



# Holy Family Parish Northeast Mallee

Incorporating the Communities of

St Mary's Sea Lake, Sacred Heart Culgoa, St Michael's Lalbert, St Joseph's Lake Boga, St Joseph's Nandaly, S's Peter & Paul Quambatook & St Mary's Swan Hill

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## 3RD SUNDAY OF LENT 20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2022

### JESUS, OUR PATIENT GARDENER



One day a faithful mum was trying to round up her kids to take them to confession at their local Church. After all, it is a beautiful sacrament of healing! But one of her sons was not in the mood. "I've got nothing to say," he protested, "I've done nothing wrong." Mum was having none of that, "You just get your bum on that car seat and I will tell you everything you have done wrong and exactly what you need to confess!"

It is never easy facing our own sinfulness. Finding fault in others can be a cosy distraction. And that is what is happening in the first part of the Gospel today. There is gossip about some Galileans who had fallen victim to violence. 'They must have done something to deserve it' is the implied suggestion.

But Jesus corrects the gossipers, those Galileans were no greater sinners than anyone else. We have all sinned. We all need God's forgiveness and mercy. We are all in need of repentance. And the time is now.

No-one enjoys acknowledging their failings and weakness. But perhaps the little parable of the fig tree we heard today can give us some hope and courage. The barren tree has been well cared for and given ample opportunity to bear fruit. It has so far failed to do so and seems a dud, good for nothing else but firewood.

But the patient gardener sticks up for it and pleads to give it another chance. He will loosen the soil and fertilise it, giving it the best chance to do what it was planted for.

*Jesus is that patient gardener.* He wants us to flourish. If we open up our hearts to his mercy he will do the work for us. He will loosen the soil, breaking down any hardness of heart. He will remove the rocks and weeds of sin. He then will fertilise it with his grace and love and watch over us with tender care. But first we have to invite him in. Again, it is never easy to face our own sinfulness. However, if we have the courage and honesty to do so we will find there only loving mercy and healing grace.

Christ has left us with a very special way to encounter this mercy in the Sacrament of Penance. By honestly confessing our sins before God, we open up our hearts to his healing and are reconciled. Today we welcome our families who are presenting their children to experience this sacrament for the first time.

Being Lent, this is also a special time for us all to renew our knowledge and desire for the sacrament. While never easy, confession is always tremendously liberating. To have God meet us at our weakest and lowest, and to encounter their only love, mercy and forgiveness... nothing can be more freeing.

#### **Parish Contact Details:**

St Mary's Presbytery 62 Splatt St  
Po Box 71 Swan Hill, Vic 3585

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Phone: 03 5032 4144

Website: [northeastmallee.org.au](http://northeastmallee.org.au)

**Office Hrs:** Tues and Fri 10:30 -2:30

#### **Parish Priest**

Fr James Kerr

#### **Parish Admin Officers:**

Glenda Klabbers

Mary Kennedy

#### **Child Protection Officers:**

Damian and Karen Kelly

#### **Child Safe Church**

Here in the Parish of Holy Family North East Mallee we follow the Child Safe Standards outlined by the Victorian Government and we also implement procedures and standards as directed by the Ballarat Diocesan Office.



***Please keep in your prayers***  
**Recent Deaths**

**ANNIVERSARIES OF DEATH**

Angelo Abate, Geordie Joseph, Lavena Johnston, Tony DeMaio, Maurice McNamara, William Foley, Ivor McLean, Valerie Irwin, Bryant (Wangie) Barry, Jeremiah Lucy

**SICK LIST**

Jayden Williams, Margaret Foott, Jarrod Crimmins, Jack Donohue, Jude Lewis, Yvonne Annan, Sarah Kenny, Michael Bourke, Bridget Phyland, Carmel Ryan

**THIS WEEKEND (19<sup>TH</sup>/20<sup>TH</sup> MARCH)**

Saturday 6:30pm Swan Hill

Sunday: 8.30am Lalbert

Sunday 10:30am Swan Hill

Sunday 5pm Sea Lake (*Opening School Year Mass*)

**WEEKDAYS IN SWAN HILL**

Tuesday 5.30pm

Wednesday- 10am Mass

*(Memorial Angelo Abate, father Teresa Taverna)*

Thurs: Confession 5pm and Mass 5.30pm

Friday: Adoration 11am and Mass 12pm & 5:30pm

*(Extra Mass for Feast Annunciation)*

Saturday: Confessions 9-10am

**NEXT WEEKEND (26<sup>TH</sup>/27<sup>TH</sup> MARCH)**

Saturday 6:30pm Swan Hill

Sunday 8.30am Quambatook

Sunday 10:30am Swan Hill

**Readings Next Week: 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent**

First Reading: Jos 5:9-12

Second Reading: Ps 33:2-7. R. v.9

Gospel: Lk 15:1-3. 11-32

**NOTICES**

**FIRST RECONCILIATIONS FOR CHILDREN**

We welcome all the families this week who have come in preparation for their child's first confession. Thank you for presenting your child and supporting them thus far. These will be celebrated on Tuesday April 5<sup>th</sup> in three 'shifts', first at 5pm, then 6pm and finally 7pm. Spreading things out this way will mean the experience won't be rushed for the children, and will also give their families the opportunity to experience God's reconciliation as well by making their own confessions. If any one you know missed the invitation to today's introduction, that is no drama. Just tell them to get in contact with us and we will help them get ready for the day.

**HARMONY DAY** next Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> at Riverside park from 4-8pm. Many of our parishioners are playing key roles in this celebration so it will be great to get along and support them.

**FRIDAY FAMILY FISH AND CHIPS**

We are planning a special Lenten treat for our parish children on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April, starting at 5:30pm. We will gather in the PFC for some fun activities and prayer, before finishing with some fish and chips! All families welcome. Just touch base with Mary or myself for more details.

**COLLECTIONS LAST WEEKEND**

1<sup>st</sup> (Presbytery) \$ 850

2<sup>nd</sup> (Parish) \$ 1925

**PARISH PRAYER**

God our Father, through the intercession of the Holy Family our patron, we pray that you bless this parish so that we may love you more. Help parents to be a good example to their children and our youth to grow in strength as good Christians. Encircle our families with your loving care; to the sick and the weak grant health; to the aged bring serenity and to those in sorrow joy. May we grow stronger in faith and may our love for one another become deeper in our daily life. Amen.

**Our Parish Schools**

**St Mary's Primary School Sea Lake**

Principal: Kate Nunn

47 Hannon Street, Sea Lake

Ph: 03 5070 1272

[Principal@smsealake.catholic.edu.au](mailto:Principal@smsealake.catholic.edu.au)

**St Mary's Primary School Swan Hill**

Principal: Kate Quin

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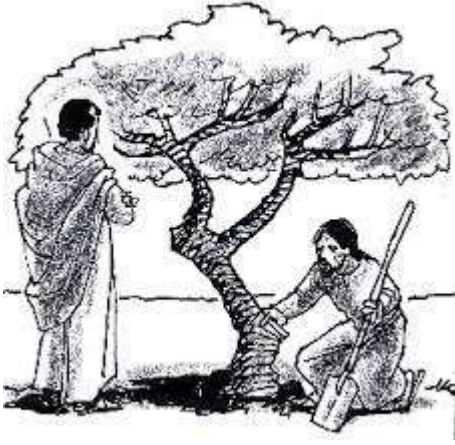
**St Mary MacKillop College**

Principal: Michelle Haeusler

53 McCrae Street, Swan Hill

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### REFLECTION BY MARY COLOE PBVM

The Lenten theme of repentance (metanoia) is the central teaching of today's Gospel. As Jesus moves towards Jerusalem, he speaks with a sense of great urgency to the crowds who come to him. Time is short. Jesus gives the crowd two very graphic images of disasters: the first is of Pilate slaughtering some Galileans while they were offering their sacrifices, and the second is a tower near the pool of Siloam that suddenly collapsed. Jesus' message to the crowd is, 'Don't think this couldn't happen to you.' There was a tendency to see the hand of God behind such sudden, apparently haphazard disasters, and so to think that those caught up in these events were being punished for sin. In this way some could be thinking, 'This couldn't happen to me. They deserved it.' Jesus warns against such complacency. The parable of the fig tree reiterates this teaching. Time is running out. Today is the moment of choice.

The 'time is short' message is not meant to frighten us with thoughts of death, but to urge us to live authentically. Live fully. Live each moment purposefully. Are we people who choose life, or does life just happen to us?

Jesus often taught using parables, such as the one in today's Gospel. The point of a parable is that some comparison is being made between the image in the story and the life of Jesus' listeners. Paul also uses comparisons as a teaching technique. Today, speaking to the community at Corinth he reminds them of the experience of the Israelites in the Exodus. They passed through the waters of the Sea, they were guided by the pillar of cloud; they were fed by the manna – and yet, in spite of all these signs of God's lavish care, they all died; so be warned. In this section of Paul's letter, he is dealing with a number of issues that the community had asked his advice about: to marry or remain single and eating food that had previously been offered to

the Greco-Roman gods. In chapter 10, he is challenging his community not to return to former practices of worship at Temples. Now that these Corinthians have turned to Christ and been baptised into him, then they should remain firm in their commitment. Remember that this is probably a small group of believers who are now breaking ties with family and friends in becoming a follower of Jesus. No longer can they join in the normal civic and religious celebrations of the city since this would mean going into a Greek Temple and participating in a meal of communion with the Greek deity. This was the pattern of life they had been used to. It was religious, cultural and civic. Now, being a disciple of Jesus means a total change that means they will stand out from their neighbours. This will be difficult, hence Paul's effort to challenge and warn them. Like the people in Jesus' time, and the Corinthians, living Christian faith does make demands that go beyond an hour on Sunday. In all the choices we make, about what we buy, how we live and how we vote, we are to be guided by Gospel principles of 'love of God and neighbour.' Are we living a rigorous Christianity that stands for principles of social justice, respect for all, tolerance towards others with a special regard for those most vulnerable in our society? What are our values really? How much do Gospel values impinge on the choices we make. These questions may help depth our Lenten time of metanoia.

Lent is a metanoia time giving us a chance to have a change of heart and to live from the choices of our hearts. We are at the half-way point of the Lenten journey. This week take some time to reflect on your choices and the direction in which you want your life to go. Choose while the choice is still possible. Time's running out.

© Mary Coloe

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

What is the connection between the parable of the fig tree and the preceding conversation?

What values underlie a belief that bad things only happen to bad people?

How have 'good' people you know coped with bad things happening in their lives?

How would you answer someone who asked, 'Why does God let bad things happen to good people?'

In what way/s is today's gospel confronting to modern sensibilities?

Where in your life is there a need for 'repentance' – a change of heart to one of compassion?

**First Reading** Ex 3:1-8. 13-15

A reading from the book of Exodus

Moses was looking after the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, priest of Midian. He led his flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in the shape of a flame of fire, coming from the middle of a bush. Moses looked; there was the bush blazing but it was not being burnt up. 'I must go and look at this strange sight,' Moses said, 'and see why the bush is not burnt.' Now the Lord saw him go forward to look, and God called to him from the middle of the bush. 'Moses, Moses!' he said. 'Here I am' he answered. 'Come no nearer' he said. 'Take off your shoes, for the place on which you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father,' he said 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this Moses covered his face, afraid to look at God.

And the Lord said, 'I have seen the miserable state of my people in Egypt. I have heard their appeal to be free of their slave-drivers. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings. I mean to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a land rich and broad, a land where milk and honey flow.'

Then Moses said to God, 'I am to go, then, to the sons of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you." But if they ask me what his name is, what am I to tell them?' And God said to Moses, 'I Am who I Am. This' he added 'is what you must say to the sons of Israel: "The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is my name for all time; by this name I shall be invoked for all generations to come.'

*The Word of the Lord.*

**Responsorial Psalm** Ps 102:1-4. 6-8. 11. R. v.8**(R.) The Lord is kind and merciful.**

My soul, give thanks to the Lord, all my being, bless his holy name. My soul give thanks to the Lord and never forget all his blessings.

It is he who forgives all your guilt, who heals every one of your ills, who redeems your life from the grave, who crowns you with love and compassion.

The Lord does deeds of justice, gives judgement for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses and his deeds to Israel's sons.

The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy. For as the heavens are high above the earth so strong is his love for those who fear him.

**(R.) The Lord is kind and merciful.****Second Reading** 1 Cor 10:1-6, 10-12

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

I want to remind you how our fathers were all guided by a cloud above them and how they all passed through the sea. They were all baptised into Moses in this cloud and in this sea; all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink, since they all drank from the spiritual rock that followed them as they went, and that rock was Christ. In spite of this, most of them failed to please God and their corpses littered the desert.

These things all happened as warnings for us, not to have the wicked lusts for forbidden things that they had. You must never complain: some of them did, and they were killed by the Destroyer.

All this happened to them as a warning and it was written down to be a lesson for us who are living at the end of the age. The man who thinks he is safe must be careful that he does not fall.

*The Word of the Lord.*

**Gospel Acclamation** Mt 4:17

Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!

Repent, says the Lord; the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Glory to you, Word of God, Lord Jesus Christ!

**Gospel** Lk 13:1-9

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this he said to them, 'Do you suppose these Galileans who suffered like that were greater sinners than any other Galileans? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell and killed them? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.'

He told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to the man who looked after the vineyard, "Look here, for three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?" "Sir," the man replied "leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down."'

*The Gospel of the Lord.*