forgiveness of the father in the parable is an image of God's love for us, generous beyond measure in his love for both of his sons. Can we truly believe that God acts this way towards us and accept his mercy without jealousy, knowing that God's love for another does not diminish his love for us?

As you gather as a family, talk about the words and phrases you speak to one another when angry. Identify words or phrases that reflect

jealousy towards one another. Talk about why we sometimes feel jealousy towards one another. Read aloud today's Gospel, Luke 15:1-3,11-32. Talk about why the older brother is jealous of the younger brother. Identify words that the family members in the parable might say to one another to begin to heal their broken relationships. Make a family commitment to say these types of words and phrases to one another with greater frequency. Pray together the Lord's Prayer.

Joshua 5:9a,10-12 Psalm 34:2-7

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 Luke 15:1-3,11-32

6th April 2025
Fifth Sunday of Lent, Cycle C

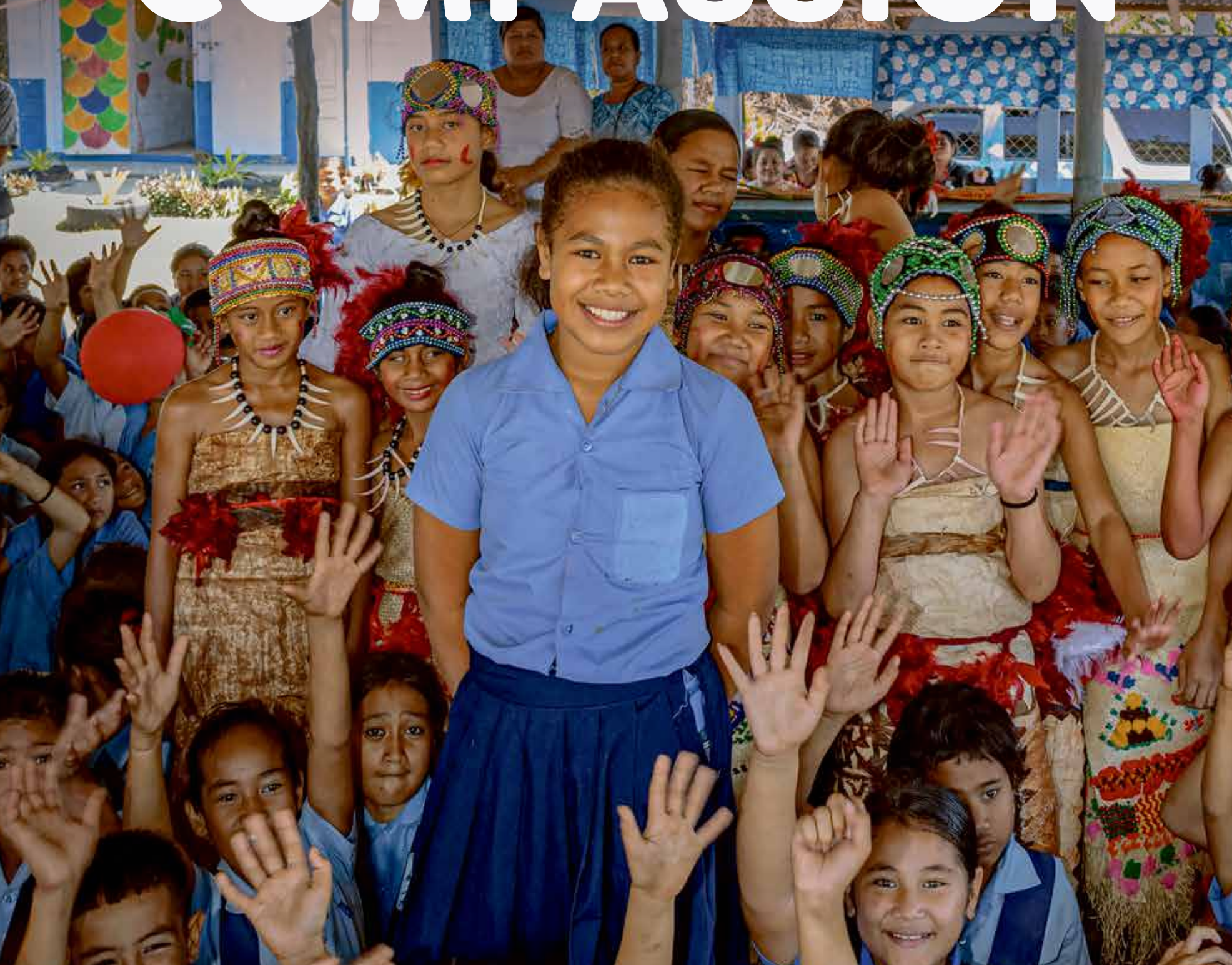
There are few people that we know better than the members of our own family. We know one another's strengths and abilities, and we also know one another's limitations and weaknesses. Like the Pharisees in today's Gospel, we may be tempted to focus on the faults and sins that familiarity with one another can sometimes reveal. As family members, however, we also have the ability to see one another's faults and sins within the context of the whole person. When we can keep this perspective, we are more likely to look upon one another with compassion. Family life, then, presents us the opportunity to see one another as God sees us, not with judgment and condemnation for our weaknesses and failings, but with mercy and compassion. When we learn to withhold judgment for the faults we know are there and seek the best in one another, we help one another to experience the depths of God's compassion, mercy, and love.

As you gather as a family, observe that when we know people well we know their faults as well as their strengths. At times, we can be tempted to focus on the faults we see in others. Discuss what your family life would be like if you always focused on one another's faults. Observe that in today's Gospel, Jesus refuses to focus on the sin of the woman brought to him for judgment. Read aloud today's Gospel, John 8:2-11. Ask: What did the people who focused on the woman's sin want to do? (stone the woman) What does Jesus say to the people who accused the woman caught in adultery? (that the person with no sin should throw the first stone) Are any of us without sin? (No.) Observe that we can help each other to grow in God's love by refusing to focus on one another's faults and sins. In this way, we can help one another to see ourselves as God sees us: with understanding and compassion. Conclude in prayer together asking God to forgive our sins by praying the Act of Contrition.

Isaiah 43:16-21 Psalm 126:1-6

Philippians 3:8-14 John 8:1-11

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