



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.

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, YEAR C

12 JANUARY 2025

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Parish Bulletin: 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: 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.



A Pastoral Note...

This Sunday's celebration of the Lord's Baptism represents the end of the Season of Christmas—as it does each and every year.

On Monday, Ordinary Time resumes for the first time in 2025 and will run for slightly longer than usual because Easter is about as late as it can be this year. And I've said it before but it bears repeating: there's nothing ordinary about Ordinary Time!

One of the beautiful aspects of Ordinary Time, something that becomes obvious when reading the text of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, is that it contains the unfolding of the 'complete' contents of Divine Revelation. It is, for those who wish to be baptised as adults, the 'curriculum' of catechesis that they engage with and reflect upon as they discern their readiness to be baptised.

And for those of us who are already baptised, Ordinary Time, by far the largest season of the Liturgical Year, brings with it the opportunity year by year to rediscover the wonders of our faith by hearing, reflecting, and celebrating these facets of the faith that re-presented week by week.

While the Liturgical Year features many fabulous Feasts and solemn Seasons, most of the 'heavy lifting' of communicating God's salvation through Jesus Christ falls to the weeks of Ordinary Time.

I mention all of this in the context of the Jubilee Year that we are currently entering. As it unfolds God's saving message for us week-by-week and day-by-day, Ordinary Time provides us with the perfect opportunity to hear the promise of hope that comes with God's saving message.

This year, as we deepen our faith through hearing, reflecting, and celebrating God's continuing presence to us, God's People, I pray that we might be inspired to a joyful hope in things yet unseen, in things yet unfulfilled.

And, more significantly in this Jubilee Year, I pray that as we become more hope-filled and joyful people of faith, we might become Pilgrims of Hope stepping out into our world and sharing the hope and joy that comes from that lively faith with others in the world.

Have a blessed—and a hope-filled—week...

Fr Andrew

Rejoice!!

Finding A New Patronal Name

The search for a new patron for a new parish has begun!

If you would like to suggest the name of a saint to potentially become the patron of the 'Catholic Parish of Dungog Gresford', please do so in writing. It would be helpful to provide a little bit of information about your proposed saint and tell us why you think your saint is a good choice.

A list of the current patronal names used across the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, which you may like to avoid, can be found on our website under the 'Resources' tab of the main menu.

A reminder that the patronal names already in use within the two parishes are not available.

Please lodge your submission to Fr Andrew by the end of February 2025.



Lenten Program 2025

As previously advised, it's time now to think about whether you would like to participate in a Lenten Group during 2025 or, alternatively, you would like to undertake the Lenten journey of reflection by yourself.

Next week, 'sign up' sheets will be available in our churches on which you can indicate your wishes for either approach so the Parish can ensure it orders enough resources for everyone who wishes to join in.

An initial order has been made, which should be sufficient, but if we need to order more that would be best done by the middle of February at the latest.

So give it some thought and be ready to 'sign up' from next Sunday.

Homily by Richard Leonard

These days there are some young Catholic parents who wonder whether baptism is the proper thing for them to seek for their children. One argument they sometimes offer is that it would be better to defer baptism until their child reaches adulthood and then he or she has the opportunity to choose it. As appealing as this argument might seem on the surface, the problem is that the reasoning behind it is so inconsistently applied.

Young Catholic parents do not give their children any choice about eating vegetables, learning to read or write and living out a moral code. They enforce these things because they know that nutrition, literacy and ethics are essential for adulthood. If we recognise that, from birth, a child has spiritual as well as educational, moral and physical needs, it strikes me as inconsistent to relegate this constitutively otherworldly element of a child's character to a 'must be decided on later' category.

Baptism is not brainwashing. Adults can come and go from the practise of their faith as they feel drawn. Sadly for us, they can even choose against belief. To grow up, however, with no religious foundation or no basis on which to make spiritual choices seems to limit freedom rather than promote it. In our culture baptism of infants by their parents is an entirely proper thing to do.

In today's Gospel we hear that Jesus was baptised by John in the Jordan because it was 'the proper thing to do'.

This can seem all quaintly odd to us today because we seem to accept that our only convention is to flout convention. The done thing today is to undo what we've done before.

We hold very strongly, however, to the idea that God always does the 'proper thing'. It's called 'appropriateness' in theology. We believe, for example, that God decided it was proper to become incarnate when he did, how he did and where he did. Over the centuries there's been endless debate about what would've happened if the Word had come to us as a woman, in another era, on another continent. While these are interesting enough matters on which to speculate, they are not what God thought proper – or what, in fact, happened.

In line with the right action of God, Jesus does the proper thing in being baptised by John's baptism of repentance, even though he had nothing of which to repent. Jesus is not simply baptised, however, simply because it was expected of him, just a fulfilment of his duty. Jesus' experience of baptism starts with John's baptism as an

admission of guilt and then reveals that baptism is primarily about the Father's love. To this day our baptismal ritual holds these two realities in a healthy tension. When we are baptised in Christ, we acknowledge both Original Sin and Original Grace. God's love comes alive in us even though we are aware of how far from that love we stray.

The Baptism of Jesus and every baptism done in his name ever since, is the moment when we hold together the greatness of God's love, that calls each of us by name to be his son or daughter, with the reality of our human frailty. What more appropriate way of welcoming anyone into the world than having a community of frail, human believers initiate its members by reminding them that Original Sin does not have the last word. For those of us baptised in Christ, the Father's love always and everywhere has the final, appropriate say on every matter.

May this Eucharist make us worthy of the love lavished on us in baptism and give us the courage to keep doing the appropriate things for the coming generations.

© 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.

Historical Context Baptism

John makes clear to the people that the baptism he performs is with water but the baptism by Jesus is with the Holy Spirit. John preached a baptism of repentance. In keeping with his Jewish tradition, John called upon the people to make a public declaration of their wrong-doing and commitment to be washed clean of this sinfulness and desire to live in right relationship with God and others. The baptism to which he refers is the complete change of heart and mind that comes through the Holy Spirit and results from a person accepting the message of Jesus.

Today's Liturgy:

Scripture Readings: 1st Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; 2nd Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7; **Gospel** Luke 3:15-16, 21-22.

Responsorial Psalm: O, bless the Lord, my soul!

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! John said: He who is to come is mightier than I; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. Alleluia!

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

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

1st Week in Ordinary Time, Year I

Monday 13 January

Tuesday 14 January

8.30am Mass @ Dungog

Wednesday 15 January

8.30am Mass @ Dungog

Thursday 16 January

9.30am Mass @ East Gresford

Friday 17 January

Memorial of St Anthony

9.30am Mass @ Dungog

Saturday 18 January

5.30pm Mass @ East Gresford

Sunday 19 January

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C

8am Mass @ Clarence Town

9.30am Mass @ Dungog

In Your Charity, Please Pray for:

Those Who Have Died: Jay Dillon, Margaret Gippel.

Those Whose Anniversary of Death Is In January:

Bob Copus, Josie Gibson, Bill Taylor, Donald & Hope Lord, Kevin Byron, Noreen Lucas, Joan Riches, Michael Curry, Mary Neilson, Michael Bede Holstein, Maureen Reynold, Len Trappel, Patrick Dooley, Rufie Bunt, Eileen Moore, Andrew Whelan, Merv Clayden, Norah Studdert, Jack Gehrig, George Maurer, Eileen Lane, John Smith, Fr Allan Curry, Reginald Peter Wilson, Joseph Watson, Aveen Watson, Edith Thomas, Pauline Thomas, Fr Martin Jackubas, Michael Denko, Marea Cox, Janet Lambert.

Those Who Are Sick: Maryann Smith, Daphne Bond, 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, Neville Barry, Susan Barlow, Allwyn Gippel, Christine Elliott, Jean Robertson, Jessica Byron, George Bainou, Gwen Trappel, Chantal Sneddan.



The Catholic Parishes of Dungog & Gresford acknowledge the people of the Worimi and Wonnarua, on whose traditional lands we gather, live and work. We acknowledge their continuing deep and abiding attachment to the land.

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.

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for January:

Together with Pope Francis, this month we pray:

"Let us pray for migrants, refugees and those affected by war, that their right to an education, which is necessary to build a better world, might always be respected."

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 by emailing childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au. Visit the Office of Safeguarding website for further information www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au.