



City Pastoral REGION
CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

The Parish Vine

St Benedict's Inner Newcastle Parish:

Sacred Heart Cathedral, Newcastle West; St Joseph's Church, The Junction; St Mary, Star of the Sea Church, Newcastle; Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Tighes Hill.

Mayfield Parish: Christ the King, Mayfield West.

Stockton Parish: St Peter-in-Chains, Stockton.

Sunday 15 March 2026

4th Sunday of Lent



Dear Parish Family,

Last Monday I took an opportunity to try the re-vamped Tower Cinema in King Street, and I saw what, in my opinion, is a remarkable movie, *'The Voice of Hind Rajab'*. I can't recommend it enough. I found it incredibly confronting, sad, depressing, inspiring all at once; I think everyone should see it. It has some colourful language and the story-line based on real events, with the voices of the real people involved used as part of the movie. Parents you'll hug your children tighter and pray harder for them.

The story follows the last day of five-year-old Hind Rajab and her death as the result of her family car being shot at in Gaza by an Israeli tank as they evacuate a red zone in January 2024. It is her real voice we hear as she talks to the Red Crescent Workers (our Red Cross equivalent) in the West Bank and as she asks for their help to save her. It seems to me that war, whilst sometimes unavoidable and sometimes justifiable even, is used as a tool for bad people to justify bad behaviour, used to justify doing bad things to good people under the guise of an enemy. Somewhere in the middle the innocent and the vulnerable become victims. Five-year-old Hind Rajab is a victim, an enemy.

Commentators talk about the impact of the audio, the real audio that is heard through the movie of Hind and her mother's voice on the actors; at different times their reactions are not acting but genuine responses. The voice of Hind's mother will break your heart as much as Hind's will.

During a rescue attempt for Hind, the only survivor in the car, the ambulance crew who arrive on the scene is also killed. Red-tape, chains of command, poor communication all contribute to the delay in her rescue, they don't contribute to her death. For me the movie has given me a renewed focus for my prayer for peace, a voice and a face, and a greater sense of urgency for that reality. Prayer is only one step for peace – we must, I must, work for it. I really appreciate what I enjoy here in Australia. The movie is still on next week at the Tower Cinema, however only during the day and one session a day only. It will be playing in the Cinema in Boolaroo on the weekend 27th, 28th and 29th March.

With the fuel crisis now dominating the news and many of us having real concern for the day we will run out of petrol and what that might do to the food chain, the conflict and its impact is getting lost. People, innocent men, women and children in places like Lebanon, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Syria, Gaza, Ukraine are being adversely affected by this war and the violence that comes with it. Our prayer has a focus. Lent is such a great time to reflect on what, how and who we pray for. And a time to reflect on what our actions say of us and our faith.

We have families here in our parish who have families living in those places and who have concern for their safety and ongoing welfare. I cannot imagine what it must be like for you who have family in the war zones; we all stand prayerfully in solidarity together with you and your loved ones.

Prayerfully,

Greg, Parish Priest

Parish Priest

Fr Greg Barker

Assisting Clergy

Fr Niel Olano

Fr Anthony Coloma

Fr Ramille Bigcas

Deacon Kevin Gadd

Parish Administration

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Website:

www.newcastlecatholic.org.au

Note: Our *NEW* website is looking great. Check it out. Feedback welcome!

Anne Warren (*Business Manager*)

Jenny Pascua (*Parish Secretary*)

Peter Davies (*Administration*)

Mary-Anne de Luca (*Sacraments*)

Dr Anne Millard (*Music & Liturgy*)

We acknowledge the Awabakal and Worimi peoples - the traditional custodians of these lands.

The Parish Diary...(for the week ahead)

4th week of Lent, Year A/2

Mon 16 Mar

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

Tues 17 Mar *St Patrick*

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

11:00am Mass at Moran Aged Care, Stockton

Wed 18 Mar

8.15am Mass @ The Cathedral

9:00am Mass @ Mayfield

Thurs 19 Mar *St Joseph*

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

9:00am Mass @ Stockton

9:00am School Liturgy at St Joseph's

10:15am St Columban's class Mass Yrs 1&5

11:00am Funeral Mass of Margaret Fois @ St. Mary's

11:00am Mass @ Fronditha Care, Mayfield

Fri 20 Mar

10:15am Mass @ The Junction

11:00am Exposition, Adoration and Reconciliation @ The Cathedral

12:05pm Mass @ The Cathedral

5:00pm Polish Stations of the Cross @ The Cathedral

6:00pm Young Adults' Stations of the Cross @ The Cathedral

Sat 21 Mar

9:15am Mass @ The Cathedral, followed by the Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, followed by Reconciliation

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Sat 21 Mar

5:30pm Vigil Mass @ The Cathedral

5:30pm Vigil Mass @ The Junction

5:30pm Vigil Mass @ Mayfield West

Sun 22 Mar

7:30am Mass @ St Mary's (Celebrating 160 yrs)

8:00am Mass @ Tighes Hill

9:00am Mass @ Stockton

9:30am Mass @ The Cathedral*

11:00am Italian Mass @ The Junction

12noon Polish Mass @ The Cathedral

5:00pm Mass @ The Cathedral

Prayer Requests

RECENTLY DECEASED: Margaret June Fois, Don Hiscox, Barry Cooper

ANNIVERSARIES: Kathryn Allan Oultram, Teodoro Baloloy, Ian King, Kenneth Lidbetter, Rees, Eunice White, Lawrie O'Brien, Keith Martin, Susan O'Brien, Rosemary King, Katrin Nowakewitz, Leo Royan, Bill Jennings

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK: John Hayes, Gary Valaire, Jeremy Eden, Braxton Rayner, Patricia Gillett, Tui Innes, Raymond Morley, Louise Hall, Phil Riordan, Twon Nguyen, Eileen Jennings, Gwen Haggerty, Nick Fazzini, Rose Gathercole, Alexander Klein, Patty Keegan, Kathryn Kennedy, Leonetta Papichio, John Woods, Rae Booc, Hoagy VanEwyk, Pat Fitzpatrick, Loreto Olano, Martyn Docherty



Please send prayer requests and items for the Bulletin to the Parish Office by 5pm on Wednesdays.

Our Columbaria

Those in our Columbaria with March anniversaries:

At Sacred Heart

Cathedral:

Louise Anne Balzer

Grahame Blick

Francesco Bufi

Veronica Ellen (Verona)

Cable

Edward Caelli

Warren Cunningham

Michael Edward Delaney

Veroncia Ellicott

Betsy Gadd-Ardesch

Frank Gibson

Olwyn Livingstone

Keith Martin

Nigel Mulligan

Terence O'Beirne

John O'Brien

Peter Francis O'Sullivan

Wesbrook (Wes) Smythe

Coz Sphiris

Anna Maria Stefanson

William (Bill) Van Schyndel

Thomas (Jack) Wakely

At St Joseph's:

Gloria Doyle

Carmel Blair

Muriel Boekenstein

Della Brain

Ellis Brown

Thelma Doohan

Megan Evans

Margaret Fleming

Barry Lewis John Gordon

Joyce Johns

Jack Muldoon

Yvonne Pryde

John Sowerby

Paul Wallace

Win Young

Kenneth McDonnell

Eleanora C Bertoss

Kathleen Booker

James Struck

Barbara Georgas

Tony Tamplin

The Chuckle

NED: St Patrick's day is only days away. Should I work on my Irish accent?

ED: No, if it ain't brogue, don't fix it.



Eternal rest grant unto them and may perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace, Amen.

Invitation: Chrism Mass Choir

You are warmly invited to be part of the **Choir for the Chrism Mass on 31 March**.

In the life of the Church, song has always been a sign of faith and joy. When voices are lifted together in prayer, the whole community is drawn into the beauty of worship. For this special celebration, as in previous years, we hope to gather a choir to help raise the roof of the Cathedral and the hearts of all who gather.

Rehearsals will take place at the Cathedral:

- 19 March – 6.30pm
- 26 March – 6.30pm

On the evening of the Mass (Tuesday 31 March) there will also be rehearsal at 5pm, followed by a short repast before the Mass begins at 7pm.

If you would like to join the choir for this wonderful occasion, please email me:

anne.millard@mn.catholic.org.au

We would be delighted to have you with us!



Easter Raffle



Why not take a book of 15 tickets for your family?

Sell one ticket or sell them all – just make sure to return sold tickets by Monday 30

March as the Raffle will be drawn first thing Tuesday, 31st March! (Hand sold tickets and money to any server at the weekend Masses or take them to the Parish Office). We are still open for raffle donations!

Parish Luncheon

At Souths Leagues Club, Llewellyn St, Merewether @ 12.30pm on Monday 16th March. All welcome. Inquiries to Maureen (Tighes Hill) on 0412 673 151.



Preparation and Cleaning at St. Mary's Star of the Sea



Church Cleaning at the Oldest St Mary's, Tuesday 17 and Wednesday 18 March 2026, 9.30am-11am in preparation of the Anniversary. Drop in at your convenience. Many

hands make light work!



**PROJECT
COMPASSION**

Fourth Sunday of Lent 14–15 March 2026

Life was hard for **Manaini** and her children living in rural Fiji. With the support from Caritas Australia's partner, FRIEND, she learnt food processing and gardening skills, improving nutrition and creating new income opportunities to support her children's education.



Please donate today.

You can support Project Compassion 2026 through the donation boxes, envelopes or by scanning the QR code.

Or online at: www.projectcompassion.org.au/donate

Or by calling: 1800 024 413

Thank you for standing with us, as we *Unite Against Poverty this Lent.*



St Peter's Community Parish Mass and Morning Tea

Sunday the 22nd of March at 9am

All are welcome!

Join us for a community parish mass at St Peter's Church, Stockton.

Morning tea will be provided at St Peter's Primary after Mass.

We warmly welcome families, friends and members of our wider community.

Please RSVP for morning tea, for catering purposes, using the following link or QR code-
<https://forms.office.com/r/tpGFPCu0zt>





Vinnies

We are looking for caring volunteers to help prepare and distribute food and essential support to people in need in our community. Volunteering with us is flexible - you can help us as often as your schedule allows. If you would like to make a difference, please contact Fran Barber - ph 0431 525 597

Regular Opportunities for Prayer and Meditation

- **Tighes Hill Christian Meditation** (non-denominational) - each Monday 3.30pm at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church Tighes Hill



- **Living Waters Meditation Centre** - each Wednesday 7.30am and Friday 11.00am at 34 Kenrick St The Junction

- **The Rosary** - each Wednesday after 8.15am Mass at The Cathedral, First Saturday of the month after Mass and Novena at The Cathedral



- **Divine Mercy Devotion** - first Sunday of the month 3.00-4.00pm at Christ the King, Mayfield West



- **Taize Service** - first Sunday of the month 5.00 - 6.00pm at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Tighes Hill, followed by a shared supper.



Retreat Opportunities

- **Jamberoo Abbey Retreat Program**

Led by the Benedictine nuns at Jamberoo NSW
[Abbey Retreat Programs – Jamberoo Abbey](#)

- **Divine Retreat Centre – Retreat Schedule 2026**

The Divine Retreat Centre in Somersby, NSW, offers a peaceful sanctuary for individuals and families seeking spiritual growth and healing. Nestled in a picturesque landscape, this Catholic retreat Centre was established in 2013 by the Vincentian Congregation.

They have scheduled a Healing Prayer to be held at St Patrick's Church, Wallsend on Monday 16 March, 7.00pm – 9.00pm. www.divineretreatcentre.org

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact the Divine Retreat Centre directly at email: drcsydney@divineretreatcentre.org



LENT

Parish Group Meetings

St Joseph's Prayer/Discussion Group has commenced our 2026 program with the Wollongong Lenten Program. We meet on Thursdays during Lent at 9.30am in the meeting room at The Junction and will continue until Easter. All welcome. Contact Janet Tully on 0435 518 671.



Book Club meets on Sunday, 5 April, to discuss *Legacy* by Chris Hammer.

If you would like to participate in book club meetings, please email:

newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au

View, Chew, and Chat is

currently engaged in the Lenten program "Compassio". You are very welcome to join us on Wednesdays! To participate, please email the parish office:

newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au



Faith Sharing on the Sunday Gospel at Tighes Hill Church after 8am Mass on 1st, 8th, 22nd and 29th March 2026.

Easter Food Blessing



You are invited to join with our Polish brothers and sisters Holy Saturday 4 April at 12 noon for the Easter Food Blessing.

Bring your basket or platter with:

- hard-boiled eggs (symbolizing new life and the empty tomb)
- bread (representing Christ, the Bread of Life)
- butter (for sacrifice and purity)
- meat, often ham or sausage (a festive protein after abstinence)
- salt (symbolizing purification)
- cake (the symbol of joy of Easter glory),
- decoration (fresh branches) and
- horseradish (the symbol of the harshness of daily life).

The food is then eaten on Easter Sunday as part of the Easter Celebrations.



Young Adults Vision and Mission Statements

Members of the EPIC Young Adults group met recently to discern new Vision and Mission Statements for the group. These are intended to define and clarify the group's purpose and priorities, and what we will 'do' to achieve our vision for our community. Here is a draft of these statements:

Vision Statement

Young adults engaging, encouraging, and empowering one another to share the joy of Christ.

Mission Statement

- Engaging and growing a vibrant Catholic community of young adults.
- Encouraging a living relationship with Jesus through prayer and worship.
- Empowering spirit-filled leaders to witness faith and evangelise others.

Our group is welcoming feedback from all members of our pastoral region on these statements. You can give your feedback by heading to <https://tinyurl.com/EPICVMFeedback> or sending us a message on Insta @epicnewcastle! We will be launching the final version of these statements, alongside our plans for the rest of the year on Sunday 3rd May, following the 5pm Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral – save the date!

Stations of the Cross

Join other young adults (18-35) on Friday nights during Lent at 6pm in The Cathedral to pray the **Stations of the Cross**. Together, we celebrate this sacred season by walking with Jesus in his Passion, drawing closer to him in prayer and to each other in fellowship. Come as you are, bring a friend, and journey with us toward Easter in hope.

Social Night

Tuesday 17th March at 6pm: EPIC won trivia last year... now it's time to spend the voucher! Pop in for a fun **social night** at The Oak in Tighes Hill as we cash in our victory and enjoy a relaxed evening. No agenda, no pressure, just good food, great chats, and the chance to build friendships beyond our usual gatherings. If you haven't been to an EPIC event before, this is the perfect opportunity to connect, laugh, and unwind with other young adults. Open to all aged 18 to 35. No RSVP required, contact Jono on 0432 504 217 with any questions. Follow us on Insta at @epicnewcastle to keep up to date on young adult events!

Parish Teams

Promoters of Safeguarding: Louise Outram, Cynthia Tamonan, Alex Tamonan, Sr Kath Williams rsm, Annie Evans.

Bereavement Team: Margaret Cox, Gail Lovell, Christopher Gregory, Margaret Beard, Margaret Newton, Jill O'Dell, Anne Millard (02) 4979 1252.

St Joseph's Pastoral Team: Contact the Parish Office.

RCIA: Contact Mary-Anne at the parish office. Our website has a form which can be used to express interest in becoming a Catholic.

Sacramental Program: Contact Mary-Anne at the Parish Office.

Baptism team: Meets on the first Tuesday of the month, with parents who are preparing for their children's baptism.

Business Owners / Employers

If you have job openings available in your shops or any businesses and would like to consider fellow parishioners looking for work, please email the Parish office. We have a young person currently looking for work, needing experience to build up their CV.

Safeguarding

If a child feels unsafe, the most important thing is to try to get help from a trusted adult as soon as possible. A trusted adult could be a parent, teacher, school counsellor, police officer, relative, or another responsible adult (e.g. well-known neighbour OR, in public, a parent with young children).

At school, the child should tell a teacher, the principal, or another staff member straight away. Schools have rules and systems to protect students, and adults there can take action to keep the child safe.

If the child feels unsafe in a public place, they should move to an area where there are other people around, such as a shop, or business premises, where they can approach employees, or security guards.

If children feel unsafe at home, it is important they talk to someone they trust outside the home, such as a teacher, school counsellor, family member, or a helpline. In Australia, children can call **Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800)** for free and talk to a trained counsellor anytime.

Children should remember that feeling unsafe is not their fault. Speaking up and asking for help is brave and an important step toward staying safe.

Diocesan Events

<https://tinyurl.com/cdmnevents>

Diocesan Resource Centre

Opening Hours: Mondays and Fridays, 10am to 4pm.
Open 1st & 3rd Saturday of each month, 10am to 2pm.
cnr Tudor and Parry Sts, Newcastle West.

All resources are available to borrow; and are searchable on the library catalogue, which can be accessed through this link:

<https://tinyurl.com/DOMNLibrary>

OR use the QR code.



Praying Scripture Group

*Diocesan Resource Centre - Cnr Parry & Tudor Streets,
Newcastle West*

The Praying Scripture group has started meeting at 2:30pm on Saturdays during Lent, at the Diocesan Resource Centre adjacent to Sacred Heart Cathedral Hamilton, to pray and reflect on the Lenten Gospels. We will continue to meet after Easter with a particular focus on the Gospel of John this year. You can contact Wayne Caruana for more information on 0466 631394.

Called to Know More – Invitation Launch

*Diocesan Resource Centre - Cnr Parry & Tudor Streets,
Newcastle West*

“Let’s Unpack that Evangelisation Word”

We are excited to launch Called to Know More, an invitation to explore the mission, story and life of the Church in a way that connects deeply with our everyday experience. Evangelisation! It’s a word we hear often. But what does it really mean, here and now? What does it have to do with our work life? Our leadership? Our parish ministry? Perhaps more than we think.

Join us as we gently unpack this word and discover what might be stirring beneath it. No prior knowledge is needed, only curiosity and openness. We will gather once a month to listen, learn and reflect together. Come with your questions. Leave with something to ponder. We look forward to exploring this together. Light lunch provided. <https://tinyurl.com/CDMNcalled>

Meditation/reflection/sharing Exploring the poetry of the mystics

Reading and listening to poetry before becoming silent and still. It engages the whole person-mind, heart and body.

Saturday, March 28th 9.30am to 12.30pm

Donation: \$10.00

Morning Tea Provided at 9.30. **RSVP** by March 23rd
annecuskelly@hotmail.com or 0407436808

MN Kids Holiday Program

7th & 8th April, 9:00am-1:00pm.

Diocesan Resource Centre - Cnr Parry & Tudor Streets

\$10 per child/per day, lunch included! Program is open to children aged 6-12 years and will include team games, science experiments, bible stories and music.

Register:

<https://MNKidsHolidayProgram.eventbrite.com.au>

Contact: Nicola Graham 0417 773 444

Way of the Cross 2026

Sunday 22 March, 2:00pm – St Joseph’s, Toronto

The Parish Community of St Joseph’s Toronto warmly invites you to its annual Way of the Cross. As we allow our grounds to fallow this year, the Way of the Cross will be held in the Church. At the end of the Way of Cross, the Sacrament of Reconciliation will be available as we prepare for Holy Week.

Mission to Seafarers

Catholic Port Chaplain, Mark Spencer, recently attended the Seafarers Welfare Conference and reflected that “a ship visit is not only an act of service – it is also a theological statement. To serve seafarers in the name of Jesus is to affirm their dignity and to meet them where they are: in their workspace, their home, and in many times, their only social space. When we talk about ship visiting, we’re not speaking about logistics alone -- we’re describing a form of presence that embodies the Gospel. Ship visiting reminds the visitor and the crew that God’s light shines even in steel passageways and engine rooms.”

Called & Gifted Discernment Process

Mission & Evangelisation is working with the Catherine of Siena Institute to offer the Called & Gifted Discernment Process this year. We will again offer this life-changing discernment process, inviting you to discover your God-given charisms. Commencing in May, step forward in faith and help our parishes thrive through use of your gifts. Express your interest here: <https://tinyurl.com/CalledandGifted2026>

Food Baskets for the Needy

Items of dry goods or tin food can be placed in the blue bins located at our churches. When donating please check expiry dates. We ask that you do not donate peanut butter. Any of the following non-perishable items are welcome: UHT milk, cereal, spreads, tinned goods, pasta, rice, pasta sauces, tea, coffee, biscuits, custard, jelly, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant.



Employment Opportunities

Family Engagement Coordinator: Catholic Schools is seeking a Temporary Full-Time Family Engagement Coordinator, who works with the Principal to support and strengthen family engagement within the school, church and wider community. The period is from 20 April 2026 to 27 January 2027 and will work across four schools in the Newcastle region: Trinity Catholic College, St Columba's Adamstown, St James' Kotara and St Kevin's Cardiff. Further details can be found on our website:

<https://tinyurl.com/CDMNSchools>

Cessnock Correctional Centre – Catholic Chaplain:

Mission & Evangelisation are seeking a full-time Correctional Centre Chaplain with the purpose of providing a ministry of healing and pastoral presence. Our Chaplains aim to provide people in custody the tools to become more at one with themselves, with others and with God. The ministry offers inmates the best chance of successfully reintegrating into society once their sentence is complete. Pastoral and spiritual care and support is also provided to inmates' families and centre staff. For further details email:

james.camden@mn.catholic.org.au

Donation Options

For anyone who wishes to make donations to the parish via direct deposit: Details are provided below for the individual parishes.

Account name: **CDF** BSB: **066739**

Account number: **see below***

Reference: **Donation [Surname]**

*Account numbers:

Newcastle Parish - Account no: 100008696

Mayfield Parish - Account no: 100007169

Stockton Parish - Account no: 100003308

OR

Scan a QR Code:



ST. BENEDICT'S INNER NEWCASTLE PARISHES
Sacred Heart Cathedral | St. Joseph's Junction
St. Mary's Star of the Sea | Immaculate Heart of Mary | High Hill



CHRIST THE KING CHURCH
MAYFIELD



ST PETER IN CHAINS CHURCH
STOCKTON

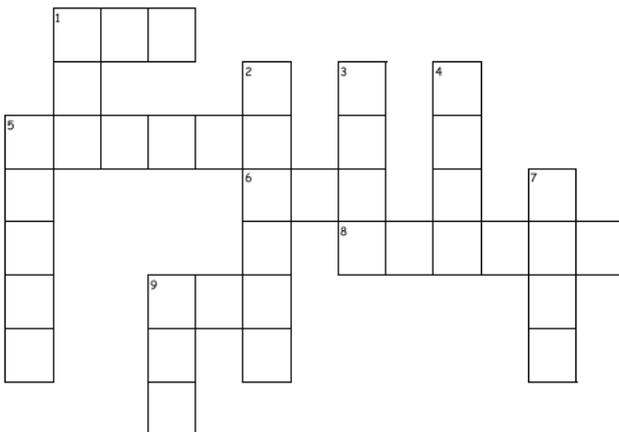
Bequests

To help our Catholic Pastoral Region continue its mission of proclaiming the Good News, you might consider including us in your Will. You just need to specify which parish(es) you would like to help.

CROSSWORD

I put my faith in you Jesus

Jn 9:1, 6-12, 35-38



Across

- 1: mother is to daughter as father is to _ _ _
- 5: someone who begs
- 6: singular
- 8: Jesus told the blind man to wash off the mud at _ _ _ _ _ Pool
- 9: an adult male human

Down

- 1: look
- 2: grass grows out of the _ _ _ _ _
- 3: we see through these
- 4: a place where you can swim
- 5: not able to see
- 7: to clean with water
- 9: dirt mixed with wate

Safeguarding

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has an abiding commitment to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. If you have any concerns for a child or vulnerable adult please contact the Office of Safeguarding: 02 4979 1390, or email

childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au or visit www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au

Today's Liturgy of the Word

First Reading: 1 Samuel 16: 1, 6-7, 10-13

In the presence of the Lord God, they anointed David king of Israel.



Responsorial Psalm: Ps 22 R. v.1

(R.) The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.

1. The Lord is my shepherd;
there is nothing I shall want.
Fresh and green are the pastures
where he gives me repose.
Near restful waters he leads me,
to revive my drooping spirit. (R.)
2. He guides me along the right path;
he is true to his name.
If I should walk in the valley of darkness
no evil would I fear.
You are there with your crook and your staff;
with these you give me comfort. (R.)
3. You have prepared a banquet for me
In the sight of my foes.
My head you have anointed with oil;
my cup is overflowing. (R.)
4. Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
all the days of my life.
In the Lord's own house shall I dwell
for ever and ever. (R.)

Second Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14

Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.

Gospel Acclamation: John 8:12

Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!
I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
whoever follows me will have the light of life.
Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!

Gospel: John 9:1-41

The blind man went off and washed himself and came away with his sight restored.



Next Week's Readings

5th Sunday of Lent, Year A

Ezekiel 37:12-14

Romans 8:8-11

John 11:1-45



Scripture Commentary

There are many occasions when we ask the question why, and can't find the answer for which we are looking. Why did we miss out on a job? Why did someone we love get cancer? Why can't we find a place to live that we can afford? Why do some days seem so difficult?



It is good to sit with our confusion and even grief. It is good to share it with the Lord who loves us so tenderly. But sometimes we have to step aside from the question why did this happen? It may be better to start with where can I go from here? What small steps will enable me to face the future in a positive spirit?

Today's readings touch upon these issues. In the Gospel, Jesus encounters a person who was born blind. The bystanders want to know why this happened. They think it must be because either he or his parents did something wrong. They are looking backwards. Jesus prefers to look forwards. He says, 'he was born blind so that the works of God may be displayed in him.' In other words, his blindness presents opportunities for growth, not a pretext for blame. The letter to the Ephesians similarly reminds us that we are on a journey from darkness to light. The whole of Lent could be described in those words. The letter says, 'try to discover what the Lord wants of you.' It asks us in terms of possibilities! The same thing happens when Samuel anoints David. It doesn't matter that David is a young shepherd. He has a big future, as anyone familiar with the Bible well knows.

This week, Caritas Australia, through Project Compassion, draws us into the story of Manaini, a 44-year-old mother and subsistence farmer in remote northern Fiji. She has transformed her family's life through food processing and organic farming, thanks to a Caritas-supported project. Once reliant on more store-bought food and prone to food waste, she now produces homemade flours, dried foods, and sells produce and baked goods from local crops. Her passion for learning has made her a key player in her community, working with others to embrace more sustainable, empowering ways of living. Thanks to the generosity of the Australian Catholic community, hundreds of thousands of people such as Manaini are finding the answer to the question, 'Where can we go from here?'

UNITE 
AGAINST
POVERTY