



The Voice

4th October 2015

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B

Psalter Week 3

During World War II, Mary was one of hundreds of Australian women who fell in love with an American soldier. She married her Episcopalian Army Major at the side altar in a Catholic Church in 1945. He was dashing and handsome and by the time it came for him to return to Philadelphia in 1946, they were expecting their first child.

Upon arrival at her new home Mary found that her brave soldier was not as fearless as she thought. He was completely dominated by his aristocratic, wealthy mother who made it clear from the beginning that she opposed the marriage. Mary's life in the family home was a nightmare. The tensions boiled over when Brendan was born. Regardless of the promises his father had made in Australia to have their children baptised Catholics, the soldier waged no war against his mother who declared that if any grandchild of hers was baptised a 'papist' she would disinherit the three of them. The Major buckled under the maternal pressure and demanded that Brendan be baptised an Episcopalian. Mary was devastated. She gathered her few possessions together, had her son baptised a Catholic and fled home.

In 1950, by now a divorcee, she met Maurice, a wonderful man who wanted to marry her and be a father to Brendan. When they went to see the local parish priest, he told them they could not be married in the Church and if they contracted a civil marriage they ran the risk of going to hell for eternity. They were tough days. Catholicism was one of the reasons Mary left the USA. In turn, the very Church she defended shut her out.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks directly about marriage and divorce. In Jesus' day only a few women had rights before the law. These were wealthy women from the priestly families. They could divorce their husbands. The vast majority of women, however, were seen as possessions of their father, husband or son. A husband could draw up a divorce writ for any reason he wished and so force his wife out of their home into destitution or humiliate her by sending her back to her own family. No wonder Jesus lays down the law so strongly about fidelity and commitment. His new interpretation of the Law of Moses defended women's rights to dignity and security.

Every Catholic parish today has parishioners who are divorced and remarried; no doubt some are here at this Mass. In the face of the negative messages you hear, I want you to know how much we admire your often heroic faith, how much God loves you and how grateful we are that you hang in here with us. The problem for the Church is that, on the one hand, we want to keep affirming the permanence of married love, and yet, on the other hand, we have an increasing number of Catholics who are divorcing. We are caught between the fine ideal Jesus teaches and the frail human condition we all carry in different ways. We have not got the balance right yet.

The Church's remedy to marriage breakdown is an annulment. An annulment is not a Catholic divorce. A civil divorce says the parties that were married are not now. An annulment says that there were factors, often unknown to the couple on the day, which meant that there was never a full and true Christian marriage in the first place. The sacrament is therefore null and void.

Some Catholics, and certainly people who are not Catholic, cannot face up to the long, complex and legal process involved in an annulment. It can be a traumatic experience. Others argue that the Church might step away from the more recent legal approach to dealing with marriage and, like the Orthodox Churches, use the Sacrament of Penance to nullify the Sacrament of Marriage. Whatever of the process, Christian teaching on this issue must always be metered with compassion.

From 1951 until 1993 Mary and her second husband did not receive the Sacraments. At my encouragement, she instigated annulment proceedings in 1990. In 1993 they received communion for the first time in 42 years. God had never moved away from them, embracing them in his arms, laying his hands on them every day and blessing them.

At that Nuptial Mass in 1994, Maurice's best man was Brendan, born in Philadelphia in 1946. Maurice had legally adopted Brendan the day after he married Mary. And as we all received communion, with tears streaming down our faces, we understood that it is to human, frail and open hearts that the Kingdom of God belongs.

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OF YOUR CHARITY

PRAY FOR THE SOULS OF

- **Recently deceased:**
Merle Fitzsimons, Mary Breen, Bernard Rowen, Mary Smith, Fr. John Gahan.
- **Anniversaries:**
Dorothy and John de Beyer, Brother Andrew, M.C.
- **Remembrances:**
Mr & Mrs Lamm, Bill Lamm, Dorn Schumacher, Mary and George Hilliard, Hilliard Brothers, Kevin Mills, Mills Family, Bernie, Hanna, and Leslie Denning, Valerie Price.
- **And the sick:**
Sara Selim, Fr. Bill Meacham, Peter Wellins, Neil Cameron, Frances Sara, Anne Singleton, June Ferry, Maryanne Diorio, Kate Tinson, Charles Knowles, Lola Proctor, Grace Williams, Jack Moulds, Mark Taylor, Alan Harland, Connor Cole, Carol Cross, Marsha Bursynski, Fr. Brian Rowland, Beryl Allen, Mary Dolan, Arnold Diorio, Bruce Spence, Sandy Sirrell, Tony O'Neil, Peter Harrison, Rita and John Webb, Vince Zappavigna.

Psalm Response

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Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia! If we love another, God will live in us in perfect love. *Alleluia!*

Around the Parish

Public Holiday Monday 5th October. 9am Morning Mass will be followed by Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction. The Parish office will be closed and re-opens Tuesday 9.30am.

Catholic Mission Sunday 18th October. Envelopes are in the church for your convenience. The need is great and your generosity would be appreciated.

Faith Based conversations: Getting good at talking about your faith to family and friends takes practice and grace. Make a new friend you can talk with about your faith. Leo Mahon room Saturday, October 10th, 10.30am-11.30am. Morning tea provided.

Baptisms: We welcome and pray

for Oliver Channell baptised at our 9.15am Mass last Sunday.

Catechists: Please remember our Catechists & their students in your prayers as they return to school for the final term this year. Pray also that the Holy Spirit will call Parishioners to answer the desperate need we have for more volunteers. As things stand, we may not be able to provide teachers/helpers for all the children in 2016. Please consider this most worthy Parish role. New Parishioners - it's a wonderful way to join our community. Questions? Susie 0411 566 622.

Children's Liturgy Roster 11/10/15: Marianne Bowyer, Kylie Spicer and Marina Mondal.

Volunteer Church Cleaning Roster 9/10/15: Brian Jordan, Veronica Jordan, Maria Wickens.

Of Grace and Faith Study Group Thursday, 8th October, 11am in the Leo Mahon room.

Nonagenarian Birthday wishes are extended to Josie Weate who turned 90 on September 30th.

Congratulations are extended to Sheila and Kevin Houghton who celebrate 63 years of marriage today. Sheila and Kevin wed on October 4, 1952 at St. Patrick's Lithgow and are stalwart attendees of our 7.30am Sunday Mass.

May the good Lord see and bless you, on your anniversary day.

May He always be your companion, and guide you on your way.

The Just Word

Relief over stalled Trans-Pacific Partnership deal... but threat remains:

The failure of Australia and 11 other nations to agree on the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free-trade deal vindicates the deep concerns of community groups that the TPP is secretly trading away issues like access to affordable medicines and governments' right to regulate without being sued by foreign corporations.

The Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network (AFTINET) said these issues should be decided through open democratic parliamentary processes, "not secretly traded away for token access to sugar or dairy markets". We are pleased that governments failed to reach agreement on key sticking points about extension of monopolies and corporate rights, which should not even be on the table in so-called free-trade negotiations," said AFTINET

coordinator Patricia Ranald. Dr. Ranald said the most dangerous features of the TPP, if agreed, are:

- Extension of monopolies on costly biologic medicines which would cost Australia's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) hundreds of millions of dollars for every year of delay for cheaper versions to become available. This would lead to pressure for higher prices at the chemist. Public health groups have urged the government not to "trade off medicines for sugar", medicines will delay access to cheaper medicines.
- Special rights for foreign investors to sue governments for millions of dollars in international tribunal if they can argue that a change in domestic law or policy "harms" their investment, even if that law or policy is designed to protect public

health or the environment. The proposal is known as Investor-State Dispute Settlement or ISDS.

AFTINET said there are increasing numbers of ISDS cases against health and environmental law, such as the Philip Morris tobacco company action challenging Australia's plain packaging law, which has cost the Australian Government \$50 million in legal fees. Proposed "safeguards" have not prevented such cases.

Other proposals in the TPP would restrict the ability of the government to regulate food labelling, even when it is in the interest of public health.

For more information, contact Australian Fair Trade and Investment Network. www.aftinet.org.au; Ph: (02) 9699 3686. Email: campaign@aftinet.org.au

Australian Catholic Social Justice Council.

From the Diocese and beyond

Wine and Cheese Evening for Married couples unable to have children.

Saturday, October 17th, 7.45pm-9.30pm. Holy Name Parish Wahroonga Sunroom (room attached to left side of church). 35 Billyard Avenue, Wahroonga. This is the first initiative for this group of couples from the Diocese and it is hoped to be

"An evening of friendship, support, hope and encouragement".

Please RSVP to Katie Fullilove, by 14th October, on katie.fullilove@dbb.org.au

Introductory Course in CPE:

The Gosford Hospital Pastoral Education Centre will conduct an introductory Course on Wednesdays for 6 weeks, commencing October 21st at the Narara Uniting Church. This is a good way to discover whether you are suited to do hospital visiting or pastoral care work in your church. More information and application forms from Gwen Vale: gwenvale@idl.net.au

CatholicCare: Did you know CatholicCare Family Centre provides outreach support each Wednesday through Mary Mac's? CatholicCare provide a

range of essential community assistance programs on the Central Coast with priority access afforded to Parishioners. CatholicCare works with people in making a positive difference in their lives leading to: improved well-being, sustained support networks and sense of hope for the future. Services include Disabilities Support, Mediation Family Law, Counselling, Homeless Support, Family Violence Support, Emergency Relief, Family Support and Hospital Chaplaincy. Feel free to visit Mary Macs any Wednesday or call 4356 2600 to find out more.



Preaching to the Fragile-Hearted

Ron Raab (continued from Sunday 25)

So many people are so emotionally broken that they will never be able to realise God's love. These are the stories that often stop me on the concrete floor and challenge my jaw to move beyond the pain. These stories reveal to me how to speak to people in need and how to get out of the way of grace.

Hilda sits patiently in the last pew waiting for Sunday Mass to begin. She huddles under a heavy raincoat and the burden of her past abuse. She sits in the chapel to escape the noise of the streets and the uncertainty of her aging body. She longs to hear a message that will set her free. She feels overwhelmed from the inner demons that tell her she is no good, that her life has been a waste of time, and that her abuse was her own fault. Hilda aches for the word of God.

Hilda tells me that she wishes she could nail down to the concrete floor the grace that she feels when I preach the healing Word. She feels a moment of safety from the waves of self-doubt and insecurity that flood her soul. Hilda comes to Mass to hear something different from what her parents taught her as a child, to hear someone say that God could take her life seriously. God is still invested among people who long to realise in this life that love is possible. Hilda tells me that she will never really feel love on this side of the grave. I too wish I could tack down grace on the concrete floor for her and so many others.

Jess teaches at a college about an hour away from downtown Portland. He is tormented by many forms of mental illness and has a hard time telling his real story to people at his school in fear that he could lose his job. Last Christmas, I spent an afternoon with him, just listening to his search for healing. He told me that when he hears me preach, healing happens inside his mind and heart for just a split second. He told me this is more comfort than he feels with his psychiatrist or with the many medications he has been taking. Jess tells me that he wishes all preachers could understand that grace from the word is real and that the liturgy means so much to people who suffer mental illness. He wants to get his word out that God is still working in our prayer. Jess exposes his vulnerable, glass heart to me every few months, and I listen with all of mine.

I stand on the concrete in the centre aisle, opening my tight jaw and speaking words of faith. This is my vocation: to live fully in this moment. I trust God's activity within the liturgy when I rely on the Spirit to give me words and insights. In this liturgical act, I come face-to-face with the energy and power of the word that longs to live within people's fragile and fearful hearts.

I am converted to a deeper understanding of my life and God's presence in the world when I realise that life is what it is. I cannot preach my way into providing housing for people or adequate health care for the elderly man who comes to us with cancer. I can be as present as I am able to God and to the needs of the community with a jaw and an imagination that I stretch into even deeper love.

As a preacher among people I also face prevailing issues. I preach in a church that is drenched in alcohol; its numbing effects are seen in every aspect of our universal church, including leaders and clergy. I witness the effects of fear, doubt, and uncertainty on many relationships. I open up the gift of the word among people who struggle with issues of co-dependency and tragic parental and sibling relationships. These relationships, the result of generational alcoholism, remain difficult to heal. So many people do not feel worthy of any attention by God. They cannot bring themselves to the power of One who faces them with goodness and kindness. Many of our parishioners and weekly guests in our hospitality centre are active alcoholics or are struggling to maintain recent sobriety. Alcohol keeps the heart hidden and opaque, rigid and lost in selfishness. I must face my own generational issues of alcohol and its effects in my own life and in the ways I interpret people's experiences with alcohol and God's mercy. I find my own co-dependency on many days clenched in my tight jaw.

As I walk along the grey floor of the chapel, I ache for people to realise God's love. This is the real heartbreak for any preacher: so many people will go from our assemblies never realising that love is the answer. God's love is present even within a sick child with



The phrase in today's psalm, "May you see your children's children," is really a prayer for a long life. The good steward knows that every day is a gift from God, to be lived with joy and thanksgiving. "May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives!"

SEE PSALM 128



(Continued on page 4)

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. MSPS. Fr. Phillip Thottam. MSPS.
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

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 0422 449 539.

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 10.20 p.m. Cash prizes. Ticket sales from 6.00 p.m. Proceeds benefit Parish. Enquiries Rob 0427 990 818.

Preaching to the Fragile-Hearted

(concluded)

(Continued from page 3)

cancer or in a marriage broken with infidelities. God is here in glass hearts and tight jaws, striving to make a home in the narrow places of humanity. I finish the homily and realize I need to let go of my words and any realization that they have flown into the fragile and insecure places of broken hearts. I stand in my convictions and I remain a believer that life has meaning in the sacred texts of the gospel. I sit down in the presider's chair after preaching, spent and yet revitalized in faith.

I will not give up on preaching and liturgy and working for justice. I witness daily the tension among so many people who are working for change, creating new systems of justice, and struggling to create a new world. Many people are either devoted to prayer or committed to work for justice; few are able to make and keep a balanced connection between the two.

After my years in the arena of poverty, I am convinced that systems will only change when all people finally experience the love God has for them. Nothing in the world can change without grace, mercy, and love. We must create a church that is of the poor, not just a church that serves the poor. I listen to battle-weary, seasoned justice workers who have given up on prayer, and I listen to young, naïve seminarians articulating that faith is all about the sanctuary, about Christ in the tabernacle and not Christ outside the church's doors. The connection of faith and service is the mission of the church, and I will keep preaching from the ground of suffering as long as my jaw holds out. **ML**

Ronald Patrick Raab, CSC, serves as associate pastor at St. Andre Bessette Church in Portland, Ore. His latest books are *The Art of Christian Mission* (World Library Publications) and *At-Home Advent Retreat: The Unsheltered Heart (Cycle C)* (Ave Maria Press). From *Ministry & Liturgy*, copyright © Resource Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission under licence number 115216.

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www.woywoycatholic.org.au



Diocese of
Broken Bay