

OUR COMMUNITY NEWS – May 24th 2020

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD YEAR A

Parish Safeguarding Officer: Sandra Watkins: 0409 492 508
Fr Marcello Colasante 0416 194 825 Contact: St Columba's, Ballarat North 53 311 012
email: ballaratnorth@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Information for special parish events (Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals)

Please contact Anne Beer on 5349 2168 or 0417 369 322

Parish Support:

A reminder that if anyone needs help with anything,
to please get in touch with one of our members below, if needed.

Gail Hall 0412 311 586 Bernadette Franc 0427 678830 Anne Beer 0417 369 322

Welcome to 'Our Community News' for May 24th

Note: Today's Community News email has four other attachments

- Ascension of the Lord- copy of 'The Saving Word' - Letter from Pope Francis for month of May
- Studies in Theology Special Session Information - Catholic Registry to track Covid19

NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

All updates are on the diocesan website "news" section" www.ballarat.catholic.org.au.

FATHER JUSTIN'S ONLINE MASSES FROM ST JOHN OF GOD HOSPITAL:

Reminder: Daily Mass at 11.30am from St John of God Hospital.

Access by searching St Patrick's Cathedral in Facebook If you can't watch then, you can always replay it.

<https://www.facebook.com/patricks.cathedral.9>

WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect Australians' lives, including their worship, the Catholic bishops will entrust the country to the care of Mary Help of Christians on her feast day next week. They have penned a "Word of Encouragement" to the Catholic people of Australia in light of the pandemic <https://www.ballarat.catholic.org.au/news/fx-articles.cfm?loadref=102&id=2807&categoryId=101>

MESSAGE FROM POPE FRANCIS TO PRAY THE ROSARY IN MAY

Pope Francis has asked Catholics to make a special effort to pray the Rosary during May and has composed two new prayers asking for Our Lady's intercession to help end the COVID-19 pandemic. See attached or go to the diocesan website www.ballarat.catholic.org.au

RECENT DEATHS:

We pray for Barbara Woods and Lorna Pearce who passed away this week.

We continue to pray for all the victims to Coronavirus throughout the world.

ANNIVERSARIES:

Eileen Kane, Lang Dean, Brian O'Loughlan, Luke Miller, Anne Fitzgerald, Peter Nolan, Lionel Smith
Fr Laurie Gallager, Nell Fay, Mick Sherman, Marjorie Lancaster, Peter Fricot

PRAY FOR ALL THESE FRIENDS OF OURS WHO ARE ILL:

Pat Byrne, Margaret MacDonald, Roger Molomby, Graeme Dawson, Blake Dridan, Fr. Adrian McInerney, Shelagh Mulcahy, Valda Murphy, Michael Wise and all those in need of prayer.

ROSTERS:

The newsletter roster will continue, but if any parishioners wish to contribute anything at all for inclusion, it will be greatly appreciated. This is be a great way to keep our little community in touch. Just simply put your contribution in an email.

May: Angela Gerrard Phone: 0439 565 468 Email: colangegeerrard@gmail.com

WEEK OF PRAYER AND CHRISTIAN UNITY 2020

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Australia will be observed this week, May 24-31, 2020. This year's theme, "They showed us unusual kindness" (Acts 28:2), calls us to move from shared prayer to shared action and remembers the historic shipwreck of Paul on the island of Malta. It calls us to a greater generosity to those in need. Resources are available at <https://www.ncca.org.au/faith-and-unity-resources/wopcu>

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK 2020: MAY 27 – JUNE 3

The theme for #NRW2020 – In this together – is now resonating in ways that could not have been foreseen when this was announced last year, but it reminds us whether in a crisis or in reconciliation, we are all #InThisTogether. For further information, go to <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week/?CFID=12862572&CFTOKEN=e6a4ca29bbfd552d-D8E105CE-F113-49B7-19FBF3A050E3AA2A>

REFLECTION:

Christ has entrusted to all the call to mission. All are called to participate in the overflowing love of God, who sent his Son into the world and who in turn gives the Spirit to men and women in all time and ages. By initiation, we are called and empowered to do what God does in the world: we are the hearts and hands of God who can bring God's love and compassion into every aspect of our life. We are commissioned to be ambassadors of God's love so that his message may reach the ends of the earth.

Prayer for today: 'Almighty ever-living God, who allow those on earth to celebrate divine mysteries, grant, we pray, that Christian hope may draw us onward to where our nature is united with you'
(See below for a reflection on the Gospel by Sr Veronica Lawson)

COVID 19 FEE RELIEF FOR SCHOOL FAMILIES

The Catholic Education Office Ballarat have provided information for families experiencing difficulty paying school fees during the COVID-19 crisis. See the video on their website <https://ceob.edu.au/>

LAUDATO SI' WEEK - MAY 16-24, 2020

Pope Francis invites you to celebrate *Laudato Si'* Week which takes place May 16-24. This year marks the fifth anniversary of this encyclical. The theme for the week is "everything is connected." Pope Francis has invited Catholics all around the world to reflect, pray and join to take action during this week. Go to the diocesan website for further information, which includes the Catholic Earthcare media release and a wide variety of resources www.ballarat.catholic.org.au

HEART TO HEART E-SEMINARS

Archbishop Chris Prowse, Canberra-Goulburn Diocese, is presenting these 30-minute e-seminars over four weeks. <https://www.catholicvoice.org.au/hearttoheart/>

NCEC EDUCATION CONFERENCE 2020 POSTPONEMENT

The National Catholic Education Conference will be postponed to a future date to be determined.

SPECIAL STUDIES IN THEOLOGY: LITURGICAL INCULTURATION

ACU's Faculty of Theology and Philosophy and the ACU Centre for Liturgy will welcome Rev Prof Mark R Francis csv (President of Catholic Theological Union, Chicago) as a guest lecturer for a new one-off masters-level unit called: THEL620 Special Studies in Theology: Liturgical Inculturation will be offered as an online intensive on July 6, 7, 9 & 10. Those interested in participating in this unit as a professional learning seminar (not for assessment), will find helpful information on the attached flyer.

Gospel Reflection

Feast of the Ascension
(Acts 1:1-11; Matthew 28:16-20)

by Veronica Lawson RSM

Loss is part of the human experience and death is generally the most painful experience of loss. As the death toll from Covid-19 approaches 300,000, we become more and more conscious of loss as a global reality. This loss of human life takes place against the backdrop of a catastrophic loss of species and of eco-systems, exacerbated in our part of the planet by the recent bushfires.

Today's Feast of the Ascension invites us to face the experience of loss in a transformative way. In Ordinary Time, we celebrate the life and ministry of Jesus. Over the period of Lent and Easter, we have been remembering his death and resurrection. As we come towards the end of the Easter season, the liturgy draws us into another aspect of the Mystery, that of the presence of the Risen One even in his absence.

While today's gospel recounts Matthew's story of Jesus' final encounter with his disciples, it does not provide an account of Jesus' "ascension" or return to God. For that, we must turn to the first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles.

The story presupposes a pre-scientific, three-tiered understanding of the structure of the world. In this ancient view, God is in the heavens above and the prophet Jesus, like the prophet Elijah of old, is caught up into God's presence. The Holy Spirit will "descend" upon God's people and "clothe" them with power to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth. The vertical (up and down) movement is balanced by a horizontal movement: Jesus' family and followers who grieve the loss of their loved one are told not to keep looking up to the heavens.

They have work to do: strengthened by his blessing, they are to stay in the city for the present and be empowered by the Holy Spirit to continue the prophetic ministry of Jesus, to be witnesses to his death and resurrection. They have to face the fact that the physical loss of Jesus means a new and different sort of presence and that they have a role to play in making him present in their world.

The gospel reading has Jesus on a mountain top where he commissions his male disciples to make disciples of all nations, literally "to disciple all peoples". He has already commissioned the women on the open road to announce the good news of the resurrection (Matt 28:10). They are to be fearless in their mission.

In Matthew's final chapter, then, both men and women are commissioned to proclaim the gospel. There are other dimensions to their mission, namely, to baptize in the name of the Triune God and to teach what Jesus has taught or "commanded" them. The confidence that they need and that we need to engage in this mission is the assurance that the risen Christ is with us to the end of time. The gospel has come full circle. In the first chapter of Matthew, an angel announces that the child to be born will be called Emmanuel, God-with-us. The last verse of the gospel invites us once more to ponder that mystery and to commit ourselves to a life-giving gospel mission.

Pope Francis' 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si'* shows us the way in the face of planetary distress.

exercised for us believers. This you can tell from the strength of his power at work in Christ, when he used it to raise him from the dead and to make him sit at his right hand, in heaven, far above every Sovereignty, Authority, Power, or Domination, or any other name that can be named, not only in this age, but also in the age to come. He has put all things under his feet, and made him as the ruler of everything, the head of the Church; which is his body, the fullness of him who fills the whole creation.

■ **The word of the Lord.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Mt 28:19, 20

Alleluia, alleluia! / Go and teach all people my gospel. I am with you always, until the end of the world. / Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 28:16-20

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

The eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them. When they saw him they fell down before him, though some hesitated. Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.'

■ **The Gospel of the Lord.**

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS, ... BUT HOPE

Having escaped the clutches of his enemies by rising from the dead, the Lord ascends, like the prophet Elijah, to heaven.

In biblical language and imagery this manner of describing the close of Jesus' earthly ministry signals that the One who had been crucified on the trumped-up charge of being a political Messiah has now entered into his true messianic glory at God's right hand.

This entrance into heavenly glory does not mean that Jesus abandons either his disciples or his saving mission in the world. Rather, he will continue to exercise that mission through the ministry of the Church, empowered (at Pentecost) by the same Spirit that rested upon him.

Just before he departs, the disciples voice an understandable concern: 'Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' The query betrays a strong sense of 'unfinished business'. Despite the Easter victory, forces hostile to God and to true humanity continue to hold sway in the world – as the disciples, and we ourselves, remain acutely aware.

Jesus does not give a direct answer. The time of the Kingdom's full arrival remains shrouded in the mystery of God. The disciples' task, meanwhile, is to take up the messianic mission of Jesus, bringing the hope of the resurrection to an often despairing world.

The Ascension is not, then, simply something that happened to Jesus. As the Preface of the Mass says so well, he 'has passed beyond our sight, not to abandon us but to be our hope; where he has gone, we hope to follow'.

Brendan Byrne, SJ

FIRST READING

Acts 1:1-11

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Why are you standing here looking into the sky? Jesus has been taken into heaven.

In my earlier work, *Theophilus*, I dealt with everything Jesus had done and taught from the beginning until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven. He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God. When he had been at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. 'It is' he had said 'what you have heard me speak about: John baptised with water but you, not many days from now, will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'

Now having met together, they asked him, 'Lord, has the time come? Are you going to restore the kingdom of Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority, but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth.'

As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight. They were still staring into the sky when suddenly two men in white were standing near them and they said, 'Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking into the sky? Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven, this same Jesus will come back in the same way as you have seen him go there.'

■ **The word of the Lord.**



RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 46:2-3, 6-9. R. v. 6

R. God mounts his throne to shouts of joy: a blare of trumpets for the Lord. (or Alleluia.)

1. All peoples, clap your hands, / cry to God with shouts of joy! / For the Lord, the Most High, we must fear, / great king over all the earth. **R.**

2. God goes up with shouts of joy; / the Lord goes up with trumpet blast. / Sing praise for God, sing praise, / sing praise to our king, sing praise. **R.**

3. God is king of all the earth. / Sing praise with all your skill. / God is king over the nations; / God reigns on his holy throne. **R.**

SECOND READING

Eph 1:17-23

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians

He made Jesus to sit at his right hand in heaven.

May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit and how infinitely great is the power that he has