



Dungog & Gresford Parishes

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

Incorporating worshipping communities at **St Mary's Church**, Brown Street, Dungog, **St Patrick's Church**, Rifle Street, Clarence Town, **St Helen's Church**, Park Street, East Gresford, **Sacred Heart Church**, Summerhill Road, Summer Hill via Vacy, and serving the surrounding districts.

SUNDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2023

24TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A

Parish Staff

Fr Andrew Doohan (*Parish Priest*)
Kerry Copus (*Parish Secretary*)

Presbytery & Parish Office

55 Brown Street, Dungog
PO Box 24, Dungog NSW 2420

P: (02) 4992 1477

E: dungog.parish@mn.catholic.org.au

W: www.dungoggresfordcatholic.org.au

Emergency contact for Fr Andrew: 0412 405 671.

Office Hours

The Parish Office is staffed on Tuesdays from 10am until 2pm & Fridays from 10am until 1pm.

Parish Bulletin

Items for inclusion in the Parish Bulletin should be received at the Parish Office by 5pm on Wednesdays. Copies of the Bulletin are available from the Parish website and are updated weekly.

Other Contacts

Clarence Town Val Preece—0403 251 434,
 (02) 4996 4474, or email
 vip_1@bigpond.com

Gresford Faith Banister
 0427 536 248

Safeguarding Promotion

For all safeguarding concerns within the parishes, please contact Fr Andrew in the first instance at the Parish Office (or mobile in emergencies).

Parish School

St Joseph's Primary School
49 Brown Street, Dungog NSW 2420
Mrs Lisa McNeilly (*Principal*)

P: (02) 4992 1377

E: admin@dungog.catholic.edu.au

W: www.dungog.catholic.edu.au



Sacraments of Initiation for Children

All the online modules are now available any for children wishing to complete their journey to full Christian Initiation. Enrolment into the process is as simple as filling out an online form available on the Parishes' website—visit bit.ly/3NuMAv7 for all the details.

For children who might not yet be baptised, or who were baptised in other church traditions, the journey is slightly different and will require some additional steps. The best place to start a conversation about this is by contacting Fr Andrew.

Please pass this information on to anyone who might find it helpful.

Australian Bishops' Social Justice Statement

The 2023-2024 Social Justice Statement from the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference has been released.

Entitled *Listen, Learn Love: A New Engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, the Statement calls “all the People of God to embrace a new engagement...which involves a commitment to listen to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sisters and brothers and to learn from them”.

The Statement can be downloaded from our website by visiting bit.ly/3OMAKFn.

For those without internet access who may wish to obtain a copy, please contact the Parish Office who will happily print a copy for you.

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.

National Catholic Safeguarding Standards

Parishioners may be aware that over the next few months, the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle is being audited against its compliance with the National Catholic Safeguarding Standards.

Our Director of Safeguarding, Sean Tynan, has recorded a short 15-minute presentation designed to let parishioners know about the audit process and, for those parishes who will be audited, what they can expect. That presentation can be found by going to bit.ly/3K5VOvo.

Although our own parishes are not being audited on this occasion, parishioners might be interested in knowing more about the audit process and the standards against which we might be audited in the future.

Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle Marriage Tribunal

Can we help you? The Church is aware of the stresses with marriage breakdown and divorce, and understands that many people have questions about the processes which might allow a divorced person to remarry in the Catholic Church. If you have any questions or would like to have a confidential chat about your situation, please contact Jane at the Tribunal on 4979 1370.

Homily by Richard Leonard SJ

Charged with the rape and murder of a young woman, it only took the jury twenty minutes to return a guilty verdict for the three men in the dock. The courtroom erupted in cheers as the verdict was read out.

As the men were being led out of the courtroom the mother of two of them ran toward the dock yelling, 'I think what you've done is despicable, but I want you to know that I love you.'

Outside the courthouse, the media were expecting the parents of the victim to advocate capital punishment for the criminals. Instead, they said they wanted to forgive the perpetrators of this vicious crime. Everyone listened in disbelief.

No one at that courthouse was running away from the heinous nature of the crimes, nor from the punishment the men deserved, but the parents involved chose to focus on either love or forgiveness.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us we should forgive each other seventy-seven times. Numbers are not randomly used in the Bible. 1, 3, 7, 12 and 40 all have specific meanings. To number something as seven is to describe it as being perfect. When we hear Jesus use this phrase we recall the story in the Book of Genesis of the seven days of creation where, on the seventh day, God looks at the result of his creative love and sees that it is very good. Jesus, using some shorthand, says that not only is forgiveness good, but that it is a creative act that gives life to the world and gives glory to those who exercise it.

In the 5th Century St Augustine said that forgiveness was like a mother who has two wonderful daughters named justice and compassion. In using such a metaphor Augustine knew that forgiveness was not a once-off event, it was a process that involved other virtues as well. Jesus teaches a similar lesson in today's Gospel, where he uses the image of the King settling his debts. Because the King is just, compassionate and forgiving, he rightly expects that, in turn, his steward will be so as well.

It's easy to be forgiving in the big picture. We can preach strongly about war, peace and reconciliation. It's quite another to forgive those closest to us. Sometimes the hardest place to be compassionate and just is our own home. If we are not speaking to a husband, wife, child, parent, sibling or friend then today's Gospel has a strong challenge right where we live.

Part of the problem is that we could have accepted the film *Love Story*'s motto, 'Love means never having to say you're sorry'. This idea is many things, but it's not Christian. For followers

of Jesus the exact opposite is true. We seek opportunities to forgive and ask for forgiveness.

Jesus doesn't tell us that forgiveness is easy, just necessary. To forgive someone in our family, our workplace, our circle of friends or in our Church is not to pretend that a sinful situation did not occur, but to face it head on and demand justice with compassion.

For when we stand before God with the weakness and sinfulness of our own life, God will not settle old scores, take revenge and exact retribution. Rather God will be perfectly just and completely compassionate. When we choose forgiveness over revenge, and love over hate we begin to glimpse God's creative goodness coming to perfection in us, because forgiveness is a participation in the very heart of God.

© 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.



Have you thought?

The parable sees the unforgiving servant putting his fellow servant in prison 'until he paid back the debt'. This is almost exclusively what prisons were used for until only a few hundred years ago. When a person could not repay a debt, they were held in prison until the debt was paid. Of course, being in prison, they had little opportunity to repay the debt themselves and relied on friends and relatives to repay the debt on their behalf. To pay someone's debt was to 'redeem' them. The earliest ideas of Christ as a 'Redeemer' were based on the idea of Christ paying a debt on behalf of humankind.

The Parish Diary (for the week ahead)

24th Week in Ordinary Time

Monday 18 September

Tuesday 19 September

Wednesday 20 September

Memorial of Sts Andrew Kim Tae-gŏn, Paul Chŏng Ha-sang & companions.

Thursday 21 September

Feast of St Matthew

Friday 22 September

Saturday 23 September

Memorial of St Pius of Pietrelcina

5.30pm Liturgy of the Word @ East Gresford

Sunday 24 September

25th Sunday in Ordinary Time

8am Liturgy of the Word @ Clarence Town

9.30am Liturgy of the Word @ Dungog

Today's Liturgy:

1st Reading Sirach 27:30—28:7

Psalm Psalm 102

The Lord is kind and merciful; slow to anger and rich in compassion.

2nd Reading Romans 14:7-9

Acclamation John 13:34

Alleluia, alleluia!

I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you.

Alleluia!

Gospel Matthew 18:21-35

Memorial Acclamation

We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

Morning Tea at Dungog

The next morning tea at Dungog will be held after the 9.30am Mass today (17 September). Please stay and join us for good food, good company, and good conversation.

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for September:

"We pray for those persons living on the margins of society, in inhumane life conditions; may they not be overlooked by institutions and never considered of lesser importance."

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

GOSPEL FOCUS

How many times?

Peter says, 'How many times should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Peter probably thought that he was being pretty generous. The religious law of his time required people to forgive three times, so by suggesting seven times, Peter would have thought that he was really going the extra mile. To forgive someone seven times is a pretty big call. But the number seven has great significance in scripture; it is regarded as a number of perfection. Peter is suggesting that there is an ideal number of times that one should forgive. Jesus blows this out of the water by saying, take that perfect number of times and multiply it by seventy. There is no perfect number of times to forgive.

In Your Charity, Please Pray for:

Those Who Have Died:

Those Whose Anniversary of Death Is In September: Annie & Brian Maurer, Peggy Brennan, Godfrey Barry, Tony O'Hearn, Fr Brian Quillinan, Pat Byron, Marjory Neilson, Ivy Hinton, Arthur Sonter, Ron Neilson, Fr Peter Quirk, Tony & Mary Maurer, Kath Morrow, Frances Amy Young, Rowland Young and Dennis Melmouth, Dot Shurrey, Mary Moylan, Norm Barham, Eileen Godwin, Warren Trappel, Lachlan Tindall (Clarence Town), Brian Byron, Margaret Moule, John Melmeth, Beryl Cooper, Paul Evans.

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.