



**St John
Vianney**
Parish Morisset



SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER - DIVINE MERCY YEAR B 07 APRIL 2024

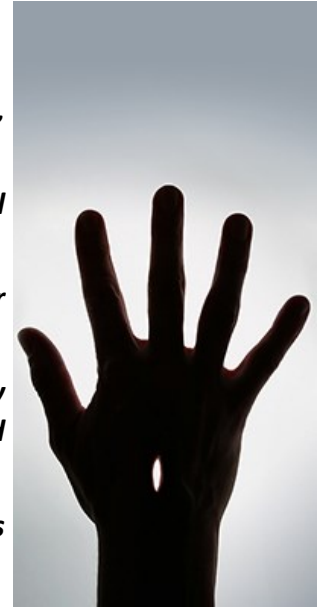
This Sunday is the Second Sunday of Easter. It is also the Octave Day of Easter, concluding eight days of high celebration.

Recently, it was also given the title of Divine Mercy Sunday, reflecting a personal devotion of Pope St John Paul II, to celebrate the merciful love of God .

Todays story of the Doubting Thomas brings home to us, just how frail is the container in which the gift of faith is carried, which is probably most of us.

To be a believer , or just a spiritual person, in todays world, can often be a lonely business. We need support. The first Christians supported one another by praying and worshipping together.

Today, again we have an opportunity to demonstrate to the world, that love is stronger than hatred, and good is greater than evil.



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Awabakal People who, long before us lived, loved, educated and raised their children on this Country. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and we recognise the young people who are our future. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in our communities. We respect their deep physical and spiritual connections to Country through their stories, traditions and living cultures.

- PARISH LEADERSHIP TEAM:** Uta France
John France
- PRIEST SUPERVISOR:** Fr Joseph Figuardo
- SACRAMENTAL PRIEST:** Fr John Purnell
- PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL:** Juliet Hutchins
Mal Melvey
Pam Melvey
Kerry Lendon
Rod Hay
- PARISH SECRETARY:** Rosanna Suckling

OFFICE: 60 Yambo Street, Morisset, PO Box 87, Ph: 02 4973.6859
Office Hours: 9.00 am to 2.00pm—Monday to Friday (except public holidays)
(We ask that you make an appointment to come to the office)
Morisset Parish Office email: morparish@mn.catholic.org.au
Morisset Parish Web site: www.vianneymorisset.org
Morisset Parish Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/stjvparish>
Morisset Parish Instagram : https://www.instagram.com/stjvparish_morisset/
Morisset Parish Bulletin Items: morparish@mn.catholic.org.au
(Please submit all Bulletin Notice requests to the parish office by 2pm Wednesdays)

Email the Parish Office to Subscribe for an Electronic Bulletin .

UPCOMING WORSHIP TIMES :

- Saturday 6th April 5pm
Mass—Morisset
- Sunday 7th April 9.30am
Mass—Morisset
- Tuesday 9th April 9.30am
Liturgy—Morisset
- Saturday 13th April 5pm
Mass—Cooranbong
- Sunday 14th April 9.30am
Mass—Morisset
- Saturday 20th April 5pm
Mass—Morisset
- Sunday 21st April 9.30am
Mass—Morisset
- Saturday 27th April 5pm
Mass—Cooranbong
- Sunday 28th April 9.30am
Mass—Morisset
- Tuesday 30th April 9.30am
Liturgy—Morisset
- Saturday 4th May 5pm
Family Mass—Morisset
- Sunday 5th May 9.30am
Mass—Morisset
- Tuesday 7th May 9.30am
Liturgy—Morisset

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Reflection for Second Sunday of Easter—Divine Mercy Year B — 7th April 2024

Having completed our six weeks of Lent in preparation for the great experience of Holy Week, we now enter the Easter Season, also six weeks in total, and during this time we are treated to an amazing smorgasbord spread out before us!

In April 2000, Pope John Paul II dedicated this particular Sunday to the Divine Mercy, a Feast that reminds us that God's act of mercy is finally available to us through his incarnate Son, Jesus.

Each week a different aspect of the Resurrection Story is presented to us in the readings & it provides us with what is known as a "mystagogical catechesis" i.e. a process of initiation into the "mysteries" of the Easter Season for the newly baptised members of the Community, as well as the whole assembly, on what it really means to be baptised in our faith.

The 1st Reading tells us in some detail how the Apostles, united & settled into their new role of spreading the Good News of Jesus, were given great power- many wonders & signs were carried out by them as they lived their lives in unison with one another, sharing all they had in common with their communities, & every day the Lord added to the numbers of their believers. We are also told that "no one was ever in want"—if only we could achieve this in our world right now!

The words of Psalm 117 & its joyous response certainly echo our feelings of joy & thanksgiving. John's Gospel Story begins in an atmosphere of fear which soon gives way to surprise when Jesus suddenly appears amongst them! He shows them the signs of his Passion, breathes on them & gives them the Holy Spirit, then sends them forth to continue his ministry.

Later on, these actions were counter-balanced by the clear, unambiguous challenge of Thomas, who was absent in their first meeting with Jesus. After Jesus had spoken to him & addressed his doubts in a very personal way Thomas finally surrendered & exclaimed "My Lord & My God"!

Jesus replied "you believe because you can see me, happy are those who have not seen yet believe". The familiar saying "seeing is believing" springs to mind here, so is it possible that we could also be sceptical like Thomas? It is all a matter of seeing with the eyes of faith, the eyes of our heart, knowing that "Jesus the Christ, the Son of God is very much with us, wherever we are! This presence brings peace, fills us with joy & sends us out on mission. Sounds easy? But just as our human relationships take time to grow & deepen, so does our faith relationship with God. Thomas needed to see Jesus, to experience his presence, before he could believe!

What do I need to do to nurture my faith? Perhaps I need to look no further than to the actions & presence of other believers. Perhaps there is no better day than today to start "looking"? Thousands of people were converted after hearing these first disciples speak, not because they saw Jesus personally, but because they saw Jesus "in the persons of his disciples."

Now we, his present day disciples, must accept a new type of relationship with Jesus- one which calls us to believe, without seeing, the historical signs of the earthly Jesus, and rely on the testimony of the believers now incarnated in the text of John's Gospel. It was written "that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, & that through this belief you may have life in His name" (v 31).

So, on this special day, let us pray for an abundance of Divine Mercy, which we know is given freely to us to help us carry out our mission as modern day disciples.

Pope Francis reassures us that in our daily lives we go forward tentatively, like a toddler who takes a few steps & falls, repeatedly, yet each time his father puts him back on his feet.

The hand that always puts us back on our feet is mercy: God knows that without mercy we will remain on the ground, & that in order to keep walking, we need to be put back on our feet.

A single thread of hope is a very powerful thing, so when the world tells us to give up, hope whispers "try one more time" - there is no failure, except in giving up.

St Mary MacKillop said in 1876 "Persevere faithfully, particularly in prayer". Heather White

Parish Assembly-Claim the Date

A Parish Pastoral Assembly, to which all parishioners are invited, will be held after Mass on Sunday 2nd June. It is several years since an Assembly was held in our Parish. (Covid etc.)

A Parish Pastoral Assembly is a body of faith-filled parishioners and the ordained, through which everyone works together, as co-responsible partners in furthering the mission of Christ in the Church and Parish.

From this Assembly, a Pastoral Plan will be developed. This Plan is a set of goals and objectives embraced through a process of shared decision-making, which will direct the parish in its activities and decisions for the next 12 months.

It will be an opportunity for us as a parish, if we are to have a positive future,, to discover our sense of purpose and call, in our own particular setting. It will help us discern what it means to be a gathered Christian community at this time?

Communion Minister Training

Fr Greg Barker VG, who is the PP of Warners Bay/Booragul, is organising online training for his Communion Ministers. He was wondering if anyone from our parish would like to join his parishioners with the training.

If anybody would like to become a minister of communion, or you would like to improve their skills in this area, contact John or Uta.

Parishes are starting to reintroduce and train, Ministers of Communion to the sick and at Mass, after the Covid lockdown

SJV School News

SJV school will hold an Open Day this Tuesday 9th April (3.30-5pm) All prospective families are welcome, especially those who are looking to enrol their children in kindergarten 2025.

It is an opportunity to meet the Principal and Teachers, and tour the classrooms and facilities.

Points to Ponder

Traditions have always been an important dimension of celebrating faith. Each age is a time of special grace, including our age of high technology.

Did You Know?

Incense: Burning incense as a perfume was an ancient practice in the Near East where Christianity originated. From its secular use it crossed over into pagan and Jewish worship. Among the Jews it was often combined with burning sacrifices. Among pagans, incense was offered to idols as an important part of worship.

The use of incense has been a part of rituals since the beginning of Christianity. Among Christians it has been used to purify, to bless, and to symbolise the motion of prayer upwards to God. Early Christians used incense at funerals. At first they rejected its use in worship, because of pagan overtones. When paganism was no longer a threat, the use of incense became popular to honour the altar, sanctuary and eventually the congregation. In the 8th century it was introduced into the Hours of Lauds,(first hours of daylight) and Vespers (evening prayer).

Project Compassion

Caritas Australia would like to **THANK YOU** for supporting Project Compassion 2024. Your Project Compassion donation will help whole communities 'have life and have it to the full' (John 10:10).

If you still have your Project Compassion box or set of envelopes at home, please bring them back **ASAP**, you can still donate online by visiting our parish Project Compassion fundraising page at: <https://parishes.projectcompassion.org.au/o/morriset-catholic-parish-2264> or by calling 1800 024 413.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO RETURN YOUR PROJECT COMPASSION ASAP.

Easter

THANK YOU! Thanks to everyone who helped in any way, with all the Liturgies over the Easter period.

With A Light Heart.

After 70 years of marriage a 90-year-old couple pass away after their cruise ship sinks in the South Pacific. The incident was unfortunate because they had been in good health for much of their life due mainly to her obsession with health food and exercise. When they reached the Pearly Gates, St Peter escorted them to their new mansion that was decked out with a beautiful kitchen, a master bath suite and indoor picture theatre. The couple were most impressed and thanked St Peter very much. However, they were slightly concerned about the cost.

"It's free," said St Peter. "This is heaven.

Smiling, the couple were then shown the outdoor tennis court and the world-class golf course that backed on to their home. St Peter told them they would enjoy golfing privileges every day.

The old man then asked, "What are the green fees?"

Peter replied, "This is heaven, you play for free."

They next walked to the clubhouse and saw the lavish buffet lunch with the best cuisine imaginable. There were dishes from every country imaginable.

"How much does it cost to eat?" the old man asked.

"Don't you understand yet? This is heaven and everything is free," an exasperated St Peter added.

"Well, where are the low fat and low cholesterol tables?" the old man asked timidly.

"Well," said St Peter, "that's the best part. You can eat as much as you like of whatever you like, and you will never get fat or sick. This is heaven."

With St Peter's last comment, the old man went red with rage. His wife tried to calm him down, but her husband glared at her and continued yelling. "If it weren't for you forcing me to eat all those blasted bran muffins, I could have been up here 10 years ago."

Magdalene Award: Nominations are open from Monday 8 April

The Magdalene Award recognises a woman living in, and committed to, the Diocese of Maitland Newcastle. This is a public affirmation of a life lived in ways that echo the spirit of Mary Magdalene.

For more information, visit www.mn.catholic.org.au/church-mission/mission-and-outreach/council-for-women/magdalene-award-2024

Pope Francis' prayer intention for April 2024

We pray that the dignity and immense value of women be recognized in every culture, and for the end of discrimination that they experience in different parts of the world.

An event celebrating the Ministry of Teresa Brierley

You are invited to join us in celebrating the ministry of Teresa Brierley on Friday 12 April.

After almost 20 years with the Diocese, Teresa has resigned from her role as Director Pastoral Ministries. We're looking forward to recognising Teresa and acknowledging her significant work for the diocese and our community before she finishes in April.

Please find the event details below:

Date: Friday 12 April Time: 2pm to 4pm

Location: Southern Cross Hall (841 Hunter Street, Newcastle West)

RSVP: By 4 April, at <https://teresabrierley.eventbrite.com.au>

Registering is essential.

Principles of Social Teaching (Pre-Assembly Opt-in Seminar)

As part of our participation in the Hunter Community Alliance Founding Assembly, we are providing a seminar on Principles of Social Teaching. The recent Synod of Bishops wrote in their Synthesis Report:

"Christians have a duty to commit themselves to active participation in building up the common good and defending the dignity of life, drawing inspiration from the Church's social doctrine."

Come and learn why we do what we do and be a part of the historical gathering at the University Great Hall. The seminar will be followed by the celebration of Mass before walking on pilgrimage to the university.

Workshop

When: Wednesday, 10 April

Time: Gather from 2.30pm for a 3pm start. Mass at 4.30pm.

Where: Our Lady of Victories Catholic Church, Shortland (enter parking from Lovell Pde)

Register: <https://forms.office.com/r/5C3pY78tsw>

Founding Assembly

Time: 6.30pm - 8.30pm (Food trucks available 5.30pm - 6.30pm)

Register: <https://events.humanitix.com/hca-founding-assembly>

aMeN caMiNo Information / Walk & Talk

If you are considering attending one of the aMeN caMiNos this year and want more information, please join us for the Information / Walk & Talk on Saturday 27 April commencing at 8.30am at St Columba's Parish Hall, Lockyer St, Adamstown. After an information session, we will set off on our walk, returning around 1.30pm.

Contact formed@mncatholic.org.au to register or for further information.

aMeN caMiNo 2024 Dates: 6-10 July, 3-7 August and 7-8 September.

Fishing Weekend: God for Blokes

If you're looking for an opportunity to think about God, hear from other men, do some fishing, and relax you should attend the God for Blokes Fishing Weekend from 3 to 5 May. You will travel from Newcastle to Forster, food and accommodation are included in the cost. For more information or to book, visit <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1092382> or call Wayne Caruana on 0466 631 394.

SUPPORTING THE CLERGY / 1st Collection

If you would like to make contributions to support the Clergy / 1st Collection please do so at Mass in the BLUE bucket or electronically using the Online Payments button on the Parish Website Home page, Diocese App, Bank Account Name: CCF BSB: 062815 No: 00328161 Ref: 5016 1st Collection or set up a direct debit contact the parish office for this option.

SUPPORTING OUR PARISH / 2nd Collection

If you would like to make contributions to support our Parish please do so at Mass via the RED bucket or deposit directly into the Parish Account our details are: Account Name: CCF BSB:062815 Account Number: 00328161 one of the following Payment References are required by CCF for all deposits: 5004 or 5004 + SURNAME or 5004 + PG + your Giver Number, or 5004 + PG + SURNAME, or you can use the Online Payments or Planned Giving button on the Parish Website Home page or the Diocese App. If you are considering taking up **planned giving** you may like to know that **a percentage of the contributions are tax deductible**. If you would like to know more or set up planned giving please contact the Parish Office.

WEEKEND ROSTERS			
		<u>THIS WEEK</u>	<u>NEXT WEEK</u>
<u>PRESIDERS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	Mass Mass	Mass Mass
<u>PROCLAIMERS:</u>	5PM 9.30AM	K Lendon R Hay	H White J Vipan
<u>PSALMIST:</u>	5PM 9.30AM	D Joyce M Melvey	K Lendon P Melvey
<u>GIFTS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	P Melvey L& G Hutchinson	P Robertson B Cox H White M Melvey
<u>SERVERS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	C Lawandos V Paulo	M Melvey R Lawandos
<u>AV</u>	5PM 9.30AM	J France J Vipan	D Peterson J France
<u>WELCOMERS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	M Melvey H White	J France M Melvey
<u>CHURCH CLEANING</u>	COOR MOR	XXXX A & G Walker	K Lendon B Hutcheson D Whitten

Our Parish supports The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle in its zero-tolerance approach to abuse. Every one of us must each day commit ourselves individually and collectively to safeguard each child and every vulnerable person to whom we minister and interact with. If you have any concerns for a child or vulnerable adult please contact the Office of Safeguarding P:02 4979 1390 or email: childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au, or visit their website for further information www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au.

UPCOMING FEAST DAYS MEMORIALS AND SOLEMINITIES

- THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD (S) - 8TH APR
- SAINT STANISLAUS (M) - 11TH APR
- ANZAC DAY—25TH APR
- SAINT MARK (F) - 26TH APR
- SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA (M) - 28TH APR
- SAINT ATHANASIUS (M) - 2ND MAY
- SAINTS PHILIP AND JAMES (F) - 3RD MAY
- THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD— 12TH MAY
- SAINT MATTHIAS (F) - 14TH MAY
- PENTECOST— 19TH MAY
- OUR LADY, HELP OF CHRISTIANS (S) - 24TH MAY

Please pray for all those who are sick: in hospital or at home, especially those living with a life threatening disease:
 Noel Courtney, Koby Smith, Mick Styles, Sr Patricia Adams rsm, Annette Boyd, Mary Monaghan, Clare Wallington, Donna Hazzard, Pam Mullaly, Tintumol Thomas, Pat Findley, Les Findley, Peter Martyn, Bernadette Martin, Joan Gillett, Bruce Gillett.

Please pray for those who have been called to eternal life may they always be in our prayers.
 Remembrance: Frances Bristow



Prayer Requests for the Bulletin

If you would like the parish to pray for a family member who is sick, recently deceased or you would like remembered please call or email the parish office or complete a prayer card for each person and place in the mail box near the parish office door. Cards are available at the back of the church and at the Parish Office. All prayer requests require permission from a family member or the person. Due to Australian privacy laws.

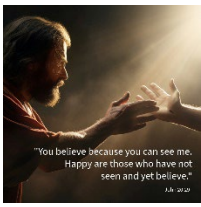
An Act of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus,
 I believe that You
 are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
 I love You above all things,
 and I desire to receive You into my soul.
 Since I cannot at this moment
 receive You sacramentally,
 come at least spiritually into my heart.
 I embrace You as if You were already there and unite myself wholly to You.
 Never permit me to be separated from You.
 Amen.



Live stream Mass every Sunday at 9.30am at www.mn.catholic.org.au/places/live-stream





SUNDAY PRAYER SERVICE
Second Sunday of Easter Year B
Sunday 07 Apr 2024

The Introductory Rites

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as Australia's First Peoples and the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we work, live and learn. Especially the Awabakal and Darkinjung nations who are the traditional owners of the land our Parish encompasses. We honour and pay respect to, Elders past, present and emerging, we acknowledge the spiritual culture of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia, and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of reconciliation.

Gathering

The Lectionary/Roman Missal or a Bible may be placed on a table together with a candle and a cross.

Sign of the Cross

Leader:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All:

Amen.

Greeting

Leader:

Blessed be Jesus Christ who has redeemed us and raised us to new life.

All:

Blessed be God forever.

Introductory Remarks

Leader (in these or similar words):

Friends in Christ, although we cannot celebrate the Eucharist this day, we gather in God's name for when two or more come together God is always with us. United with the whole Church, we celebrate the joy of Easter and keep this day of the Lord holy.

Opening Rite

LITANY OF PRAISE

Leader:

Before listening to the Word of God let us praise the Lord Jesus Christ who has raised us to new life.

A brief period of silence follows.

Leader:

Lord Jesus, you fill us with your peace: Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you are the joy of all who believe: Christ, have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are the saviour of the world: Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader:

May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins,

and bring us to everlasting life.

All:

Amen.

Opening Prayer

Leader:

Let us pray.

All pause for silent prayer.

Eternal God, we are your children who have been baptised in Jesus and born again in the Spirit. In these days of Easter joy stir up our hearts and increase our faith in you. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ, your Son, with the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever.

All:

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Acts of the Apostles 4:32-35

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

The whole group was united, heart and soul.

The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed for his own use anything that he had, as everything they owned was held in common.

The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all given great respect. None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from them, to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

To indicate the end of the reading, the reader acclaim:

The word of the Lord.

All reply:

Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 117:2-4. 15-18. 22-24. R. v.1

(R.) Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting.

- Let the sons of Israel say:
'His love has no end.'
Let the sons of Aaron say:
'His love has no end.'
Let those who fear the Lord say:
'His love has no end.' **(R.)**
- The Lord's right hand has triumphed;
his right hand raised me up.
I shall not die, I shall live
and recount his deeds.
I was punished, I was punished by the Lord,
but not doomed to die. **(R.)**
- The stone which the builders rejected
has become the corner stone.
This is the work of the Lord,
a marvel in our eyes.
This day was made by the Lord;
we rejoice and are glad. **(R.)**

Second Reading

1 John 5:1-6

A reading from the first letter of St John

Anyone begotten by God has already overcome the world.

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and whoever loves the Father that begot him loves the child whom he begets. We can be sure that we love God's children if we love God himself and do what he has commanded us; this is what loving God is – keeping his commandments; and his commandments are not difficult, because anyone who has been begotten by God has already overcome the world; this is the victory over the world – our faith. Who can overcome the world? Only the man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God; Jesus Christ who came by water and blood, not with water only, but with water and blood; with the Spirit as another witness – since the Spirit is the truth.

To indicate the end of the reading, the reader acclaim:

The word of the Lord.

All reply:

Thanks be to God.

Gospel

Reader:

From the holy Gospel according to **John**.

All:

Glory to you, O Lord.

John 20:19-31

After eight days, Jesus came in and stood among them.

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you.'

'As the Father sent me,
so am I sending you.'

After saying this he breathed on them and said:

'Receive the Holy Spirit.

For those whose sins you forgive,
they are forgiven;

for those whose sins you retain,
they are retained.'

Thomas, called the Twin, who was one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. When the disciples said, 'We have seen the Lord', he answered, 'Unless I see the holes that the nails made in his hands and can put my finger into the holes they made, and unless I can put my hand into his side, I refuse to believe.' Eight days later the disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them. The doors were closed, but Jesus came in and stood among them. 'Peace be with you' he said. Then he spoke to Thomas, 'Put your finger here; look, here are my hands. Give me your hand; put it into my side. Doubt no longer but believe.' Thomas replied, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him:

'You believe because you can see me.

Happy are those who have not seen and yet believe.'

There were many other signs that Jesus worked and the disciples saw, but they are not recorded in this book. These are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing this you may have life through his name.

Reader:

The Gospel of the Lord.

All:

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All are seated.

Reflection on the Word

A short period of reflection may be observed.

Profession of Faith

Leader:

In union with the whole Church
let us profess our faith.

All:

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,**

At the words that follow, up to and including the Virgin Mary, all bow.

**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of the Faithful

Leader: Brothers and sisters, having seen the Risen Lord, we bring our prayers before God.

Reader: That with faith in Christ, the Holy Church will ever bear witness to the spread of the Gospel. In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That national leaders will make decisions with respect for human life and dignity. In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That people of different races, cultures, and religions will treat one another with respect and seek to build mutual understanding. In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That we will be open to God's loving mercy and will show mercy to others.. In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That the work of the Synod on Synodality will continue, bringing renewed energy to the

Church as it works to bring about the Kingdom of God. In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That all the sick will experience the divine healing of Christ. In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That everyone who has died will share in the glory of Christ our Saviour. In your glory:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: God our Father, having not seen, we believe in Jesus Christ. Hear our prayers and help to sustain our faith in Jesus as the true flesh who rose to glory with you. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Leader:

At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:

All:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

The Concluding Rite Blessing

Leader:

Through the resurrection of his Son
God has redeemed us and made us his children.
May the Lord bless us with joy
and fill us with fruits of the Spirit.

All make the sign of the cross during the blessing.

All:

Amen.

Dismissal

Leader:

Let us go in peace. Alleluia.

All:

Thanks be to God. Alleluia.

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Pondering life, death, suffering and love

This time of year, Christians, and our society more broadly, observe and celebrate 'Holy Week' culminating in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. During Holy Week I often find myself reflecting upon life and death, upon suffering and love.

BISHOP MICHAEL KENNEDY PUBLISHED MARCH 29, 2024

I once read somewhere and like to repeat at funerals that "grief cannot and does not exist except where there has been love". Grief is actually a privilege - a painful one at that - because it gives expression to the love that we have shared with the departed person.

So, even though grief is one of our greatest sufferings, there is also a certain sweetness to it because it is linked to love.

Many of the events we Christians commemorate during Holy Week entailed much grief and suffering on the part of Jesus Christ: his unjust arrest and trial; being deserted by his friends and rejected by the crowds that a few days earlier had hailed him their king; his passion in which he was mocked, beaten, scourged, and crowned with thorns; carrying the heavy cross up Mount Calvary; and his crucifixion and death on the cross on Good Friday - the total gift of himself to us.

In all of these events the sufferings of Jesus are certainly very prominent. But Holy Week is not really about suffering, it's about loving. It was Jesus' love for God and love for you and me that brought him to his passion and death, and it was his love that opened the way for our redemption. His suffering was a consequence of his loving. And his loving suffering is redemptive: it picks us up; it elevates us; it redeems us.

The love of God calls for a response from each of us, and the only adequate response to love is love; a love that is true and faithful; a love that is patient and kind; a love that generates peace and joy; a love that binds people together.

Love and suffering. There is suffering in every person's life. Blessed are they whose suffering is a consequence of their loving, for their loving suffering lifts people up and has redemptive power to restore goodness and heal relationships.

Of course, the culmination of Jesus' life was not his death on the cross but his resurrection from the dead on Easter Sunday - the sign he said he would give to prove that he is indeed who he said he is - the very Son of God; the God of love and mercy who saves us from sin and promises eternal life.

Here in Jesus' death and resurrection we find the greatest of the Christian paradoxes - that death is actually the beginning of life. Or, as Jesus put it on various occasions: the grain of wheat must die in order to give life to the rich harvest of new and more grains of wheat; and the one who clings to life will lose it but the one who lays down their life will find it.

Dying to oneself is actually more simple than many people realise. Saint Paul gave us the answer when he said that "Love is patient; love is kind". Being patient by accepting the limitations of others (while being conscious that others are being patient with our own limitations); and being kind, by getting up and doing things to help others, is the simplest of recipes for dying to oneself and finding the fullness of life.

Holy Week is the holiest and most solemn week of the Christian year. Days like Good Friday are solemn days, not sad ones. And days like Easter Sunday are pure joy.

As we approach Easter, may we each take some time to reflect prayerfully on the life and death, suffering and love of Jesus Christ. May we see in his life and experience in our own life the beautiful link between suffering and love and between life and death.

May you know the love of God for you this Easter, and may you respond to his love with your own love.

I wish you, your family, and your loved ones a truly Happy Easter.

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FAITH MATTERS: Have you heard of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd?

In most cases, when I have asked this question to members of the diocesan community their answer has usually been no. Tucked away in the parish hall at the Our Lady of Lourdes Beresfield in the Chisholm Parish region, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd have been in operation since 2017.

ROSEMARY MCALLISTER PUBLISHED APRIL 02, 2024

You may have seen our interesting Church Without Walls piece several years ago, sharing the story of Siubhan Sadler, a Catechist in the Chisholm region of Maitland Newcastle. As a reminder, you might like to watch it again at www.youtube.com/watch?v=1tdosGrebNs

The Association, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, has a rich history which was the result of a long period of careful observation of children by Sofia Cavalletti and her Montessori collaborator, Gianna Gobbi, in Rome in the 1950's. The two women became friends and devoted their life's work to children. The way Catechesis of the Good Shepherd began was quite by accident, without warning or planning, the way God so often comes into our lives. Sofia liked to say, "We started without knowing we started". Their work provided a way of being in the presence of God that is both unique to the child and a gift to the adult who stops long enough to notice. Since that time, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd has grown and spread to more than sixty-five countries.

The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a child-focused program that meets in a specially prepared environment called "The Atrium". In this environment, the children are given the opportunity to develop their own relationship with God using the hands-on materials to further their meditation. Using a Montessori philosophy all the works in the Atrium are based around a methodology of responsibility, respect, and independence. When a child finishes work, they then prepare the workstation to be set up for the next person to use. The catechist's job is to present the materials to the children and then step back as the Holy Spirit leads them. The children are presented with works on Scripture, Liturgy and Practical Life.

"The Good Shepherd calls His own sheep by name and leads them out."

These are some of the first words of scripture that are given to each child who comes to the Atrium. All the children come to know that Jesus is the Good Shepherd and He calls each of them by name to know Him and follow Him. Children as young as three come to the Atrium and think about how the Good Shepherd takes care of His sheep, just like their parents take care of them.

The program currently runs on Wednesdays during the school term; sessions for 3-6-year-olds in the morning and 6-12-year-olds in the afternoon after school. The Atrium has had a major impact on the families who have attended. The following parents have provided feedback on their experience.

"I was struggling to engage my 5 and 4-year-old boys in what happened during Sunday Mass. I tried different things, but it all seemed too far away for them. Then I met Siubhan at a diocesan activity. She had a model altar set up with an altar cloth, chalice, paten, little candles, and a crucifix, all at the children's size! I was fascinated as much as my boys! I remember saying, "I want my children to have access to this!" Seven years later we still attend. I found the Atrium to be a bridge that helped my children understand what happens at Mass and in the sacraments. I could explain things to them with words and that would give them 'head' knowledge. But time spent in the Atrium, engaging with materials, listening to God's word, and interacting with other children, has given them a deeper 'heart' knowledge, one that I'm hoping will stay with them till later in life. My now almost 3-year-old started attending. It was beautiful to see the joy in her face when she sang an Atrium song and her older siblings joined in with her, actions and all. She felt part of something."

"I have learnt so much of the Catholic faith, both spiritually and in scriptures. I have been able to find calm and grow in faith and friendship with the parents of children. Finding community, sharing of experiences, parents and praying together. My boys have expressed such love for Christ and how they see Him in the mundane things/every day. My children turn to prayer more in times of distress and loves God deeply. My children's faith and understanding of the Catholic teachings

is strong. The friendships developed with their fellow Atrium members is beautiful."

"My experience of the Atrium has allowed me to grow, form friendships with other adults/parents. It has deepened my faith and prayer life. The Atrium has been great for my child who has been attending since she was 3, now 9. She has formed friendships, learnt to work well with other children in the many varied activities they have to choose from. It has deepened her faith, prayer life and love of God and neighbour. She still looks forwards to the Atrium each week."

"The Atrium is a good place for children. It is quiet, orderly, well organised and stimulating. It offers many activities that can help the children know God. The adults do not directly teach the children about God, but they help them to learn about God. The workstations like the altar corner, the scripture corner, the Good Shepherd corner are all designed to develop awareness of the presence of God. I like the arrangement of the furniture in the Atrium. There is a quiet place for each child to do their "work". Each desk and chair are well placed for quiet work. The children are well-trained. They know what activities they can do. They know how to use the "works" and how to put them away. Most of the children were engaged the whole time I was observing. They went from one activity to another without help from the adults. They obviously enjoyed doing the "work" that they chose to do."

"Our family has been grateful to enrol our 4-year-old in the Atrium this term. Initially, I was unsure about this unique approach, as I had not experienced formation like this as a child, but we have seen beautiful fruits of the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd since the first visit. The Atrium has given our child a special dedicated place where he can reflect on the mysteries of God and start to develop his own unique relationship with Jesus. After his first visit to the Atrium, he shared with me "Mum, do you know that Jesus is alive?" He asked me "why did they kill Jesus" and "why did they kill him if he was so good?"

The questions have only continued since then and have been confronting and humbling regarding my own ability to articulate these concepts. While walking in the dark together one night on a camping holiday, he noticed the lights on at other campsites and told me, "God is a light, he lights the way in the darkness." Now each Sunday at Mass, he checks the colour of the priests' vestments to see what liturgical season we are in, so he can tell Siubhan and Claire. He has shared the following song with me regarding the colours - "Purple and green, red and white, colours of the year; purple and green, red and white, remind us of the Light. Purple is for preparation, white is for celebration, green is for the growing time, red is for Pentecost." All from memory, as I did not learn this song as a child!"

"My son prays with me with renewed interest during the day. He has shared songs with me, "God's Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path", he says Siubhan sings that before reading the Word of God (I'm not sure if this is true, but I believe it probably is!). He will occasionally wash his hands "the way we do at the Atrium" with meticulous care, cleaning each finger individually until the process is complete. He has requested a place for his artwork, "like they do at the Atrium," and occasionally after he does something organised, he'll say "Siubhan taught me that at the Atrium." Wow, I have already been inspired to make positive changes in our home and in our prayer life, thanks to the Atrium. My husband is not religious, but supportive and feels Christian values are beneficial for our children. I can use all the help I can get sharing the truth and beauty of the Catholic faith. Claire and Siubhan as catechists in the special Atrium space, presenting our son with the opportunity to interact with God's Word using tangible resources and appropriate age-level catechism is invaluable. The Atrium is meeting our son's needs in a variety of ways and I look forward to the future fruits, as well as his little brothers being able to attend."

The Atrium at Beresfield are holding open days during Term 2. If you would like the opportunity to visit and learn more about the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, please register at: <https://forms.office.com/r/9KMf55C5nz>

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