

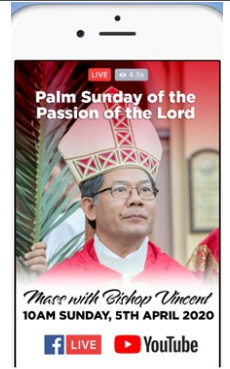
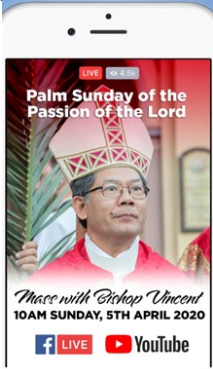
The Balfra

Weekly Newsletter of St Finbar's Catholic Parish, Glenbrook

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

4th & 5th April 2020

Entrance Mt 21:1-11; Is 50:4-7; Ps 21; Phil 2:6-11; Mt 26:14-27:66; Eucharistic Prayer 2



Dear Parishioners,

Those who suffer like Christ for the love of God and neighbour may hit the rock bottom of agony, but are sure to rise to the height of glory.

Our Lord Jesus died for the love of God and humanity; and the fact that all through his passion he suffered alone, brings out the depth of his love, for loneliness in suffering is the clearest indication of a person's capacity to love. The fact that he suffered, not because of weakness inherent in human nature, but as the result of human injustice and of his revolutionary message, proves his faithful love for God and humanity. In his suffering he acted upon his own word; "the greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them" (John 15:13). Our Lord did not suffer to wipe out suffering from our lives but to teach us how to suffer, to teach us that suffering will always accompany true love; and hence anyone who follows him must carry his daily cross (Matthew 16:24). He taught us about the Supremacy of love and of the qualities that exemplify it, namely, that love is stronger than violence, that humility is stronger than pride, that kindness is stronger than anger, that gentleness is stronger than rudeness and that peace is stronger than war.

Jesus overcame the apparent futility of suffering by his abiding obedience to his Father's will. Many acted during the Passion of Jesus as prisoners. Pilate was utterly imprisoned by his own weakness; the high priests were controlled not by truth but by their lust for the blood of Jesus; Peter could not control even his tongue and denied his Master; Judas ended his life as the prisoner of his own helplessness. But Jesus was all the time free, so free that he would later say, "I am now ready for you". Of course, he needed help; help which he could not expect from his own disciples who slept when he suffered and woke up only to desert him. Hence Christ's constant prayer was, "The Lord God is my help" (Isaiah 50:7). We too experience the agony and passion as a world community at this time in the form of Covid19: Economic turmoil, fear and uncertainties. Like Christ's prayer, let our prayer be "The Lord God is my help". There are thousands who undergo the passion, try to face each day as a true Christian. May our love of God and neighbour be deep and strong in our hearts so that we would also be able to love, to reach out to others and diminish their sufferings. We would be able to see in those who suffer the face of Christ. Passion was not the last word in the life of Christ. It was only the first word of the Holy Week that will reach its climax on Easter Sunday. So too, however many of our days seem to end in a depressing way, they are not the last word in our life. Rather, they are only the prelude to triumphs we have yet to experience in this life. Hitting rock bottom must not make us pessimistic. Palm Sunday should solidify our hope. This year though we are not holding palms in our hands and marching in the Church as a Parish Community, let palms be still in our hearts as signs that we are willing as St. Finbar's Community to march with Jesus in this time of fall and agony. For the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus prove that life will prevail and still be victorious. So as we remember the agony of Jesus during this week and join with him offering our own agonies and passion to the Father, let our prayer be like the constant prayer of Jesus "The Lord God is my help".

May God bless you all and keep you safe.

Father Jolly Chacko, MS
Parish Priest

A message from Bishop Vincent to the people of Parramatta during the Coronavirus crisis

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ

Many of us feel powerless in the face of this corona virus pandemic. We see in a devastating way how widely a virus spreads person to person and the immense damage it is doing to our community.

We are indeed living in a time of great crisis locally and globally. So, it is only human that we will experience considerable fear and anxiety.

However, as people of faith in Jesus of Nazareth, we are called to place our trust in our God who promises to be present with us even in these times of great suffering and sickness.

Even in his seeming absence, we still place our hope in the One who loves us tenderly and with great mercy. And so, as responsible citizens and faithful Catholics, in solidarity with our wonderful doctors and health professionals, our first rule must be: "Do no harm."

That means not doing anything that might spread the virus to others with whom we live in community. We need to listen to our medical experts and not to conspiracy theorists who use any crisis to profiteer or stir up hatred and division.

We must also comply with the directives of our government authorities for the sake of the common good. The gospel calls us to practice such solidarity in these difficult days.

As many of you already know I have issued a statement which involves the closure of churches and the curtailment of our regular worship practices until this crisis abates.

Please adhere strictly to these directives that I have given. Further updates can be found here: www.parracatholic.org/covid19 as the situation we are in is so fast changing and complex.

All of us in the Diocese of Parramatta must follow these guidelines without exception, so that we can be like St Joseph: 'Protectors of Life'.

Becoming 'Protectors of Life' will certainly demand of us sacrifices. Let's especially not forget the suffering in our midst: the elderly, the weak, the disabled, the homeless, the unemployed et cetera. Let us not forget vulnerable groups and communities: the indigenous, the asylum seekers in detention, prisoners et cetera.

Then there are also those whom the Catholic Church through the traditional Lenten Project Compassion supports. In previous ages before germs and viruses were understood, people blamed strangers, Jews and 'outsider's' for sickness. Anyone who was different could be the target of people's fear.

So, let us in these days be especially mindful of caring with compassion and charity for any persons in community who are on the 'margins': be they the aged, the chronically ill and all those living in poverty and isolation. Let our love for them be real and concrete.

May we also use these days to deepen our prayer and spiritual lives. Even as we mourn our losses, Pope Francis encourages us, "Let us call upon him today, firmly rooted in prayer, for without prayer all our activity risks being fruitless and our message empty." (*Evangeli Gaudium*, no. 259)

So please visit our diocesan website at: www.parracatholic.org/covid19 for some good and helpful information about how we can follow this path of deeper prayer. It includes online liturgy resources for personal and family prayer and various options for viewing Mass on-line and meditating on the daily scripture readings.

The coronavirus crisis strikes fear and anxiety into people across the globe. It also reveals deep cultural prejudices and divisions against the elderly, the weak and even those of certain race and ethnicity.

Our faith makes us step beyond these human boundaries. It expands our horizons and pushes the limits of our capacity to love.

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Through the example of Jesus, we are called to embrace those vulnerable in our society and reach out to them. It is not the time to look after ourselves only but to care for others, through our prayers, acts of kindness and deep communion with them.

May these days of suffering and fear draw us ever close to Christ and let's all pray with Pope Francis to Mary, our mother:

Pope Francis' Prayer to Mary during the Coronavirus Pandemic

O Mary,
you always shine on our path
as a sign of salvation and of hope.
We entrust ourselves to you, Health of the Sick,
who at the cross took part in Jesus' pain, keeping your faith firm.
You, Salvation of all People,
know what we need,
and we are sure you will provide
so that, as in Cana of Galilee,
we may return to joy and to feasting
after this time of trial.
Help us, Mother of Divine Love,
to conform to the will of the Father
and to do as we are told by Jesus,
who has taken upon himself our sufferings
and carried our sorrows
to lead us, through the cross,
to the joy of the resurrection. Amen

Under your protection, we seek refuge, Holy Mother of God. Do not disdain the entreaties of we who are in trial, but deliver us from every danger, O glorious and blessed Virgin.

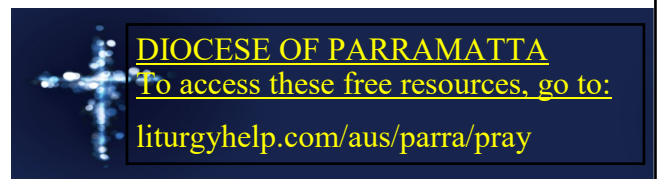
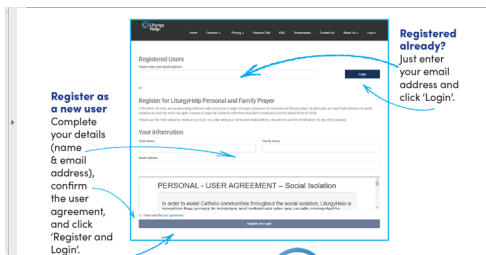
*Most Reverend Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv
Bishop of Parramatta*

LITURGYHELP.

Personal and Family Prayer.

In this time of crisis, we are providing Catholics with access to a range of resources for personal and family prayer. In particular, we hope that Catholics in social isolation can gain a sense of prayerful solidarity with their local faith communities and the whole Body of Christ. Feel free to print resources and give them to your friends, family and community, particularly those who do not have access to the internet.

For help, ideas and updates, follow us:
[facebook.com/LiturgyHelp](https://www.facebook.com/LiturgyHelp)



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Reflection on the Gospel



Gospel Reflection

The Passion narrative, as described in the gospel of Matthew, is keen to drive home two particular points. Firstly, throughout this gospel, the gospel writer is at pains to demonstrate Jesus as fulfilling the prophecy of scripture. At the time of the arrest and the use of the thirty pieces of silver, we are reminded that these things took place to fulfil scripture. Secondly, this particular gospel emphasises the innocence of Jesus throughout the passion narrative: he is 'sold out' by one of his followers; his trial before the Sanhedrin is a farce; his most loyal follower denies association with him; Pilate declares himself innocent of Jesus' blood and the crowd accepts the consequences of their actions. At no point is any hint of guilt cast over Jesus. He is an innocent whose fate has been manipulated by others. In this gospel there is no conversation between Jesus and the criminals between whom he is crucified. There is no suggestion that Jesus too is a criminal who is deserving of his fate. His innocence is manifest.

These two themes merge together in this gospel. The manner of Jesus' arrest, trial and death are all in accordance with the prophecy of scripture (i.e. in accordance with God's will), and yet it is emphasised throughout that Jesus is innocent. There can be no accusation that Jesus is in any way deserving of his treatment and yet what befalls him is in keeping with God's plan. It emphasises the sacrificial act made by Jesus: a proven innocent giving his life for the good of others. The actions of those who plot against Jesus to seek his downfall actually serve to bring about his purpose. No other outcome was possible. The writer assures the audience that the death of Jesus was no accident; it was intended from the very beginning.

Reflection by Greg Sunter

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE RECENTLY DECEASED:

Elise Doyle (Jacqui Visser's Sister), Patrick Hanson, Patricia De Mattia, Ken Moore, Maureen Purcell, Veronica Blair (Marg Holden and Bly Miers Mother), Merle Catlin (Margaret Richard's Mother), Jim Barrett, Anthony Campbell (Alison Howard's Brother), Hilary Doyle and Denis (Mick) O'Sullivan.

PLEASE PRAY FOR SICK PARISHIONERS, RELATIVES & FRIENDS:

Maria Macri, Eugene Daley (Margaret Rivas' Friend), Ryder Lopez, Rev. Max Barrett (CSSR) (Jim Barrett's Brother), Joan Paine, Mark Bates, Lyn Downes, Reg Moore, Pam Clyne, Ellen Moffitt, Terry Stevens, Jacqui Visser, Joan Lohrey, Joanne Macrae, Maddison Farrugia, Catherine Kirk (Cameron), Sophie Hollies, Colleen Nolan, Michelle Anthony and Harrison Aggar (Margaret & Ian Dickson's Grandson).

PLEASE PRAY FOR THOSE WHOSE ANNIVERSARIES OCCUR AT THIS TIME:

John Burrowes, Imre Varga, Mary Kiel, Agnes Collins, John Gibson, James Sims, Wallace Whye, Margaret Noonan and John Downes.

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