



Dungog & Gresford Parishes

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

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.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER, YEAR B

28 APRIL 2024

Parish Staff

Fr Andrew Doohan (*Parish Priest*)
Deacon Solomon Okovido (*In Residence*)
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

Emergency contact for Fr Andrew: 0412 405 671

Office Hours

Tuesdays 10am-2pm

Fridays 10am-1pm

Other Contacts

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

Gresford Faith Banister
0427 536 248

Parish School

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

P: (02) 4992 1377

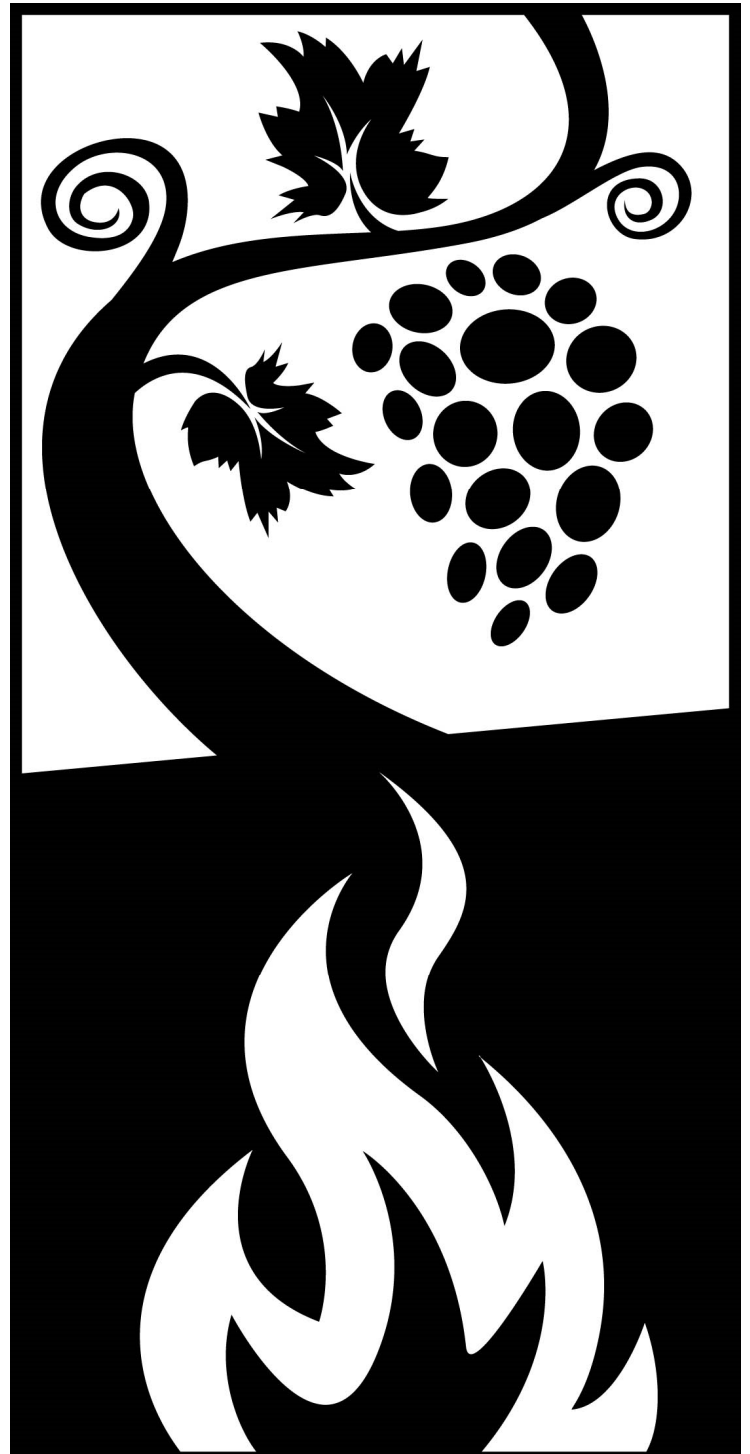
E: admin@dungog.catholic.edu.au

W: www.dungog.catholic.edu.au

Parish Bulletin is published each Sunday. Items for inclusion should be received at the Parish Office by 5pm on Wednesdays. Copies of the Bulletin are available from the Parish website which is updated weekly.

Parish Website is updated regularly with copies of the bulletin and other information, and is found at www.dungoggresfordcatholic.org.au.

Safeguarding Promotion For all safeguarding concerns within the parishes, please contact Fr Andrew.



Welcome to Bishop Michael

We welcome Bishop Michael to our parishes this weekend as he joins us across our three parish Masses. We hope that Bishop Michael's first visit with us will encourage him to return—often!—to experience the hospitality and welcome of Dungog & Gresford.

There will be an opportunity to 'meet & greet' Bishop Michael after each of our Sunday Masses:

East Gresford: after Mass, we will adjourn to the Gresford Bowls Sport & Recreation Club, where you can join Bishop Michael for a drink or a meal in the bistro.

Clarence Town: we'll share a 'cuppa' in the usual manner after Mass.

Dungog: we'll share a 'cuppa' in the usual manner after Mass.



Mass Count During May

The Diocese has asked for a count of mass attendances across the weekends of May.

This is not anything new in one sense; it's a time in the diocese's life when we have undertaken such counts in the past and we are returning to this practice.

"Counter's Record Form" will be distributed to each of the churches this weekend, and it would be appreciated if someone in each locality could take responsibility for undertaking the required count each week at the same time during the Mass (for the sake of consistency), completing the Record Form, and sending it back to the Parish Office.

I will compile the records across the month, and then submit the collected data at the end of the month.

My thanks for everyone's assistance across the month.

Fr Andrew

Children's Sacramental Initiation 2024

Children wishing to complete their journey to full Christian Initiation are now able to begin that journey for 2024.

All the information required—including the online enrolment form—can be found on our website at bit.ly/3NuMAv7.

The celebration of Confirmation for this cohort will take place on **Friday 25 October 2024** at 6.30pm.

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

Is It Time To Reintroduce Collections?

The advent of COVID way back when brought a number of changes when we were eventually able to reopen our churches.

One of those was not passing the collection plates from hand to hand, and instead leaving them somewhere convenient for people to place their donations in.

It's been suggested that it might be time to bring back the former practice—and so your feedback on whether we should or shouldn't would be very much appreciated by the end of April.

There are other additional options for contributing to the financial support of the Parish—via the Mass App on the phone or direct debit, for example. If you would like to explore these options, please contact the Parish Office.

Change to Parish Office Hours

At the request of our Parish Secretary, Kerry Copus, please note that there will be a change in the Parish Office staffing hours from the beginning of May 2024.

From 1 May 2024, the Parish Office will be staffed on **Tuesdays** (from 10am to 1pm) and **Fridays** (from 10am to 1pm).

Alleluia!!

The Catholic Parishes of Dungog & Gresford acknowledge the Gringai clan of the Worimi people and their deep and abiding attachment to the land on which we live and work.

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

Homily by Fr Richard Leonard SJ

Until I spent time on a vineyard ten years ago, I always heard the parable of the vinedresser as a tough, 'shape up or ship out' message. I always imagined God as the vinedresser having a field day lopping and cutting my dead branches, trimming my unproductive stems and uprooting all the rot that undermines my fruitfulness. It always felt like a violent activity.

It was a pleasant surprise then, to actually see a vinedresser in action. Far from an act of violence, the care paid by the dresser to each stem is extraordinary. He or she carefully inspects the branch, delicately cutting only the smallest amount so that the vine will be healthier and more productive. A good vinedresser pores over the vines and from experience knows that to cut too much or too little will render the vine without its distinctive character. Every cut is measured and aimed to prune back only the diseased branch, so as to bring about greater growth for the whole vine and a bigger yield for the vineyard. The vinedresser is not violent with the vine, but extremely tender. The first hearers of today's Gospel would have known that this metaphor is anything but a 'shape up or ship out' message.

This parable is a profound insight into the Christian life. We can claim to belong to the Christian family all we like. We can come to Mass every Sunday. But if the fruit we produce is bitter and poisonous, if we are unforgiving, unjust and uncaring, we cannot claim to be on the vine of Christ's love. And if that's the case we are in desperate need of the gentle hand of the vinedresser, who only wants to see us bring forth the yield we are capable of achieving.

Rev Billy Graham once said, 'Being a member of the Church no more makes you a Christian than living in a garage makes you a car.' That's the point of today's Gospel: God will not judge us by what we say or the public face of goodness we can turn on, we will be judged by our acts of love in and through our kindness and compassion.

This metaphor also reminds us that we are connected to each other. There are moments in our life of faith when we hear or see other Christians saying or doing things we cannot countenance. We can try to disown them by retreating into our denomination, but we are all connected in Christ's vineyard. We need the courage to tell them the truth as we see it, and charitably point out the problems we have with what they think is right. And we need the humility to listen when they challenge us.

It's even harder when the diseased part of the vine is in our own Catholic section of the vineyard.

Our first instinct can be to lop off the branch, just to get rid of it. But as any vinedresser knows this is the last resort. Whether we find it easy or not, Christ calls us to limited surgical interventions over amputations every time. This is tough love. Even though there are people within our community who have committed terrible crimes and betrayed our trust, the Gospel calls us to hold on to them until it's clear that no matter what intervention we make, they are dying on Christ's vine already. And even then, we hope and pray that our action towards them might see a new growth within them which could be the beginning of a possible grafting back on to us in the future.

In the face of the world's 'shape up or ship out' principle, today's Gospel challenges us to hang in there with each other, in season and out of season, because as the old folk hymn sings, 'They'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love. Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.'

© 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.

SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT

In context

The imagery that Jesus used in his parables and in extended metaphors such as the one used in this week's gospel sometimes seems a little foreign to a 21st Century audience. However, the world in which Jesus lived and taught was dominated by small scale farmers and producers in an agrarian economy. His use of images such as 'shepherd', 'vine', 'tenants', 'farmers' and 'wineskins' would all have been immediately recognisable to his audience. They would also have appreciated much more than we do the subtlety of Jesus' use of such images when he twists them in an unexpected way.

The Parish Diary (for the week ahead)

Fifth Week of Easter

Monday 29 April

Memorial of St Catherine of Sienna

Tuesday 30 April

8.30am Mass @ Dungog

Wednesday 1 May

Thursday 2 May

Memorial of St Athanasius

9.30am Mass @ East Gresford

Friday 3 May

Feast of Sts Philip and James

Saturday 4 May

10am Baptism @ Clarence Town

5.30pm Mass @ East Gresford

Sunday 5 May

Sixth Sunday of Easter

8am Mass @ Clarence Town

9.30am Mass @ Dungog

Today's Liturgy:

1st Reading Acts 9:26-31

Psalm Psalm 21

I will praise you, Lord, in the assembly of the people.

2nd Reading 1 John 3:18-24

Acclamation John 15:4-5

Alleluia, alleluia!

Live in me and let me live in you, says the Lord; my branches bear much fruit.

Alleluia!

Gospel John 15:1-8

Memorial Acclamation

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

Baptisms This Week

We welcome **Clay Allen**, together with his family and friends, as we celebrate his Baptism next Saturday at 10am in St Patrick's, Clarence Town.

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for April: "Let us pray that the dignity and worth of women be recognised in every culture, and for an end to the discrimination they face in various parts of the world."

LIVING THE GOSPEL

Bearing fruit

The vinedresser of this passage cuts away the dead branches and prunes back those that are not bearing fruit. In what way do we bear fruit? When we strive to reach our fullest potential in whatever we do, we bear fruit. When we act out of motivation for the other person rather than ourselves, we bear fruit. When we strive to bring about the reign of God in our small part of the world, we bear fruit. Sometimes we too need to have some of our thoughts and actions pruned so that we might better bear the fruit that we are truly capable of producing.

Safeguarding in our Parishes means ...

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults is important.

Our Catholic Parishes of Dungog & Gresford are committed to fostering communities of safety and care.

We acknowledge our legal, moral, and spiritual responsibilities to care for and uphold the dignity and rights of children, young people, and vulnerable adults.

Rejoice!!

In Your Charity, Please Pray for:

Those Who Have Died:

Those Whose Anniversary of Death Is In April:

Bede Gehrig, Ruth Jones, Lenore McDermott, Paula Murphy, Robert Holdom, Dorothy Bowtell, Rex Garland, Bruno Rocco, Herbert John Preece, Allie Allen, Peter Allen, Tom O'Driscoll, Paddy Kilpinen, Bill Tyne, Neil Faber, Lyn Barry, Michael Flanagan, Paul Cooper.

Those Who Are Sick: Maryann Smith, Daphne Bond, Maree McCulloch, Leonie Young, Lisa Reid, Bev Herbert, Warren Wade, Irene Robinson, Luke Barry, Kathie Maynard, Kevin Ward, David Loudon, Michaela Brown, Phillip Hartup, Anne Newman, Graham McCarthy, Keith Edwards, Otilie Sheens, Lyn Kerr, Neville Barry, Susan Barlow.