



Holy Family Parish Northeast Mallee

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Incorporating the Communities of St Mary's Sea Lake, Sacred Heart Culgoa, St Joseph's Nandaly, S's Peter & Paul Quambatook & St Mary's Swan Hill as well as the Lake Boga Families & Faith Group



23RD MARCH 2025

3RD SUNDAY OF LENT

JESUS, OUR PATIENT GARDENER



See the picture on the left? I used the same image the last time we had this Gospel. A younger parishioner was looking at it, very puzzled. "Fr James, Fr James, what is that man doing?" "He's digging around the tree and manuring it, to help it grow fruit, like in the Gospel." "Oh," he replied, then after a pause, "I thought he was digging a hole to bury that kid in." It can be hard keeping a straight face sometimes. I don't always succeed.

Anyway, back to the Gospel!

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 means of encountering this mercy in the Sacrament of Penance (also known as Confession or Reconciliation). By honestly confessing our sins before God, we open up our hearts to his healing and are reconciled. Some of our young parishioners will experience this sacrament for the first time on Monday. We pray for them, and their families too, that it will be a powerful experience of God's mercy in their lives. 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. As we approach Easter, you will see more opportunities for the Sacrament opening up so that everyone has the chance to experience this Sacrament.

Parish Contact Details:

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Office Hrs: Tues, Wed and Fri 10:30 -1.30

Parish Priest

Fr James Kerr

Parish Office:

Glenda Klabbers & Mary Kennedy

Child Protection Officers:

Tony and Joelle Whiting

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+
 Maria Rosa Carlo

ANNIVERSARIES OF DEATH

Tony De Maio, Ivor McLean, Valerie Irwin
 Bryant (Wangie) Barry, Jack O'Connor
 Clare Gammon, Kath Thompson
 Jeremiah Lucy, Olive Burns, Bill Kelly
 Mark Boulton, Gloria Langerak, Joe Wilkinson
 James Peter Maher, Michael Brennan

SICK LIST

Pope Francis, Pat Hoare, Maureen Allen, Pat Croft,
 Yvonne Richardson, Paul Donohue, Jayden Williams,
 Margaret Foott, Jarrod Crimmins, Michael Bourke,
 Jack Donohue, Jude Lewis, Bridget Phyland,
 Carmel Ryan, Peter Amezdroz, Ken Duryea,
 Helen Duryea

THIS WEEKEND 23RD MARCH 2025

3RD SUNDAY OF LENT

Sat 6pm Swan Hill
 Sunday 8:30am Quambatook
 Sunday 10:30am Swan Hill

WEEKDAYS IN SWAN HILL

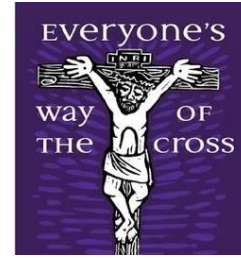
Tues: Annunciation of the Lord Mass 10am
 Wednesday: 10am Mass
 Thursday: Confessions 5pm,
 5.30pm Mass, Adoration
 Friday: 11:30am Mass
Confessions 5:30pm
Stations of the Cross 6pm

NEXT WEEKEND 30TH MARCH

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

Saturday 6pm Swan Hill
 Sunday 10.30am Swan Hill

NOTICES



STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Fridays of Lent 6pm St Marys Swan Hill.

UPDATED NOTICE: KIDS & FAMILY'S STATIONS OF THE CROSS POSTPONED

We had started to advertise the Annual Kid's Stations of the Cross for next Friday, but due to some changed circumstances this will have to be cancelled. We look forward to organising an alternative Family event sometime after the Easter School Holidays.

CONNECT: YOUNG ADULTS

Meeting again this Saturday 22nd after 6pm Mass



FIRST RECONCILIATION

Please pray for all the children who will be making their First Reconciliation this coming Monday evening, and for their families too. We pray this will be a blessed and powerful experience of God's love and mercy for them all.

LITTLE ACTS OF KINDNESS FOR LENT

Tell someone you love them. (1 John 4:19 – "We love because He first loved us.")

Leave a note or drawing in a sibling's or parent's lunchbox. (Hebrews 10:24 – "Spur one another on toward love and good deeds.")

Our Parish Schools

St Mary's Primary School Sea Lake
 Principal: Kate Nunn
 47 Hannon Street, Sea Lake
 Ph: 03 5070 1272

St Mary's Primary School Swan Hill
 Principal: Kate Quin
 2 Murlong St Swan Hill
 Ph. 03 5033 2541

St Mary MacKillop College
 Principal: Michelle Haeusler
 53 McCrae Street, Swan Hill
 Ph: 5032 9771

principal@smswanhill.catholic.edu.au

Hold the door open for as many people as possible today. (Luke 6:31 – "Do to others as you would have them do to you.")

Read a Bible story to a younger sibling or friend. (Psalm 119:105 – "Your word is a lamp for my feet.")

Call a grandparent or older relative just to say hello. (Proverbs 17:6 – "Children's children are a crown to the aged.")

Donate toys and clothes you no longer use. (2 Corinthians 9:7 – "God loves a cheerful giver.")

Make a homemade card for someone in the hospital or a nursing home. (Psalm 147:3 – "He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.")

Simple Prayer: Lord may our words and actions bring joy to others. Amen.

HAVE YOU 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?'

SCRIPTURAL CONTEXT – PARABLES

The parable of the unproductive fig tree at the end of today's passage is not a straightforward story with a clear message. Indeed, this is a hallmark of the style of storytelling that we call 'parable'. A parable is deliberately open to interpretation at different levels. In the first instance, today's parable is a simple farming story. However, the original audience knew (as we know) that there had to be more to the story. Parables use metaphoric and symbolic language that invites the listener or reader to explore deeper and find a meaning that lies beyond the literal.

GOSPEL FOCUS – REPENT

Throughout the gospels, Jesus challenged the prevailing 'purity codes' that separated and classified people. The Jewish religious officials of the day were obsessed with the 'letter of the Law' as it applied to purity observance. Jesus told them that a spirit of compassion was much more important than the blind adherence to the Law. He suggests that it is not the lack of observance of purity codes that makes a person 'unclean' or 'sinful'; rather, it is lack of compassion informing their actions towards others. The call to 'repent' is a call to complete conversion of heart – to take on an attitude of compassion.



GOSPEL Luke 13:1-9

*A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke
Unless you repent you will all perish as they did.*

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.

ALL: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

READINGS NEXT WEEK:

4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

First Reading: Joshua 5:9-12

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

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

FIRST READING Exodus 3:1-8. 13-15

A reading from the book of Exodus

This is what you must say to the children of Israel: I Am has sent me to you.

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. ALL: Thanks be to God.

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.)**

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

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

All this that happened to the people of Moses in the desert was written for our benefit.

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. ALL: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Matthew 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: *On the reverse of this page, right hand column, (under the picture)!*

