

17 March 2024
Fifth Sunday of Lent Year B



Entrance Antiphon

Give me justice, O God,
and plead my cause against a
nation that is faithless.
From the deceitful and
cunning rescue me, for you,
O God, are my strength.

First Reading from the
prophet Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 50:3-4. 12-15. R. v.12

Response: Create a clean
heart in me, O God.

Second Reading from the
letter to the Hebrews 5: 7-9

Gospel Acclamation

Glory to you, Word of God,
Lord Jesus Christ! If you
serve me, follow me, says
the Lord; and where I am, my
servant will also be.
Glory to you, Word of God,
Lord Jesus Christ!

Holy Gospel according to
John 12: 20-33

Communion Antiphon

Amen, Amen I say to you:
Unless a grain of wheat
falls to the ground and dies,
it remains a single grain.
But if it dies, it bears much
fruit.

NEXT WEEK

**PALM SUNDAY OF THE
PASSION OF THE LORD**

First Reading Isaiah 50:4-7

Resp Ps: Ps 21:8-9. 17-20.
23-24. R. v.2

(R.) My God, my God, why
have you abandoned me?

Second: Philippians 2:6-11

Gospel: Mark 14:1 – 15:47

*We acknowledge and respect the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we stand,
the elders, past and present and all the Dharawal people. May we too be good stewards of this land.*



The word 'heart' occurs almost a thousand times in the Bible, more than three times as often as the word 'soul.' Perhaps this is just another item of trivia but surely it gives us a clue about Christianity. It is a religion of the heart. It gets our blood pumping.

As we approach the climax of our Lenten journey, this week's readings ask questions about our hearts. The psalm begs 'a pure heart create for me, O God.' Those words invite the Lord to come right inside us, into the very core of our being. The prophet Jeremiah quotes the Lord as saying, 'deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts.' In other words, we won't find God's most intimate whisperings to us just in books or lectures. We will find it when we are genuinely in touch with our core, our most intimate space. God's love is inscribed on our hearts.

In his letter, *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis speaks against 'a culture of walls.' He asks us to treasure the hope found in every heart:

Hope 'speaks to us of something deeply rooted in every human heart, independently of our circumstances and historical conditioning. Hope speaks to us of a thirst, an aspiration, a longing for a life of fulfilment, a desire to achieve great things, things that fill our heart and lift our spirit to lofty realities like truth, goodness and beauty, justice and love... Hope is bold.'

The word 'caritas' means love. The work of Caritas Australia is a heartfelt response to the needs of the world, one that gives expression to our shared hope. Caritas always works in partnership with others. During Lent, as we have listened to the experience of people we have helped through our support of Project Compassion, we will have noticed that life-giving partnerships with groups on the ground in many countries make this possible.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks of the grain of wheat that must die to create a rich harvest. Of course, he is referring to his own passion. But there is a message here for us all. 'Anyone who loves their life will lose it.' We are called to wear our hearts on our sleeves. To reach beyond the safe and familiar.

As Holy Week approaches we hope you and your parishioners are feeling inspired and supported to raise money for Caritas Australia, the aid agency of the Australian Catholic Church working to eradicate poverty and injustice



The people at the friendship group gathering on Tuesday

had fun with singing, dancing, happy birthdays and yummy morning tea. Thank you to Meg and her helpers for setting up

a St Patrick's Day theme with wonderful decoration.

Linda found lovely Irish sayings for all of us to hear.

Next gathering will be on 2 April after 9am mass.

Happy St Patricks Day to all



Worship: Mass and Devotions

Sunday Mass	Weekday Mass	Devotions
Saturday Vigil: 6pm	Mon, Tues, Wed Mass at 9am	Adoration with the Rosary: Saturday 9.30am
Sunday: 9.30 am and 5pm	Thursday - Mass at 7.30pm	Divine Mercy Devotion: Third Sunday at 3pm
Filipino Mass: Third Sunday at 11.15am	Fri and Sat Mass at 9am	Alliance of the 2 Hearts Mass and Devotion: First Friday of each month from 7.30pm
Samoan Mass: First Sunday of even months at 12 noon	Healing Mass on the first Saturday of each month at 9am	Stations of the Cross; Friday 7pm during Lent
Maori Mass: First Sunday at 2pm		Reconciliation: Saturday 11 am—12

Contact us

Office Hours: **Tuesday-Friday 9.30am-12.30pm**

Phone: **9603 7373 / 0434 705 176**

Email: **varroville@dow.org.au**

Website: **varroville.dow.org.au**

Parish Priest:
Fr. Shane Kelleher OCD

Parish Associate:
Sr “Jill” Girlie Sudario, CM

Meetings and Gatherings

Friendship Group meets on the 1st Tuesday of the month at 9am.

Readers Ministry Meeting meets on the last Tuesday of every 2 months at 7.30pm via zoom. (30 April)

Fiesta Committee Meeting Save the date for our first planning meeting for 2024 on Tuesday 9 April at 7.30pm.

Holy Family Fellowship meets on the 4th Saturday at 7pm.

Book Club meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 10am.

Fundraising Team meeting is on Wednesday 24 April at 7.30pm.

Faith Circles meets every Monday via zoom at 2pm & 7.30pm.

Bible Reflection group meets every Monday at 10am.

Children’s Choir will meet on Friday 15 March at 7.30pm.

Childrens Ministry Gathering will meet on the 4th Sunday from 3– 5 pm.

Youth Ministry is on fire for faith, friendship and specially for God! All 13-17 years old are invited to join every fortnight on the 2nd & 4th Friday of every month at 6:30 pm.

Prayer intentions

For the sick and homebound: Una Champion, Myka Mangos, Kevin Cloran, Karen Browne, Amanda and John Meredith, Reg Gardner, Sr Heather Burke, Marie and Barry Atkins, Carol and Gabriel Gonzales, Amelia Jimenez, Joe Spinnato, Susan Mella, Sean Finnerty, Rose Levoune, , Doris Wahhib, John Kajdrys, Pat Stewart.

May they experience the saving power of the risen Lord amidst their pain and affliction.

For our recently dearly departed: Francisco Carmona, Lola Moors, Rosario David, Rodney Smith,

Those whose anniversaries occur at this time: Veni Menezes,
Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, may perpetual light shine upon them.



Our Community: Rosters

24 March	Saturday 6pm	Sunday 9.30am	Sunday 5pm
Welcomers	Glen & Arlene	Gabriel, Ofa & Volunteer	Terry & Maree
Altar Servers	Andrew, Sebastian, Eliana	Orly, Claire & Meliame	Vu & Nathan
Readers	Suzanne & Russell	Martin & Tina	Sheenalyn & Leah
Refreshments	Tracey & Richard	Maria, Volunteer	Margaret & Geoff
CLOTW		XX	
Flowers	No flowers in Lent	Church Vacuuming	Volunteer
Counters	Christine & Cira	Foyer Cleaning	Mafi Family

Our Parish Notices:

Working Bee on Saturday 23 March from 8am to prepare the church and grounds for Easter.

Altar Server Training will be held on 4 Saturdays during March at 4pm. For anyone wishing to become an Altar Server and for those already serving, it is a refresher, especially in preparation for the Easter liturgies. For more info call the parish office.

Holy Family Fellowship Prayer Group is calling you

Why: to kick start our evangelization drive, and invite/inform other parishioners about what we do.

Where: OLMC Parish Hall on 23rd March 2024.

Please join us for the 9.00 am parish mass followed by a 2 hour session (morning tea provided).

Sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion and Confirmation; The dates for these Sacraments are available on our parish website and registrations are being accepted via the Parish office.

EASTER SERVICES

7.30pm Holy Thursday: Mass of the Last Supper

10am Good Friday: Stations of the Cross

3pm Good Friday: The Passion of the Lord

7pm Easter Vigil on Saturday

9.30am and 5pm Mass on Easter Sunday

7.30pm Friday 22 March: Parish Reconciliation Service after Stations of the Cross.

Sunday 7 April: Divine Mercy Sunday

Community Notices

To celebrate 2024 Seniors Festival 11 – 21 March and the theme 'Reach Beyond', CatholicCare are hosting a number of fun and informative FREE events for seniors.

♦ **GET CREATIVE:** Art & Social Session (Mosaic Art)

Where: Seta's Café, 2/25-29 Dumaresq St, Campbelltown

When: 12.30pm on Thursdays 14 & 21 March 2024. FREE – but only 25 spots available per session, so book in quick.

To book your spot at one of the above events call Colleen on 0437715647 today!

Women Alive Retreat – A Spiritual Retreat for Women

Saturday 13 April 2024, 9:30am-3:30pm; Venue: St John's Parish Hall, 31 Cordeaux Street, Campbelltown; Please confirm your intention to attend the retreat by messaging Maria on 0433 905 968.

On The Journey Podcast this week: Sr Katherine Stone MGL says following Jesus means taking the road to the cross. Mother Hilda says God's protective concern for us abounds when we face challenges in life. Plus, Fr Tony Percy, and from the Pietà Lenten Series, Fr Antony Jukes, and Fr SeanCullen with their Lenten reflections. The Journey podcast available at www.jcr.org.au.

'Footsteps of St Mary MacKillop Pilgrimage' 10 – 20 October 2024 The itinerary for the 'Footsteps of St Mary MacKillop'

pilgrimage has been released. Set out on a true Australian Pilgrimage through the life and times of Mary MacKillop, as we rekindle the story, landscape, and spirit of our nation's first saint. Please share this news with family, friends, and fellow parishioners. As it is expected that this pilgrimage will 'sell out', everyone wanting to attend is encouraged to submit your deposit as soon as possible. It is the hope of Fr David Catterall (Parish Priest of St Mary MacKillop Parish, Oran Park) to be chaplain on the October 2024 departure. More info, including the costs and itinerary, can be found at

www.harvestjourneys.com/tour/footsteps-of-st-mary-mackillop

CatholicCare are currently looking for Community Support

Workers; Becoming a CatholicCare Community Support Worker will give you a career that you love, whilst providing a valuable connection to people living with a disability or the aged in our Diocese. If you want to find out more about becoming a Community Support Worker call 4227 1122. or go to catholiccare.dow.org.au/get-involved/careers/

Emmaus Silent Retreat Friday 19th April - Sunday 21st April, Varroville: Embark on the sacred journey of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, where the victorious love of God is revealed through the abiding presence of Jesus.

Be renewed in spending time alone with the Lord, and watch as He slowly sets your heart ablaze. This retreat is run by the MGL Sisters and is a retreat for both men and

women: trybooking.com/CNSXK

Palestinian Christians in Australia We Palestinian Christians are often referred to as the "Living Stones", a term made popular over centuries referring to the first Christians from the Holy Land. Our ancestors were there when the spirit fell on them in Jerusalem during Pentecost; they were the first to venerate the Holy Places, the actual stones where Jesus walked and suffered.

Our community are facing a big obstacle in settling refugees from Palestine in Australia especially with the accommodation expenses. We at Palestinian Christians in Australia managed to get 7 families a temporary rented apartments with basic needs but we still have many Christian families on the waiting list. If all the families who got visas end up arriving we will need a large amount of funds to host them in apartments for at least 3 or six months, till they have time to get settled and find work. We initiated an accommodation drive to try and raise some funds for that purpose. If you are able to help please go to the website for more information. The link to the website is: <https://palestinianchristians.org.au/accommodation-drive/>

An invitation to join electronic parish planned giving from

your Parish Finance Council An electronic regular gift provides many benefits. You will find it a secure, convenient and efficient way to regularly support your parish, while also reducing our administration costs. It will also help us to confidently forecast and plan, as we know that we can rely on your support. You can increase, decrease, discontinue or restart your monthly gift at any time. Please visit <https://www.dow.org.au/giving2/parishgiving/> to learn of the four simple ways you can support our parish electronically.

Holy Gospel according to John 12: 20-33

If a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it yields a rich harvest.

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. These approached Philip, who came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put this request to him, 'Sir, we should like to see Jesus.' Philip went to tell Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together went to tell Jesus. Jesus replied to them:

'Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
I tell you most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest.
Anyone who loves his life loses it;
anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life.
If a man serves me, he must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too.
If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him.
Now my soul is troubled.
What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour?
But it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour.
Father, glorify your name!'



A voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'

People standing by, who heard this, said it was a clap of thunder; others said, 'It was an angel speaking to him.' Jesus answered, 'It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours.'

'Now sentence is being passed on this world; now the prince of this world is to be overthrown.

And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself.'

By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Reflection of Pope Francis

On this Fifth Sunday of Lent, the liturgy proclaims the Gospel in which Saint John refers to an episode that occurred in the final days of Christ's life, shortly before the Passion (cf. Jn 12:20-33). While Jesus was in Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, several Greeks, curious because of what he had been doing, express the wish to see him. They approach the apostle Philip and say to him: "We wish to see Jesus" (v. 21). "We wish to see Jesus". Let us remember this: "We wish to see Jesus". Philip tells Andrew and then together they report it to the Teacher. In the request of those Greeks we can glimpse the request that many men and women, of every place and every time, pose to the Church and also to each one of us: "We wish to see Jesus".

And how does Jesus respond to that request? In a way that makes us think. He says: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.... Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (vv. 23-24). These words do not seem to respond to the request those Greeks made. In reality, they surpass it. In fact, Jesus reveals that for every man and woman who wants to find him, He is the hidden seed ready to die in order to bear much fruit. As if to say: if you wish to know me, if you wish to understand me, look at the grain of wheat that dies in soil, that is, look at the cross.

The sign of the Cross comes to mind, which over the centuries has become the symbol par excellence of Christians. Even today, those who wish to "see Jesus", perhaps coming from countries and cultures where Christianity is not well-known, what do they see first? What is the most common sign they encounter? The Crucifix, the Cross. In churches, in the homes of Christians, even worn on their persons. The important thing is that the sign be consistent with the Gospel: the cross cannot but express love, service, unreserved self-giving: only in this way is it truly the "tree of life", of overabundant life.

How might we be better prepared to share our faith so that others might "see Jesus" in our words and actions? Today too, many people, often without saying so, implicitly would like to "see Jesus", to meet him, to know him. This is how we understand the great responsibility we Christians and of our communities have. We too must respond with the witness of a life that is given in service, a life that takes upon itself the style of God – closeness, compassion and tenderness – and is given in service. It means sowing seeds of love, not with fleeting words but through concrete, simple and courageous examples, not with theoretical condemnations, but with gestures of love. Then the Lord, with his grace, makes us bear fruit, even when the soil is dry due to misunderstandings, difficulty or persecution, or claims of legalism or clerical moralism. This is barren soil. Precisely then, in trials and in solitude, while the seed is dying, that is the moment in which life blossoms, to bear ripe fruit in due time.

It is in this intertwining of death and life that we can experience the joy and true fruitfulness of love, which always, I repeat, is given in God's style: closeness, compassion, tenderness.