

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 8 March 2026

3rd Sunday of Lent

Dear Parish Family,

On Thursday we welcomed Fr Ramille Bigcas, from the Archdiocese of Capiz, for service here in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. I don't need to say, 'make him welcome', that is a given and you are exceptionally good at it. He has hit the ground in a whirlwind: forms to fill in, accounts to sort, computing to get set up, new phone number to learn and, of course, the 'Working With Children Check' number to arrange. All needs to be done early in the process. I've become very adept at the round of agencies to be negotiated with to get all the things he needs lined up. He won't remember any of it, it is simply one more office, one more form. *That was just day 1.*

We have strict rules around working with the vulnerable in this country and no one can minister here without the correct permissions. It is a challenge for a few older of our clerics and folk I know, however we do what we need to, to ensure the safety of all. With that in mind you will have opportunity shortly to update your skills and knowledge in this area through a series of workshops that will be on offer after Easter. You'll only need to come to one. You might have to attend due to the role you have volunteered for, or you might choose an online version to achieve the same goal. Updating our skills and knowledge is a good thing and, as a church, we recognise how essential it is to know how to look after one another in truly living out the gospels.

On another note: parking, the bane of all our lives during the week. This week has seen workers from two of the construction sites, plus people working in the offices nearby vying for parking on the presbytery back lawn and driveway. Add the complication of our own Diocesan staff, the courses we run and all those trying to get to Mass, it's messy. Had two challenging days getting in and out of the garage this week with the numbers of cars blocking my access. I am desperately trying to keep everyone off the lawn under the trees or, at the very least, limit the number of days people park there, due to safety issues and the impact of the cars on the trees. When the trees get stressed, they drop branches, not little twigs or leaves but branches. You might remember last year one of our trees lost a branch which blocked part of Hunter Street – luckily in the middle of the night. If you would be mindful.

On a weekend there is more parking. The Tudor Street carpark is open to us. On weekdays staff pay the parish to park to there; it's why it isn't open for general parking. In the Hunter Street Carpark there are five spots also reserved and paid for by staff whose jobs require them to come and go throughout the day. If we park in them, in essence we are denying them what they paid for – to give it its weight, it is stealing. I don't know what is happening with the limited parking in the street around the Cathedral; the same cars are staying there all day. You can ring the Newcastle City Council and complain as a concerned citizen. Right now, all I can say is this, *be patient, be generous and kind as you seek out a spot to park - and get here early, especially during the week.*

Don't forget there are prayers and reflections screening throughout the day in the Cathedral to aid your Lenten journey. I have found it like an oasis from the busyness of the day and the heat.

Greg, Parish Priest

Parish Priest

Fr Greg Barker

Assisting Clergy

Fr Niel Olano

Fr Anthony Coloma

Fr Ramille Bigcas

Deacon Kevin Gadd

Parish Administration

McAuley Building, 242 Parry St,

Newcastle West, 2302

PO Box 6, The Junction 2291

Phone: (02) 4979 1101

Email:

newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au

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*)

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

3rd week of Lent, Year A/2

Mon 9 Mar

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

Tues 10 Mar

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

[No 9:00am Mass @ Stockton]

Clergy Reflection Day

Wed 11 Mar

8.15am Mass @ The Cathedral

9:00am Mass @ Mayfield (anointing)

Thurs 12 Mar

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

9:00am Mass @ Stockton

1:30pm Mass @ Charles O'Neill, Mayfield West

Fri 13 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 14 Mar

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

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Sat 14 Mar

5:30pm Vigil Mass @ The Cathedral

5:30pm Vigil Mass @ The Junction

5:30pm Vigil Mass @ Mayfield West

Sun 15 Mar

7:30am Mass @ St Mary's

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

* Livestreamed on the Cathedral's YouTube channel - search Sacred Heart Cathedral Hamilton

To Give Away

Upright Beale Piano. Good condition. Steel frame. Needs tuning.

Lounge suite. One three seater and two arm chairs. Good condition. Located in Merewether.

Please contact the parish office.

Prayer Requests



RECENTLY DECEASED: Kevin Johns, Tommy Russell

ANNIVERSARIES: Peter Cootes, Darcy Keogh, James Francis Tait, Linda Barski, Leonie Witt (Royan), Stan Maurer, Jean O'Brien, Mary Hanson

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

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

The Chuckle

This year I've given up spreadsheets for 40 days and 40 nights. It's going to be Excel lent.



Name our Bulletin

From responses to the survey, we have narrowed down possible names for the bulletin to four:

- ◆ *Between Hill and Harbour*
- ◆ *Beachside Bulletin*
- ◆ *The Parish Vine*
- ◆ *Living Waters*



Use the QR code to cast your vote!

And the Gift Voucher Goes to...

Fr Greg, in the presence of scrutineers, drew from a bucket containing the names of those who submitted responses to our parish bulletin survey.

Congratulations **Jonathan McCallum!**
We'll organise delivery of your voucher.



Easter Raffle



Tickets on sale this weekend: \$2 each, or 3 for \$5. Expected drawing on Palm Sunday.

We're accepting donations of eggs, bunnies, bilbies or other Easter gifts.

Baskets are available at the main entrance of each church. During the week you are welcome to bring along your donation to the parish office.

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.



Tell Us About You

You can use the link or QR code to provide your contact details. You can also let us know if you wish to take on a volunteer role, and/or join our Planned Giving program.



<https://tinyurl.com/newcparishcensus>

Cathedral Cleaning Schedule

For those visiting the Cathedral through the weeks of Lent for prayer and reflection, it could be handy to know the weekly cleaning schedule: Monday mornings from 9.30am and Thursdays from noon.

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.



Our catechumens, preparing for baptism at Easter, with Bishop Michael and Fr Greg after the Rite of Election on Sunday 22 February.



Third Sunday of Lent 7-8 March 2026

Monoranjon lives in a village in Bangladesh close to the sea, where floods and storms often damage his crops and his home. With support from Project Compassion, he learnt climate-resilient farming techniques and new ways to diversify his income, helping his family survive and build a safer, more sustainable future.



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.*

Scams

Dear Parish Family,

Several people have received scam texts requesting assistance from a 'Fr Greg Barker'. Please note I sign either Fr Greg or simply Greg. I will never send a text asking for your help in that format. The messages tell you that I am in a meeting and am unable to talk right now, requesting help usually in the form of gift cards. I will never ask for gift cards. Scammers access through either our website or published on-line bulletins. So please if you receive such a text do not open it or respond to it: simply delete it. Regards, Greg

A Lenten Retreat Invitation

"Consecrate in the Truth, Be Christ to Others"

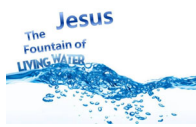


8 March 2026, from 12noon.
Toohey Room, 841 Hunter Street,
Newcastle West

Speaker: Fr Gregory Barker, Vicar
General of the Diocese of Maitland -
Newcastle

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 last Saturday 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, 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.

Safeguarding

Entitlements of the elderly in Australia are safeguarded under the Charter of Aged Care Rights. This charter includes about 1.3 million seniors currently receiving government funded residential care, home care or other aged care services. All are entitled to:

1. safe and high-quality care and services;
2. be treated with dignity and respect;
3. have their identity, culture and diversity valued and supported;
4. live without abuse and neglect;
5. be informed about care and services in a way they understand;
6. access all information about themselves, their rights, care and services;
7. have control over and make choices about their care, personal and social life;
8. have control over personal aspects of their daily life, finances and possessions;
9. their independence;
10. be listened to and understood;
11. have a person of their choice to speak on their behalf;
12. have complaints dealt with fairly and promptly;
13. personal privacy and to have personal information protected;
14. exercise their rights without it adversely affecting the way they are treated.

Everybody involved in the delivery of care must respect these rights. More details at <https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/>

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,
Newcastle West*

\$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



MN KIDS HOLIDAY PROGRAM

Where faith meets fun
& science sparks joy!

Program is open to children aged 6-12 years and will include team games, science experiments, bible stories and music.

Location: Diocesan Resource Centre (Cnr of Tudor & Parry St, Newcastle West)

Dates: 7th & 8th April 2026

Time: 9:00am - 1:00pm
Child minding available from 8:30am-1:30pm

Cost: \$10 per child/per day.
Lunch Included



Called & Gifted Discernment Process

After the success of the 2025 trial, 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>

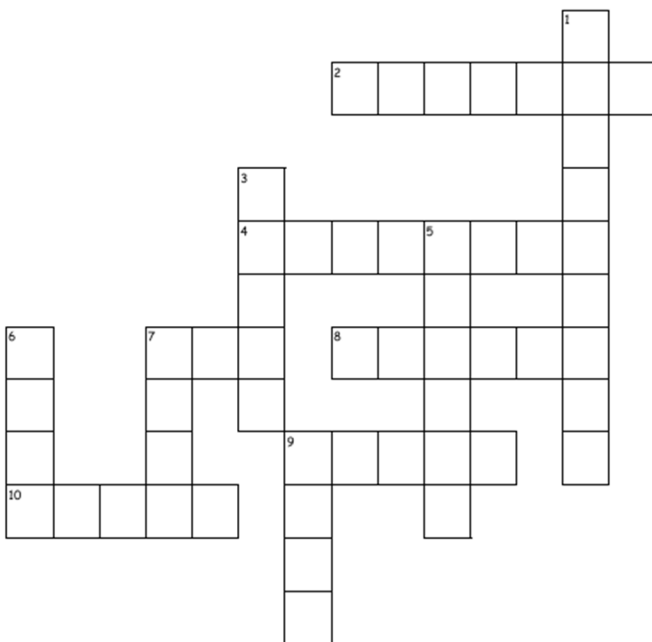
Cessnock Correctional Centre – Catholic Chaplain:

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

CROSSWORD

I am the Christ who speaks to you now



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.

Jn 4:5-15, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42

Across

- 2: Saviour
- 4: a relative from many years ago
- 7: the number between one and three
- 8: this is used to carry liquids
- 9: an adult female human
- 10: to consume liquid

Down

- 1: a person from Samaria
- 3: Jesus sat by a well that had been dug by this person
- 5: a town where Jesus stayed
- 6: what we eat
- 7: a large village
- 9: a hole in the ground that people collect water from

3rd Sunday of Lent, Year A [N03LESUA_2005_CWG.rtf]

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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

Today's Liturgy of the Word

First Reading: Ex 17:3-7

Give us water to drink.



Responsorial Psalm: Ps 94:1-2. 6-9. R. v.8

(R.) If today you hear his voice,
harden not your hearts.

1. Come, ring out our joy to the Lord;
hail the rock who saves us.
Let us come before him, giving thanks,
with songs let us hail the Lord.
2. Come in; let us bow and bend low;
let us kneel before the God who made us
for he is our God and we
the people who belong to his pasture,
the flock that is led by his hand.
3. O that today you would listen to his voice!
'Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as on that day at Massah in the desert
when your fathers put me to the test;
when they tried me, though they saw my work.'

Second Reading: Rom 5:1-2. 5-8

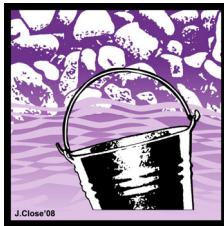
*The love of God has been poured into our hearts by
the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.*

Gospel Acclamation

Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!
Lord, you are truly the Saviour of the world;
give me living water, that I may never thirst again.
Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!

Gospel: Jn 4:5-42

*The water that I shall give will turn into a spring of
eternal life.*



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Next Week's Readings

4th Sunday of Lent, Year A

1 Sam 16:1, 6-7, 10-13

Eph 5:8-14

Jn 9:1-41

Scripture Commentary

Every summer seems to get a little longer and a little hotter. We have all become conscious



of issues surrounding water. Either there seems to be too much, as when we see summer floods or the rising sea levels in the Pacific. Other times, there seems to be too little water as when the rivers in our country run low or members of God's family around the world experience drought. Caritas Australia, through **Project Compassion**, has been responding to the dire needs of water justice in a range of vulnerable countries.

Today's readings may well cause us to reflect on the current state of God's creation. In the book of Exodus, we hear that people are complaining to Moses because they are dying of thirst. In the Gospel, Jesus meets a woman in a Samaritan town. She has come to draw water from the well in the hottest part of the day. In both cases, access to water is precarious. Yet God responds not only to a thirst for water but to a deeper thirst as well. Moses' people are thirsty for direction, leadership and hope. The woman in John's Gospel has a thirst for love and acceptance which, Jesus tells her, will come from within if she is able to accept him and his message of life. As the story unfolds, we learn of her loneliness and see her reconnecting with her community.

In reflecting on this story in *Listening Together*, Cardinal Radcliffe reminds us that Jesus' words are abrupt. 'Give me a drink.' He considers the times in John's Gospel when Jesus expresses thirst, including when he is on the cross. Radcliffe concludes that Jesus is thirsty on our behalf. He longs for our freedom.

Thirst is a great spiritual metaphor, one which Pope Leo XIV has used. But let's not forget the millions of people for whom physical water is a real challenge. This week, Project Compassion shares with us the story of Monoranjon, a farmer in Bangladesh whose family has been deeply impacted by environmental damage, specifically salination of soil and water. This beautiful story reminds us of the importance of meeting people, as Jesus did, at their place of greatest need.

Our thirst for freedom and justice enables us to *Unite Against Poverty*.

