

Sunday 3 May 2026

5th Sunday of Easter

Dear Parish Family,

The ISIS brides and their desire, with their children, to return to Australia, continues to be newsworthy. Gaza not so much, and Ukraine not at all, sadly.

The rights and wrongs of Australians who have, or may have, committed crimes overseas and crimes punishable under Australian law, are somehow at the heart of the ISIS bride controversy. I get lost in the mixed messaging; maybe you do too. I am no journalist, lawyer or politician, I freely admit, and I feel for all those who are trying to negotiate in this massive dilemma on our behalf. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could get some consistent information so that we aren't being asked to support one side or the other in the 'dark'? I'd like to see a couple of things that I hold dear at the forefront of the reporting, including a person being 'innocent until proven otherwise'. I can't help wondering what crimes the children of the 'brides' committed, and what status and help we should be giving them.

Maybe this is not our business, and probably the privacy act or the court of law prohibits a freer flow of information; however we know almost nothing about the women, how they came to be ISIS brides, or their crimes. I remember three young women who, at the age of 15, left England to be brides to ISIS – it was newsworthy, too, at the time. What maturity did they have to make that decision? Whilst a few 15-year-olds see themselves as grown up, I am pleased we don't see them in exactly the same way. The status of women in the countries under Taliban, or under the ISIS regime, we know were not treated well, kindly or given any great freedoms – their daughters the same. I don't know the answer I just know, as a Catholic community, we are called to be just, to act with integrity and to be reflective of God's loving heart. What would Jesus ask of me/us or have me/us do? Got a thought or answer, let me know.

Friday, 1 May, we celebrated the work of a long-standing employee of the Diocese and Church in Elizabeth Doyle. Liz has worked in the bishop's office for over 30 years and supported the work of our bishops in this diocese. It is a great testament to her vision as a servant of the church that she has negotiated with us the various changes, synods, plenaries and pilgrimages of our faith journey. I am sure there have been days when Liz wondered what she was doing still here, but with humour, commitment and a great work ethic, she has helped us negotiate it all. I wonder just how many days over the next few weeks Liz will fly out of bed and get ready to head into the office? On behalf of this parish, I wished Liz the very best for the future, thanked her for her service and expressed gratitude for her support to us. Please join with me in praying for her in retirement.

The priests of the parish and our office staff continue to support communities around us as they work through some significant staffing changes. I know you will continue to be patient, understanding and kind, as we are sometimes 'slower' to respond. Have you heard the phrase 'only so many hours in the day'? We feel a bit like that at the moment. We are still smiling and joy filled.

See you in Church.

Greg, Parish Priest



Parish Priest

Fr Greg Barker

Assisting Clergy

Fr Niel Olano
Fr Ramille Bigcas
Fr Stany Mathew
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*)
Dr Anne Millard (*Music & Liturgy*)

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

5th week of Easter

Mon 4 May

7:30am Mass @ The Cathedral

Tues 5 May

7:30am Mass @ The Cathedral

9:00am Mass @ Stockton (anointing)

6:00pm Adoration in The Cathedral (see EPIC notice)

Wed 6 May

7:30am Mass @ The Cathedral

9:00am Mass @ Mayfield West

9:30am Mass @ Holy Family School Mass

Thurs 7 May

7:30am Mass @ The Cathedral

9:00am Mass @ Stockton

9:00am St Columban's School Mothers' Day Liturgy

2:00pm Mass at Irwin Hall, Mayfield

Fri 8 May

9:00am Stockton School Mothers' Day Liturgy

10:15am Mass @ The Junction

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

12:05pm Mass @ The Cathedral

Sat 9 May

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

6th Sunday of Easter

Sat 9 May

5:30pm Vigil Mass @ The Cathedral

5:30pm Vigil Mass @ The Junction

5:30pm Vigil Mass @ Mayfield West

Sun 10 May

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

The Catholic Schools Week Mass will be on Friday week, 15 May, at the Sacred Heart Cathedral at 11am. The regular Friday Reconciliation, Adoration and Mass are cancelled for that day.

Prayer Requests



RECENTLY DECEASED: Tracy Press, Sr Clare McCudden rsj

ANNIVERSARIES: Fr Peter Williams, Allan Eastiway, Claudio D'Andrea, Agnes & John Lawler, Margaret Brennan, Alfred Bryant, Alois Schmitz, Len Campbell

PRAYERS FOR THE SICK: Wally McLellan, 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, Leonetta Papichio, John Woods, Hoagy VanEwyk, Pat Fitzpatrick, Martyn Docherty

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



The Most Reverend Michael Kennedy

and the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle cordially invite

The People of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle to the Ordination to the Permanent Diaconate of

Mr Christopher Voigt

by

Most Reverend Michael Kennedy

on Saturday, 23 May 2026 at 10am

in Sacred Heart Cathedral, 841 Hunter St, Newcastle West

All are Welcome

Our Columbaria

Those in our Columbaria with May anniversaries:

At The Cathedral:

Margaret Winsome

Azzopardi

Joyce Callaghan

Michael Clement Daley

Marjorie Hardy

Ian King

Mario Malaspina

Gerard McCosker

Cyril O'Neill

Barry Pritchard

Lorna Pearl Roberts

Barbara Smith

Beryl Smith

At St Joseph's:

Edith Isabel Fahey

Violet Ernst

Mollie Buckland

Anne Marie Gilroy

John Hogg

Margaret Kelly

Maureen Maher

Paul-Elizabeth McNamara

John Joseph Skehan

Francis Smith

Eunice Smyth

Meryl Ryan

Jack Robinson

Charles Tynan

Frederick Wilson

Geoff Young

Zilda Burgess

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

YOUTH MINISTRY

EPIC Young Adults – Next Chapter

Members of the EPIC Young Adults group are excited to announce a finalised vision and mission and a renewed schedule of events for the group. EPIC is a space for 18-35 year olds in our pastoral region, wherever you are on your faith journey. You can read our new guiding statements below:

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.

We have three events in May to kick off this new era!

- **Sunday 3rd May - Next Chapter Relaunch** – Stay behind after the 5pm Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral for pizza and an opportunity to hear about what's next for EPIC.
- **Tuesday 5th May – Adore** – Join us for Eucharistic Adoration at 6pm in Sacred Heart Cathedral. This is a new monthly event, held on the first Tuesday evening of each month! Come rest in His presence.
- **Thursday 14th May – Movie Night** – Drop into the Toohey Room at 6pm to watch Fr Stu, starring Mark Wahlberg, the story of a self-destructive boxer, transformed from an atheist to a Catholic priest. Pizza provided!

A full schedule of events for the next three months will soon be available on our Instagram, WhatsApp group, and on flyers in the back of each of our Mass centres! Stay in touch by joining our WhatsApp with this QR code or following us on Insta at @epicnewcastle.



Welcome to Our Newly Baptised!



We joyfully welcome those receiving the Sacrament of Baptism this weekend:

At The Cathedral: Mason Giles, Reuben Lancaster, Monty Madden and Austen Roberts

Welcome Fr Stany!



This week we welcome Fr Stany Mathew, who has arrived from India to serve in our parish. We look forward to walking together in faith, growing as a community rooted in Communion, Participation, and Mission. We are grateful for your willingness to serve, to lead, and to share your gifts with us.

Parish Survey

As part of our work for the Parish Assembly process, the Parishes' Regional Pastoral Council is collecting data from our Parish Churches. The survey you are being asked to complete is part of our fact-finding and will be included in our discernment for a Pastoral Strategic Plan.

Please complete the survey just once. It is anonymous and will be collected by the Parish Office to be given to our Regional Pastoral Council, our Assembly Planning Committee, and the Assembly gathered in June. This is an opportunity to continue our synodal process as we listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit through your voice.



Return and Earn - Update



Fr Niel coordinated a meeting on Wednesday, and a plan of action was put together. There will be another meeting on Thursday 7 May at 5pm. We are looking for volunteers to help with collection and transport to "return and earn" stations. Please leave your name and phone number with the parish office. This is a way to **care for the earth** by recycling. It's also a way to **care for others**, as the funds raised will be distributed in this instance to Caritas Australia, Catholic Mission, St Vincent de Paul, and to the Good Friday appeal.



Please return any Project Compassion boxes that may still be at home!

Caritas Australia Lebanon Emergency Appeal

The situation in Lebanon remains extremely fragile, and civilians urgently need humanitarian support. More than 2,000 people have been killed and over 1.1 million people displaced nationwide, including more than 390,000 children. Our partners Caritas Lebanon continue to deliver emergency food, water, shelter and health support across the country, maintaining humanitarian convoys to hard-to-reach areas in southern Lebanon.

Stand with the people of Lebanon today. Learn more or make a donation today at www.caritas.org.au/lebanon.



Rosary During the Month of May

- During the month of May, we will pray the rosary after each weekday Mass **In the Cathedral** – 7.30am Mon to Thurs, 12.05pm Friday.
- **Catholic Mission** is providing the opportunity to pray the rosary during the month of May:

Dates: Monday to Friday, 1 May – 31 May

Time: 2:00pm – 3:00pm

Location: Online via Teams

Teams link: tinyurl.com/RosaryPrayer26



Couples for Christ AUSTRALIA

SCAN TO RSVP

Christian Life Program

Consecrated in the truth,
Be Christ to other

Orientation Day

17 May, 2026 - 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Sacred Heart Cathedral - Hamilton
Toohey Room, 84 Hunter Street
Newcastle West

Join us to learn more about the CLP Program
Light meals will be provided, and child-minding is available

RSVP:
0411 409 329 - Bro. Bong Ampon 0431 133 583 - Sis. Rose Ampon
0477 741 502 - Bro. Alex Tamonan 0411 081 374 - Sis. Cynthia Tamonan

Parish Group Meetings

Book Club next meeting is Sunday, May 3rd, to discuss *Remarkable Truths of Alfie Bains* by Sarah Clutton. If you would like to participate in book club meetings, please email: newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au



View, Chew, and Chat: You are very welcome to join us on Wednesdays! This coming Wednesday, 6 May, we will look at Parousia chapter 4. To participate, please email the parish office:

newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au

St Joseph's Prayer/Discussion Group resumed on Thursday 30 April at 9.30am, at the Junction Meeting Room. For inquiries phone Janet on 0435 518 671.

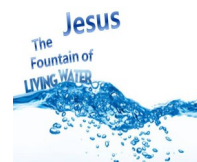


Regular Opportunities for Prayer and Meditation

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



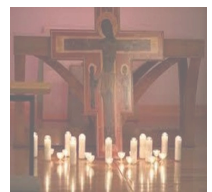
- **Living Waters Meditation Centre** - each Wednesday 7.30am and Friday 11.00am at 34 Kenrick St The Junction



- **The Rosary** - each Wednesday after 7.30am 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.



2026 National Count of Attendance YOU ARE COUNTED ON

This May, the Australian Catholic Church participates in the National Count of Attendance.

Every Parish, every Mass, every body.

Help us accurately plan for the future.



Parish Assembly Update

Thank you everyone who was able to come and take part in the first two sessions of our Assembly process. It was heartwarming to see so many of you sharing your hopes and dreams for the future strategic and intentional direction of the parishes to which we all belong.



The planning committee recently met and, after going through the data we collected in your conversations and feedback, **has decided to postpone session three from 2 May (this weekend) till 13 June (save the date)**. We realised in looking at your feedback that we were missing vital data and needed more time to work on how the next session should and would run.

Following the 13 June session, you will be invited to one further gathering on 12 September to tweak our Parishes' strategic and pastoral plan.

To be honest as a committee, we didn't feel we had moved to a more practical place in the conversations and that you as parishioners needed a bit more time to think about how and where our future direction should lead us. We know what we need; we are just not sure what is a priority in getting there. You were great in naming the goodness of our communities.

You were wonderful at the broad strokes of parish life and had named beautifully what our parish does and should look like. You also identified areas, broadly under which deeper conversations need to be had. Our three headings, from the Synod on Synodality facilitated by Pope Francis, of Participation, Mission and Communion, you genuinely found helpful. You also found of value, the opportunity to be heard in the small groups. It was mentioned the process was simple and that participants generally were not overwhelmed by speaking to the large group, noting that feedback to the wider community would be had.

As parish priest, I realised I need to do more work on information you need to have in relation to the physical challenges our sites present, so that we might deepen more fully the Pastoral planning under the headings of Participation, Mission and Communion we need to implement. That information will help you and me and our Councils set our priorities.

At our two assembly sessions we didn't/you didn't in your conversations, address the 'elephant' in the room, which is Stewardship (money and property) – our prioritising which part of Stewardship, Mission, Participation and Communion our finances or resources would support. My hope was that you would set the agenda for the third phase. We need a bit more time, it would seem, for the conversations

that need to be had.

With that in mind, over the next few weeks you are going to be asked to take part in data gathering in readiness for the 13 June assembly. A few online surveys starting with this week (which you will have received as an email and will appear in our Bulletin) and where you are being asked what you value most in the place you worship: people, place, time. The questions in the next stages of data collection will require a bit of reflective thought and 'big' picture thinking. There will be paper copies on hand for those, like me, who are challenged by the computer! Your generosity in completing the surveys will help our Regional Parish Pastoral Council, Regional Finance Council and the Assembly planning committee continue their valuable work on your behalf.

With warm regards

Fr Greg, Parish Priest

Understanding synodality

The 2021-2024 Synod on Synodality engaged the church around the world in exploring how we can be more welcoming, respectful, curious, participatory, prayerful and missionary. A discussion group at Tighes hill church after 8am Sunday Mass will explain the Synod's Final Document using a resource called: A Feast for All Peoples (52 page book).

24 May - Synodality as a spiritual practice

28 June - Synodality for mission

26 July - Synodality as ecclesial discernment

23 Aug - The Church as prophetic in today's world

Each meeting should take 45 minutes and include: prayer, scripture reflection, a passage from the Synod's Final Document, discernment and discussion. A free copy of the book A Feast for All Peoples will be provided to participants.

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>



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

Diocesan Events

<https://tinyurl.com/cdmnevents>

Called to Know More: Year of St Francis

Tuesday 19 May | 12pm | Diocesan Resource Centre
Special Guest Speaker: **Mark Toohey**

Pope Leo XIV has named 2026 a special year to commemorate the 800th anniversary of St Francis of Assisi's death. Who was St Francis? Why are so many people within and beyond the Church, moved and inspired by him? This event will explore what his life story can teach us about our relationship to each other, the church and the world. Through story and conversation, we will discover the person beneath the plaster saint.

All Welcome. <https://tinyurl.com/CDMNStFrancis>



Laudato Si' Week: 17-24 May 2026

One week. One concrete action. One global response.

Laudato Si' Week is a global Catholic celebration. Inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical *Laudato Si'*, it joins Catholics around the world in renewing our commitment to care for creation. This year the theme is Hope to Action and encourages each of us to take one action during Laudato Si' Week to care for our common home. Catholic Earthcare, in partnership with the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, is pleased to share resources to support your parish to participate.

Download resource: <https://tinyurl.com/CDMNLaudatoSi>



ALIVE Catholic Youth Launch

24 May, Trinity College Adamstown

Witness how the Holy Spirit is moving in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle as we launch ALIVE - a dynamic and exciting event that will showcase a new diocesan identity for young people that seeks to draw them into a personal relationship with Christ they feel confident to share with others. Music will be led by a nationally acclaimed worship team and a number of exciting plans will be announced alongside some good news stories of where ALIVE is already taking shape in schools and parishes. Visit the Diocesan events page to secure your free seat. All ages are welcome.

<https://tinyurl.com/ALIVECDMN>



PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS

*Eternal God,
Through the life of your son, you invited all people to "come and see"*

and to make a home with you.

Through the gift of baptism, you have opened our ears so that, through word and sacrament, we may hear your call in our lives.

We pray that young people may answer this call

to ordained priesthood and shepherd your people,

to the permanent diaconate and proclaim your Gospel,

to religious life and witness poverty, chastity and obedience,

to marriage and embody Christ's love for the Church,

to single life and serve you more completely.

Inspire our lives so that we may have the courage to respond,

"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

We make this prayer through your son, Jesus Christ.

Amen



Diocesan Cursillo 3-day Course

Do you wonder how to be more fully alive? If so, then you may like to consider attending our Cursillo 3-day course. The annual Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle 2026 Cursillo 3 days will be held from 11-14th June at Rathmines with the theme "Joy of the Lord is my strength". Cursillo is a short course which will enrich your faith for the rest of your life. It is Christ-centred, based on gospel values and will be asking each participant "How can I BE Christian in my many everyday environments?" Learn More: <https://tinyurl.com/cdmncursillo>

Marian Talks - Mackillop Parish

Behold Your Mother:

Explaining and Defending the 4 Marian Dogmas

Nationally known speaker Simon Carrington, from Fire Up Ministries, will lead us in looking at:

- Mary, Mother Of God
- Mary's Immaculate Conception
- Mary's Perpetual Virginity
- Mary's Bodily Assumption

Sessions will be on **Fridays** at 7 Milson St Charlestown, commencing with **Holy Rosary at 6:30pm** and the **Talk at 7:00pm:**

8 May, 15 May, 22 May, 29 May

Each session is self-contained, so you can attend any number of sessions.

While not compulsory, a **donation of \$20 per talk** would be appreciated to help cover the donation to the presenter and refreshments.

Marian Consecration Retreat

Saturdays: 2 – 30 May



You are invited to attend a self-directed online Marian Consecration Retreat, facilitated by members of the Newcastle Charismatic Renewal Group, during the **Saturdays of the month of May**.

The sessions will be held at 11am in the Toohey Room (Catholic Diocese of Newcastle Precinct, Newcastle West) for the first week and then the Diocesan Resource Centre, adjacent to the Cathedral, for the remaining weeks.

The retreat is free to attend although you will need to purchase the book to read the daily reflections throughout the 33 days. Please contact **Wayne Caruana on 046 6631 394** or register via the QR Code.



Safeguarding

Role of the Parish Priest in Safeguarding

The Parish Priest has the role of developing the safeguarding implementation plan and actioning strategies which will support the Parish in achieving compliance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards. This role will include:

- endorsing and displaying the *Maitland-Newcastle Diocese Commitment Statement of Safeguarding*;
- the formation of a *Promoters of Safeguarding* group to assist in promoting a safeguarding culture;
- taking the responsibility for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in the Parish;
- identifying potential risks within the Parish and taking steps to eliminate these risks;
- ensuring that there is a link on the Parish internet website that can be accessed by parishioners and the general public on the culture of safety and on suitable links to gain further information on this topic;
- encouraging safeguarding in the Parish as a standing agenda item on the Parish Pastoral Council;
- ensuring that Parish workers / volunteers have access to child protection training and induction processes;
- ensuring Parish outings and events have risk assessments conducted / documented prior to the event;
- completing and managing safeguarding reports in our Parish and ensuring that confidentiality is maintained.



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.

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

RCIA: Contact Mary-Anne at the parish office. Visit our website to fill out the form.

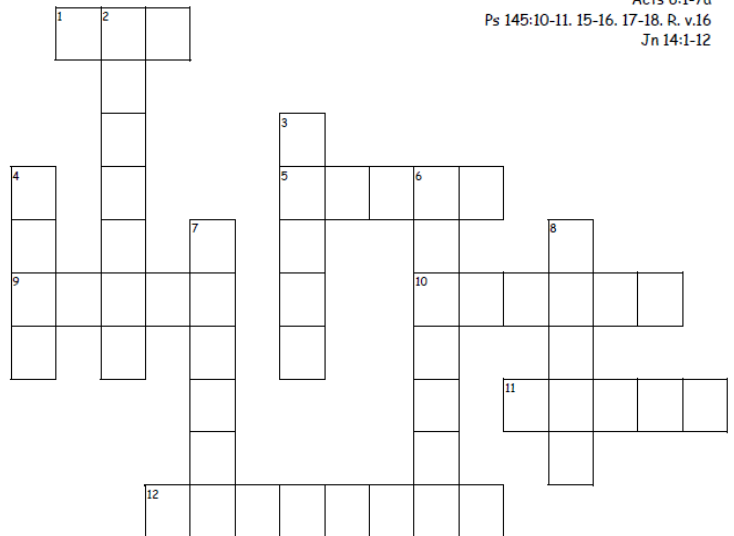
Sacramental Program: Contact Mary-Anne at the Parish Office.

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

CROSSWORD

We are filled with God's spirit

Acts 6:1-7a
Ps 145:10-11, 15-16, 17-18, R. v.16
Jn 14:1-12



Across

- 1: Jesus said 'I am the __ __ , the truth, and the life'
- 5: a house is made of many of these
- 9: belief
- 10: Father, Son and Holy _ _ _ _ _
- 11: between six and eight
- 12: the disciples known as the twelve

Down

- 2: the common language spoken by Jesus
- 3: something that is true
- 4: the opposite of death
- 6: information that is passed on to someone else
- 7: this man wanted Jesus to show them the Father
- 8: someone or something from Greece

Today's Liturgy of the Word

First Reading: Acts 6:1-7

They elected seven men filled with the Spirit and wisdom.



Responsorial Psalm: Ps 32:1-2, 4-5, 18-19. R. v.22

(R.) Lord, let your mercy be on us,
as we place our trust in you.

1. Ring out your joy to the Lord, O you just;
for praise is fitting for loyal hearts.
Give thanks to the Lord upon the harp,
with a ten-stringed lute sing him songs. (R.)
2. For the word of the Lord is faithful
and all his works to be trusted.
The Lord loves justice and right
and fills the earth with his love. (R.)
3. The Lord looks on those who revere him,
on those who hope in his love,
to rescue their souls from death,
to keep them alive in famine. (R.)

Second Reading: 1 Pt 2:4-9

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood.

Gospel Acclamation: Jn 14:6

Alleluia, alleluia!

I am the way, the truth, and the life, says the Lord;
no one comes to the Father, except through me.

Alleluia!

Gospel: Jn 14:1-12

I am the way, the truth, and the life.

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Next Week's Readings

6th Sunday of Easter, Year A

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17

1 Pet 3: 15-18

Jn 14: 15-21



Looking Forward to...



Next Sunday!

Scripture Commentary

The **first reading** paints a picture of the early Christian community quite different from those of preceding Sundays. Earlier we saw a community that was of one mind and one heart. Today we observe tension. Hellenists and Hebrews are divided over the lack of care given Greek widows. This was a practical matter, not a point of doctrine. The reading draws the lines of authority that existed within the community. Peter does not stand as sole leader. Instead, the entire group of apostles addresses the problem. They distinguish between various ministries and they appoint members who will meet the needs brought before them. Furthermore, the community selects those who will exercise the ministry, and the apostles commission them.

Today's **responsorial psalm** opens with an invocation to praise God for the blessings of creation and the care shown to human beings. God is acclaimed as trustworthy and God's word is as firm as is God's own self. It was by this word alone that the universe was created. The psalmist moves from consideration of covenant commitment to that of divine providence. God cares for all who fear the Lord, who stand in awe of and wonder at God's great power and majesty. The Lord looks upon the people, presumably with eyes of compassion and love. Finally, God is characterised as a saviour, one who will deliver them and preserve them in the face of great need.

Using an image from construction, the author of **1 Peter** develops both a Christological theme and an ecclesiological one. He characterises both Christ and Christians as living stones. He seems to be saying that by coming to Christ, the living stone, Christians, as living stones themselves, are built into a spiritual house. Despite being the living stone that gives life, Christ was rejected by human beings. Though so rejected, Christ was chosen by God to be the cornerstone of the building that is constructed out of the living stones that are the Christians. As such, Christ becomes the focus of judgment. Those who believe in him are not put to shame, but those who reject him will stumble in darkness.

In the **gospel** Jesus develops two major theological themes: eschatology and Christology. First, Jesus seeks to strengthen his followers, who appear to be troubled at the thought of his departure. He does not conceal it, but he interprets it in a very positive way. He is indeed leaving, but he is going to the dwelling place of God and he promises to return to get them so that they can be together again. Jesus does not focus on the end of his life, only on the joyful events that will follow it. If his death is his departure and his resurrection is his return, then his union with his followers is the mutual indwelling enjoyed in this life by those united with him.

© Dianne Bergant CSA

Dianne Bergant CSA was a Professor of Biblical Studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, where she taught from 1978 to 2014. She holds a BS in Elementary Education from Marian College, Fond du Lac, WI; an MA and PhD in Biblical Languages and Literature from St Louis University.