

A Pastoral Note...

As my annual leave and overseas travels draws ever closer, I've been spending some time continuing to put things in place for while I am away. I haven't, as yet, found a priest for the third and fourth weekends I am away, and I down to the very last options, but I haven't given up hope just yet.

Other things, however, have seen more success. The basic outline of the bulletins for the four weeks I am away have been put in place, and I've made arrangements for them to be posted to the website as usual (which thankfully is easy to do from the other side of the world).

There is one thing, however, that will require the assistance of parishioners, particularly from Gresford and Clarence Town: **getting the printed bulletins from the Parish Office at Dungog to the right church.**

For the first two weekends, Fr Greg will not be staying at the presbytery, and so it will be vital for someone to collect the little case that I normally carry with me from the Parish Office on the Friday before and then return it if Fr Greg doesn't take it with him back to Dungog.

Depending on what arrangements can be put in place for the third and fourth weekends it might also be necessary for locals from the two centres to do the same.

So I would like locals from Gresford and Clarence Town to work out amongst yourselves who will take responsibility each week for attending to this particular aspect of parish life. It would be appreciated if the local who will undertake this role lets the Parish Office know who will be coming.

Have a blessed week...

Fr Andrew

Baptisms This Week

We welcome **Carter Drinkwater**, together with his family and friends, as we celebrate his Baptism at St Mary's on Sunday.

The Catholic Parishes of Dungog & Gresford recognize we stand upon the traditional country of Gringai clan of the Worimi people, who have walked upon and cared for this country for thousands of years.

We acknowledge their cultural heritage, beliefs and deep spiritual attachment and relationship to this country. We pay our respects to their Elders—past, present, and emerging—and commit ourselves to working together for reconciliation and justice.

Make A Difference During August

CatholicCare's Community Kitchens offer more than just a meal. With the assistance of volunteers, CatholicCare has created a space where people can feel safe and enjoy the company of others and access other services if needed.

CatholicCare asks you to consider making a gift to their *Make a Difference Appeal* to assist in continuing to feed and connect people through CatholicCare's Community Kitchens and other non-funded programs.

CatholicCare's programs really do make a difference in the local community, but they cannot do this work without the generosity of the broader community. A tax-deductible donation will go a long way.

Donating is easy and only takes a few simple steps. Visit www.mycause.com.au/page/318856/make-a-difference.

Catholic Theological College—Information Session Online

The Catholic Theological College offers an Graduate Certificate in Teaching Meditation, a three unit course that can be complete online.

The course is designed for those seeking to learn the methods and skills of teaching meditation and meditative prayer in a variety of situations including primary and secondary schools, parishes, hospitals and other settings.

The course includes the history and practice of meditation and *lectio divina* and provides an opportunity for students to reflect on their own spiritual gifts.

An online information session will take place on Monday 4 September at 7.30pm. Registration for the session is essential and can be made by going to bit.ly/3qzMTfh. More information about the Graduate Certificate can be found by going to bit.ly/3OVhahR.

'Come Rest A While' Reflection Day

In appreciation and interested Christian Initiation ministers, 'Come rest a while' is an opportunity to listen, reflect, and get to know other ministers. This year's reflection day will take place on **Saturday 9 September** at Charlestown, commencing at 10am and finishing 3.30pm. Morning tea and lunch is provided.

More details and registration is available at bit.ly/44BV6hM.

For enquiries or registration assistance, contact Sharon Murphy: phone 4979 1134, or email sharon.murphy@mn.catholic.org.au

HOMILY by Richard Leonard

One bright Sunday morning, everyone in the town got up early and went to the local church. Before Mass started, the townspeople were sitting in their pews and talking about their lives, their families.

Suddenly, Satan appeared at the front of the church. Everyone started screaming and running for the front entrance, trampling each other in a frantic effort to get away from the devil incarnate. Soon everyone was evacuated from the Church, except for one elderly lady who sat calmly in her pew, not moving, seemingly oblivious to the fact that Satan was in her presence.

Now this confused Satan a bit, so he walked up to the older lady and said,

'Don't you know who I am?'

The woman replied, 'I sure do.'

Satan asked, 'Aren't you afraid of me?'

'No, certainly not' said the woman.

Satan was a little perturbed at this and queried, 'Why aren't you afraid of me?'

The woman calmly replied, 'Because I've been married to your brother for 48 years.'

Until quite recently in many cultures around the world events or experiences that had no ready explanation were put down to evil forces. This was certainly true in Jesus' day. Diseases, physical deformities, mental illnesses, accidents, bad weather patterns and defeats in battle were attributed either to God's vengeance or the work of a demon. Although we no longer hold this to be true, we still hear this line from some people today.

The Syro-Phoenician woman considers herself cursed for having a daughter who is tormented by a demon. It is very unlikely that her daughter is possessed by the devil. She probably had a chronic illness that could not be cured. Furthermore, the woman is also considered cursed by others because she is a Gentile, a non-Jew. In fact this story is unsettling and rather unflattering to Jesus on several levels.

Because of her ethnicity and religion the disciples do not think she should ask for anything from Jesus. He seems to concur with them. If it wasn't for the woman's courage and persistence, she would never have got what she wanted. And by Jesus referring to them as dogs, he seems to agree with the contempt with which the Jews held the Gentiles.

Again it is the woman's quick wit and faith which turns the situation around. She domesticates the racial slur and argues that if she is to be considered a dog she is not a wild one but of the house variety where she should be able to enjoy the left-

overs. The power of her insight and the rightness of her cause catches Jesus off-guard, her daughter is healed and everyone is taught a lesson about how the Kingdom of God breaks through in the most extraordinary ways.

This story also tells us of the power of intercessory prayer. The woman goes through her ordeal not for herself but for her daughter. Her faith in Jesus is the vehicle by which someone else's life is enriched. So too for us. As Christians many of us regularly tell others, whom we know are in need, that we will pray for them. Often these people, some who do not share our faith, are touched by this kindness.

When we make our prayer intercessory, either at home or in the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass, it can be our finest hour. We can learn a lot about a parish from its intercessions. It can be the time when we forget about ourselves and our needs for a while and ask for the needs of someone else, even if we don't know them. This type of prayer has the possibility of helping us place our lives in context and reminding us that while we have a seat at the world's table, others are at our feet scavenging for scraps.

The best prayer reminds us that we have to get down and get dirty and work to raise up all of God's children to the places of honour which everyone deserves.

© Richard Leonard SJ

Richard Leonard SJ is the Director of the Australian Catholic Office for Film and Broadcasting, is a member of the Australian Catholic Media Council and a film critic for all the major Australian Catholic newspapers. He completed a PhD in cinema studies at the University of Melbourne. He lectures in cinema and theology at the Jesuit College of Spirituality and has been a visiting lecturer in Australian cinema at the University of Melbourne, a visiting scholar within the School of Theatre, Film and Television at UCLA and is visiting professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Catholic University, has lectured widely and is the author of numerous books.

"Great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish."

Matthew 15:28



The Parish Diary (for the week ahead)

20th Week in Ordinary Time

Monday 21 August

Memorial of St Pius X

Tuesday 22 August

Memorial of the Queenship of the Blessed Virgin

Wednesday 23 August

5.30pm Mass @ Dungog

Thursday 24 August

Feast of St Bartholomew

9.30am Mass @ East Gresford

Friday 25 August

9.30am Mass @ Dungog

Saturday 26 August

5.30pm Mass @ East Gresford

Sunday 27 August

21st Sunday in Ordinary Time

8am Mass @ Clarence Town

9.30am Mass @ Dungog

Today's Liturgy:

1st Reading Isaiah 56:1, 6-7

Psalm Psalm 66

O God, let all the nations praise you!

2nd Reading Romans 11:13-15, 29-32

Acclamation Matthew 4:23

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus preached the Good News of the kingdom and healed all who were sick.

Alleluia!

Gospel Matthew 15:21-28

Memorial Acclamation

When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for August: "We pray the World Youth Day in Lisbon will help young people to live and witness the Gospel in their own lives."

SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT

This passage is the second of a group of three stories that make up Chapter 15 of Matthew's Gospel. The first story shows Jesus challenging traditional views of cleanliness and uncleanness – one of the great separators between Jews and Gentiles. The story in this week's gospel follows with its account of the Canaanite woman's great faith being recognised. Finally, Matthew relates the story of the feeding of the four thousand – a dramatic sign by Jesus of the open invitation to receive his message and ministry. The three stories, taken together, form a powerful chapter that makes clear that the message of Jesus is not exclusively for the Jews.

Morning Tea at Dungog

The next morning tea at Dungog will be held after the 9.30am Mass today (20 August). Please stay and join us for good food, good company, and good conversation.

Safeguarding in our Parishes means ...

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: by phoning 4979 1390 or emailing childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au.

Visit the Office of Safeguarding website for further information www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au

In Your Charity, Please Pray for:

Those Who Have Died:

Those Whose Anniversary of Death Is In August: Luxton Walker, Connie Gibson, Gladys Garner, Selena Smith, Mary Sonter, Margaret Muddle, Fay Farrow, Barbara King, Reg West, Harrison Walters, Jack Jordan, Jean Taylor, Jim Riches, Ron Jones, Margaret Kelly, Joan McMullen, Lou Dillon, Terry Shiel, John Rose, Norma Preece, Laurie Williams, Denis Cavanough, Margaret French, Jean Kenney, Shirley Wade, Allen Kearns, Tony Townsend, Molly Turner.

Those Who Are Sick: Maryann Smith, Daphne Bond, Maree McCulloch, Leonie Young, Lisa Reid, Bev Herbert, Denise Wenden, Warren Wade, Irene Robinson, Ray Tonkin (Qld), Luke Barry, Kathie Maynard, Kevin Ward, Brian Holstein, David Loudon, Michaela Brown, Phillip Hartup, Bella Duggan, Ella Rusak, Peter Byron, Peter Rooke, Graham McCarthy, Matthew Kerr.