

The Voice

23rd August 2015

Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

Psalter Week 1



OF YOUR CHARITY PRAY FOR THE SOULS OF

- Recently deceased:**
 Betty Pursehouse,
 Bill Simpson, Joan Faldon,
 Warwick Torrens.
- Anniversaries:**
 Patricia Jehan, Sofa El-Khatib,
 Paulina Menezes,
 Umiliano Menezes.
 Sebastian Lee Hee-chang.
- And the sick:**
 Sara Selim, Peter Wellins,
 Frances Sara, Neil Cameron,
 June Ferry, Kate Tinson,
 Janelle Darson, Pat Bombell,
 Kevin Houghton, Beryl Allen,
 Wanda Grima, Tony O'Neill,
 Lola Proctor, Rene Glaze,
 Jack Moulds, Fr. Brian Rowland,
 Carol Cross, Fr. Bill Meacham,
 Mark Taylor, Irene Beck,
 Saxon Hall, Arnold Diorio,
 Bruce Spence, Mary Dolan,
 Roy Beveridge, James Leary,
 Grace Williams, Len Lloyd,
 Audrey Winsbury, Phil Curtis,
 Marsha Burzynski, Len Lloyd,
 Rita and John Webb,
 Peter Harrison, Sandy Sirrell,
 Elaine Finlayson, Saxon Hall,
 Charles Knowles, Phil Curtis,
 Connor Cole, Irene Diebold.

I have some sympathy for the response of the Jews to Jesus' hard teaching in today's Gospel! For a Jew to be asked to drink blood is as abhorrent as it gets. It is the same as demanding that an ultra Orthodox Jew eat pork!

In almost all the stories in the Gospel of John there are insiders and outsiders, those who understand the message and those who take Jesus too literally and are offended or confused. The flesh and blood given for the life of the world is at one and the same time the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus celebrated in the Eucharist. Jesus was not, literally, offering his arm for his followers to chew! He was referring to the gift he was soon going to give his followers: the example of utter fidelity to God's Kingdom even unto death, and the meal of that Kingdom, the Eucharist. We are the recipients of both gifts and the commission to live them out. The Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation is given to us for our mission in the world today and for our journey toward the World to come.

The other response in today's Gospel gives us great hope. In spite of being confused and deserted by his friends Peter hangs in there with Jesus. He holds on to faith when all the signs show that a hasty retreat may be a better course of action. We all know people who remain faithful in the most extraordinary of circumstances. Some of these we can understand - parents with sick children or spouses with ill partners. It's heroic, but understandable. But sometimes fidelity is heroic and inexplicable: when a spouse welcomes back his or her partner after an adulterous affair; when a foreign-born priest or religious will not abandon an oppressed community; when a person

will fight a just cause and be persecuted all the way to the end. These are powerful signs of faithful love at work too. It's a fine line to know when fidelity is 'dying to self' not 'killing self'. We are called to the former and often seduced by the latter.

James Keenan in his excellent book, 'Virtues for ordinary Christians' says that fidelity is the bottom line of the Christian life. He argues that the Church has spent too much time preaching about 'infidelities' and too little time teaching about those things that strengthen fidelity. 'Each person', he says, 'has two major moral goals in life: to be just and to be faithful'. Being faithful to his Father, and to us, sums up what Jesus does for our salvation and is exactly what He calls forth from the disciples in today's Gospel. Perhaps because we too easily think it is something difficult, we presume that being faithful to our friends is hardly a moral issue. Yet once we see that friendship is the key to the moral life then we can come to see that living the moral life is about the ordinary interactions of our day.

James Keenan writes, 'To this end we may need to make more calls, write more letters, cook more dinners, take more strolls, linger a little longer with a friend. We may also need to disengage ourselves from the habit of counting or measuring what the other does or does not do or say'.

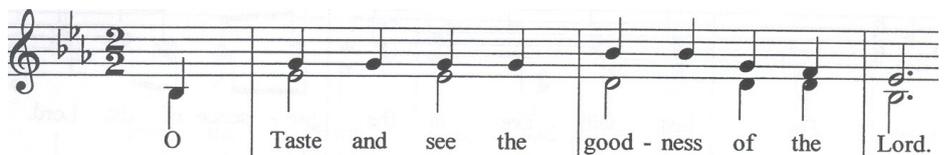
May this Eucharist enable us to respond to the invitation of the Holy One of God to place fidelity and friendship at the centre of our moral life and attend to the everyday activities that will see us live it out.
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Psalm Response

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Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia! Your words, Lord, are spirit and life; you have the words of everlasting life. *Alleluia!*

Around the Parish

Fulfilling International Mission for Skilled Volunteers

Communities in East Timor, PNG, Kenya, Kiribati, Samoa and elsewhere are asking for teachers, health and community development workers, administrators, agricultural workers and others. You can assist to mentor local workers in your field of expertise. This will provide opportunities for those who have not had the advantage of an Australian education; improve the operations of organisations in vital sectors of local communities and so assist poverty reduction.

For 55 years Palms Australia has assisted such communities to recruit, prepare and support Australian Catholics who volunteer to share their lives and skills. We have increasing numbers of requests from communities who believe this approach, more than anything else, assists their self-reliance and sustainable development.

Want to know more? Information Session will be held on Saturday 12 September at 11:00am, at Aquinas Academy, 141 Harrington Street, The Rocks.

RSVP to leanne@palms.org.au or call 02 9518 9551.

Baptisms: We welcome into our Faith community and pray for Torah Camp, Kathryn Luxton, Nash Percy, Sienna Percy and Vivienne Percy who were baptised last Sunday.

Liturgy Team meet Tuesday, 25th Aug. 7.30pm. Parish office.

C.W.F. Collection held last weekend raised \$4,920. Thank you for your generosity.

Bus Trip Auburn Botanical Gardens Cherry Blossom Display. 26th August, leaving 8.30am. Cost: \$15. Contact Susie Casey 0403 417 639 or 4344 1742.

Catechists meeting Thursday, 27th August, 9am in the Leo Mahon room

Thank You to everyone who helped with the Ecumenical Luncheon on Saturday, 15th. It was a great success. Special thanks to Rae Busby, Dorothy Fulton and Maureen Gleeson for preparing the most scrumptious soups and to Sam French for placing all the chairs and tables

into place. Thank You to everyone who attended.

Parish Pastoral Council: The Annual Council Executive elections were held at the last meeting. Your chairperson is Nicole Cumming (Principal of SJB School), Deputy Chair is Kenneth Stewart, Patricia Baxter is the new Secretary with Susie Simmons as Deputy. Our Parish is indebted to the outgoing committee for their diligence, particularly Jennifer Dempsey.

Children's Liturgy Roster 30/8/15: Kylie Spicer, Carol Yates, Christine French.

Volunteer Church Cleaning Roster 28/8/15: Maria Wickens, Jo Salter, Mary McCumstie, Pam Hickey.

Greetings from Fr. John Anderson in Peru wishing everyone in the parish good health. Father's postal address is on the back page if you would like to contact him.

Planned Giving envelopes (starting 6 September 2015) are available for collection in the gathering area. Please note that your envelope number may have changed.

The Just Word

Child Detention: 'never again':

More than 200 Australian human rights organisations and community groups have signed a joint statement calling on all members of the Federal Parliament to take action to end the detention of children once and for all.

Coordinated by the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) in response to the report of the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), *Forgotten children: The Report of the National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention 2014*, the statement urges the Parliament to introduce legislation to prevent children from being detained for immigration purposes in the future.

The statement was supported by national peak bodies, religious groups, refugee and asylum seeker support agencies, interna-

tional development agencies, health services, welfare agencies, legal centres and human rights groups, including the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council.

In addition to arguing for legislative change, the statement calls for the release of children and families detained in Nauru and for allegations of child sexual abuse in detention centres to be referred to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

"The Australian Human Rights Commission report is a well-researched, detailed and deeply disturbing account of the harm inflicted on vulnerable children as a direct result of decisions taken by successive governments," RCOA chief executive officer Paul Power said.

All of the politicians and bureaucrats involved in detaining chil-

dren knew what they were doing, as the consequences for children's mental and physical health were clearly outlined in the Commission's 2004 report on the detention of children and numerous research reports and parliamentary inquiries.

"The Rudd and Gillard Governments set new records for the numbers of children detained while the Abbott Government has seen the average length of detention blow our from three months to more than 14 months in its relatively short time in office. While we welcome the Abbott Government's commitment to releasing children and their families from detention in Australia, we know from past experience that political promises are not enough.

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council.

From the Diocese and beyond

Weekend of Discernment on the call to be a Priest: Have you ever considered the call to become a priest? Is there someone you know whom you would invite to consider this call?

This is a two day program of prayer, sacraments, talks, silence and discussion for those seriously considering a call to the priesthood. To be held at the Seminary of the Good Shepherd, Homebush, Saturday, 12th and Sunday

13th September. You are welcome to attend. Contact Fr. Paul on 9484 1427 for further details.

Serra Vocations Mass and Dinner: Mass will be celebrated 6.30pm, Sacred Heart, Pymble, Thursday 27th August by Fr. Joseph Lam, Administrator of the Lakes Parish. After Mass a meal will be held followed by a presentation by Fr. Joseph about his study of the Theology of Pope

Benedict XVI and his work with him. All welcome!

The Journey Catholic Radio Programme. Tune to Rhema CC 94.9 at 1pm this Sunday to listen to Fr Richard Healey with his thoughts on the Gospel and Sr Hilda who addresses the issue of pain, whilst the Pirolas challenge us with a piece entitled "Flashy Wedding Short Marriage".



Old Testament Commentary by Mark O'Brien

Joshua 24:1-2, 15-18

According to the preceding chapters of the book of Joshua, God has enabled the Israelites to destroy the inhabitants of the promised land who, to serve the theological agenda of the book, are portrayed as an evil or destructive presence that God has to eliminate in order to provide a 'promised land' for Israel. As in the book of Genesis God here brings order out of chaos and provides a land that is 'very good' (cf. Gen 1:31). The claim is that God does what is good and provides what is best, anything less and the theology of God is compromised. Foreigners who acknowledged God and Israel as the chosen people are protected, illustrated in the book of Joshua by the prostitute Rahab and the devious Gibeonites (the Bible loves unlikely outsiders who become insiders). Israel is described as settled in their God-given inheritance in the land and the aged Joshua is given a final, climactic speech before departing the scene.

The purpose of his speech at Shechem, more or less in the centre of the country, is to elicit an ongoing commitment to the covenant relationship from Israel. One might think that Joshua's reference to 'the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River' (in Mesopotamia) is somewhat anachronistic in relation to a people who have remained loyal to the Lord throughout the conquest campaign. But the author (s) of this text who wrote long after the time of Joshua knew very well the fragility of faith and how prone human beings are to temptation. There was too much evidence in Israel's turbulent history to deny it. As well, it is generally recognized that the references to 'you' in texts such as our reading and in the book of Deuteronomy are not addressed just to the audience within the story but to any reader or listener: even though expressed in human terms, the word of God transcends the limitations of time and place. In line with the way they are portrayed in the book of Joshua, the 'conquest generation' of Israelites profess their unwavering allegiance to the God who has done so much for them. The subsequent narrative reports that this generation re-

mained faithful to God all the days of Joshua and all the days of the leaders who outlived Joshua. But then, according to Judges 2:10 another generation arose who 'did not know (i.e., acknowledge) the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel'. They abandoned the Lord for the gods of the Amorites and reaped the consequences. The Bible's claim is that only when one makes God the centre of life and 'knows' God that the rest of life can fall into place. Without this, we develop a distorted perception of reality (e.g., the attraction of other gods that are no gods) and this inevitably causes chaos and division. The antidote to this distorted perception is the truth provided by the Torah teaching in the Pentateuch. The Gospels make a similar claim about Jesus and present his teaching as the fulfilment of the Torah/law.

Psalm 33:2-3, 16-23

The responsorial psalm makes use of yet another selection from Psalm 33 and once again commences with the first stanza. For a comment on it consult the commentary for the 19th Sunday of Year B. The selection for this Sunday is the last part of the psalm. It is different to the earlier parts of the psalm (see for the 19th and 20th Sundays) because it sets up a contrast between the way God treats the wicked and the just. The change provides added scope for the psalmist to celebrate God's care for all those in need and who cry to God for help. Thus the selection begins and ends with this contrast (the second and fifth stanzas) but focuses on God's care for the needy in the intervening stanzas (three and four).

God's care for the 'just' and the 'broken-hearted' covers all bases. God sees their situation in a way that no one else can, God hears their cry when no one else does, God is close to them when they think they are deserted by everyone, God is the one who can deliver those whose spirit has been crushed, who think there is no hope or future, God does not deliver from just one or a few trials but 'from them all the Lord will rescue him'. Finally, God's care reaches every part of one's being ('not one of his bones shall be broken' – this verse of course is invoked in the Passion Narrative of John's Gospel, cf. John 19:36). These are highly rhetorical assertions that of course cannot be validated in all instances; no one can monitor all of life's experiences or as-

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Catholic Parish of Woy Woy Peninsula

Woy Woy, Umina, Ettalong, Koolewong, Tascott, Blackwall, Booker Bay, St Hubert's Island, Empire Bay, Horsfield Bay, Pearl Beach, Patonga, Woy Woy Bay, Daley's Point and Phegan's Bay.

St John the Baptist Church, corner of Blackwall and Victoria Roads, Woy Woy

Parish Office Ethel Cox Parish Centre
P.O. Box 264 Walter Baker Hall
54 Victoria Road 100 Blackwall Road
WOY WOY N.S.W. 2256

Phone: (02) 4341 1073
Fax: (02) 4341 0214
Email: parish@woywoycatholic.org.au

"He must increase, I must decrease"

Fr. Jack Robson. *Parish Priest*

Fr. Timothy Raj, MSFS. Fr. Phillip Thottam, MSFS.
Assistant Priests.

Office Staff: Helen Cameron, & Raelene Spithill,
Margaret Cooper.

Office Hours: 9.30 a.m. – 4.00 p.m., Monday to Friday

Deadline for The Voice: 3.30 p.m. Wednesday

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sess them accurately. They are made to bolster faith in those who pray the psalm. The condemnation of the wicked can be read in the same vein; they provide a faith assurance for the oppressed and troubled. It is left up to God when and how the wicked will be punished. Other psalms and the books of Ecclesiastes and Job lament how the wicked appear to get away with blue murder.

Father John Anderson
Parroquia Santa Roso de Lima,
Vicariato Apostolico de Iquitos,
Apartado 108, Iquitos.
Peru

SUNDAY MASS TIMES

Vigil Saturday 5pm; Sunday 7.30am , 9.15am, 6pm.

WEEKDAY MASS TIMES

Monday-Friday 7.45am (Monday & Tuesday with Lauds); Saturday and Public Holidays 9am; First Friday 4pm (with Anointing of the Sick).

SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

Friday after morning Mass; First Friday, 3.30 p.m.; Saturday 11.30am; & 4.30pm ; Sunday 7.00 a.m.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

1st & 3rd Sundays, 11am; 5th Sunday, during 9.15 a.m. Mass.

Godparents are examples of faith to the child. They must be confirmed and practising Catholics, at least sixteen years old. If there is at least one godparent, a non-Catholic may act as a Christian witness. Parents and godparents must attend a pre-baptismal instruction, held on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month at 9.30 a.m.

EXPOSITION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

Every Saturday after 9am Mass until 10am; every Monday until 9am (Public Holidays 10.15am).

PARISH CHOIR – Practice Wednesday nights in the church, 7 p.m.
Enquiries: 4341 3367.

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, 21a Dulkara Rd South Woy Woy 2256. p 024341 0884 f 0243 445049.

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST YOUTH GROUP For information and events contact Sam French 042 244 9539.

CATHOLICCARE Counselling and Family Relationships. Ph: 4356 2600.

MARY MAC'S PLACE Volunteers provide nutritious, freshly cooked meals and information and referrals to appropriate community services. Open Monday to Friday, 11am-1pm, at the Ethel Cox Parish Centre. For more information, please contact Christine on 4341 0584.

CASH HOUSIE every Saturday night at Peninsula Community Centre, Cnr. Ocean Beach Rd. and McMasters Rd. Games start at 7.30 p.m. and finish approx 10.20p.m. Cash prizes. Ticket sales from 6.00 p.m. Proceeds benefit Parish. Enquiries: Rob 0427 990 818.

We're on the Web!
www.woywoycatholic.org.au

Staying Home Leaving Violence: CatholicCare Staying Home leaving Violence program assists women and children on the Central Coast to remain in their homes and be protected from family violence. The program support ranges from new security measures, personal and financial problems and legal support. If someone you know is experiencing family violence contact CatholicCare 4356 2600.

101st World Day of Migrants and Refugees 31/8/15

The Catholic Church teaches that the demand of human dignity always comes before the national interest. *I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Matthew 25: 35.*



Diocese of
Broken Bay