

## 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year [A]

**Fr Justin Driscoll**

May 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> 2026

5.00pm Ballarat East, 9.00am Bungaree, 10.30am Ballarat East



“I shall ask the Father,  
and he will give you  
another Advocate.”

John 14:16

Most Thursdays I'm in Ballan and this past week was no exception, including a visit to the new Mecwacare aged care facility to visit our residents there and offering the sacrament of Anointing of the sick. Our residents there are blessed by the generous ministry of some of our parishioners who offer regular pastoral care and holy communion. The new facility is wonderful, with some of the largest rooms for residents that I've seen in such facilities. Usually when I'm there to Anoint, we all gather in the one large room, but this time I was taken by our parishioner to residents individually in their own rooms. When I approached one of the newer residents and was introduced to her to offer her the anointing, the look of terror and fear on her face was evident. 'Am I going to die?' she asked, with an understanding of the sacrament that came from extreme unction and the last rites. After we'd talked about the sacrament of the sick not being reserved only for imminent death, she was ready to be anointed, but it does point to much work to do in order for this great sacrament of healing to be more fully appreciated. Thomas Groome tells a story in his book, *What makes us Catholic*<sup>1</sup> of a conversation he had with Kevin, who'd paused pensively after his first beer.

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<sup>1</sup> *What Makes Us Catholic: Eight Gifts for Life*, Thomas Groome (HarperCollins Religious US:2003).

Finally, he said, 'You know something? When the hospital asked for religious preference, I automatically put down Catholic. Then I wondered what that means for me, if anything anymore.'

'Why did you put it down' the other probed. You could have ticked off no preference or just skipped over that part of the form.'

'But' Kevin said 'I could never do that, what if something went wrong during the operation?'

'But Kevin you were only having your appendix out!'

'Yeah', he said with a sage expression, 'but yeh never know!'

Kevin was raised in a traditional Catholic family. His parents likely had never missed Sunday Mass, barring serious illness. Though they didn't agree with everything the Pope said, to them he was "the holy Father" spoken of with reverence. But Kevin, a rising young star at a major company had long ceased attending Church, 'never darken the door' as he happily admitted.

Well, Tom Groome interjected after another long pause, 'you often say you've left the Church. And every faith community should have a well marked exit sign, leaving members free to leave - and free to stay, which ever they choose and to return whenever they choose. So what's the big deal?'

'Ah but it's not that simple," Kevin said with an air of explaining things, "yeh see, I didn't feel I'd lied on that form. It felt right to put down Catholic. That's what I am. But then it should mean something for me...But what...?"

To be Catholic in this time and place is increasingly counter cultural, to be living the Gospel authentically has been and will always involve such a prophetic dimension that it will at times be a struggle for us. But then if we are not recognisably bold why would people choose us? But are we bold enough to be Catholic? Bold in the sense of being courageous, confident, fearless, standing out distinctively, being conspicuous and imaginative in thought or expression. Living faith with such boldness can be a risk and if we don't trust ourselves in our Catholicity, how can we expect others to trust us?

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In addition to courage and confidence, over recent decades we've recognised that humility and service are also necessary for our ecclesial identity as well as a great capacity to listen.

What we have is precious, it is a gift – and we need to treasure the uniqueness of this gift. The marketplace has many other symbols – McDonalds, Nike, Coca Cola –and what we proclaim is the cross and we continually need to discern ways of being visible in the world, in our local community, in every facet of our lives and through every dimension of our culture we are called to live this precious faith. We are a mission Church and we have been made for these times. We needn't think that God's got it wrong, that somehow this Holy Spirit, the Advocate the one promised by Jesus to the 12 as part of his farewell discourse, has got the message wrong. Miracles aren't when God does what we ask God, it is when we do what God asks and God is asking us to live as church in this time and place

And there is something bold and breathtaking in the vision of Jesus and it is to understand this that we are created, the People of God, the Body of Christ here in this time and place.