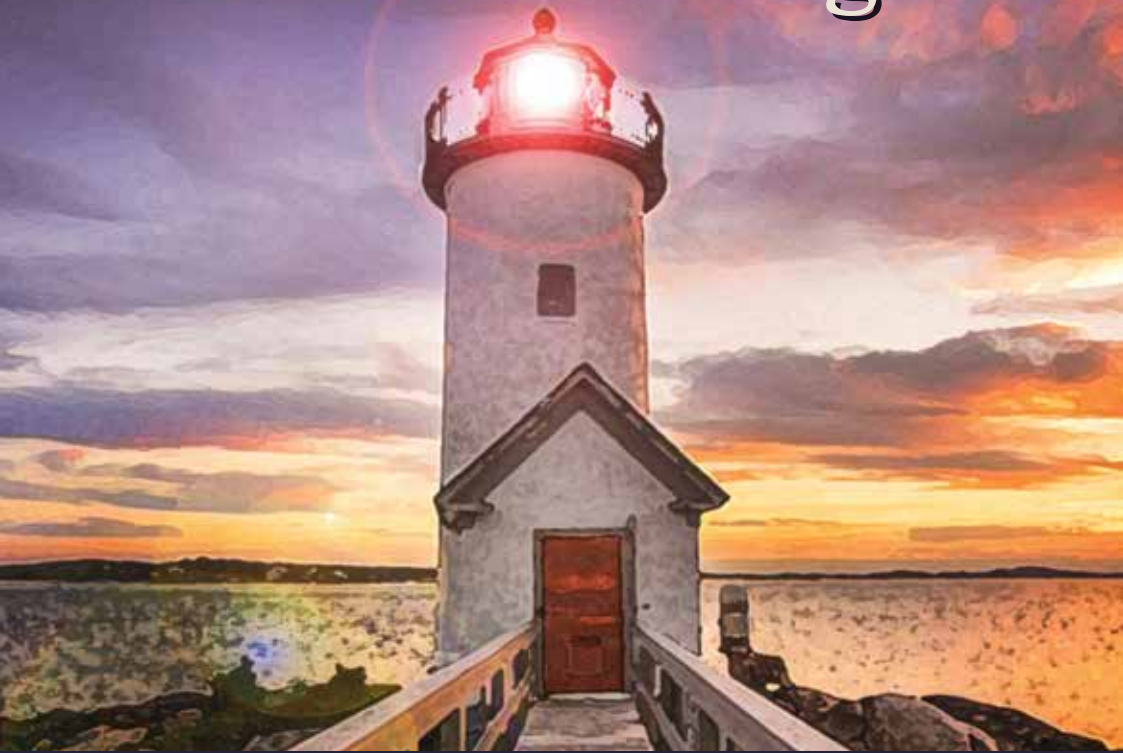


# Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega



Diocese of Broken Bay - Lenten Program **2021**

Reflecting Together on Bishop Anthony's Pastoral Letter  
*"Jesus Christ, our Beginning and End"*







# Jesus Christ, the Alpha and the Omega

Diocese of Broken Bay - Lenten Program

**2021**



## Introduction - Bishop Anthony

**A**fter one year as your Bishop, it was a joy for me to be able to offer you my Pastoral Letter in November 2020, which presented the fruit of my prayer and contemplation on the priorities that I would like us to embrace as the community of the Diocese of Broken Bay. Thank you for receiving these with an open heart, and in a particular way, thank you for gathering during this Lenten season to reflect further and consider how these priorities can be more intentionally lived in our own lives and within our communities.

The beginning and the end of our contemplation is the person of Jesus Christ; our constant during change. Empowered and united by the Holy Spirit in our common faith, we are each called to continue to grow in holiness and be formed as disciples, discovering our own vocation arising from our baptism, and living an authentic Christian life that places justice and mercy at the heart.

It is my prayer for you that you will come to know Jesus Christ in a deeper way throughout these next six weeks. Focused on Christ and led by the Holy Spirit as one community of the Church of Broken Bay, we journey together towards the joyous solemnity of Easter. May this Lenten period which culminates in Christ's Resurrection encourage us and bring new life to each one of us and our communities.

+ Anthony Randazzo

**Most Rev Anthony Randazzo**  
Bishop of Broken Bay





## How to Use this Booklet

This booklet invites you to reflect prayerfully on the Sunday Gospel readings in Lent together with the six priorities set before us by Bishop Anthony Randazzo in his Pastoral Letter to the community of the Church of Broken Bay, dated 29 November 2020.

**In preparation, participants are invited to read the corresponding section in the Pastoral Letter. It can be accessed at: [www.bbcatholic.org.au](http://www.bbcatholic.org.au) if you do not have a hard copy on hand. For hard copies, please ask your parish.**

This booklet can be used individually or as part of a group. The notes below are provided for use in a small group context.

**For each of the 6 weeks of Lent, this resource includes a reading of the Gospel text; a reflection on the text which draws on one of Bishop Anthony's priority areas; and a personal testimony on an aspect of that particular priority area. All materials and reflections have been prepared by members from our Broken Bay Church community, making this resource relevant to us and the journey we are on as a community.**

**Audio materials supporting this booklet include:**



- Gospel text recordings
- Personal testimony recordings

These can be accessed or downloaded at [www.bbcatholic.org.au/lentenprogram](http://www.bbcatholic.org.au/lentenprogram)

It is suggested that you allocate 1 ½ hours to complete the session.

**The recommended process is as follows:**

### **1. Opening Prayer** (10 mins)



An Opening Prayer is offered, which may be read together by participants.

Song suggestions are given for each week which you may wish to consider using as part of the gathering prayer time for the group.

### **2. Introduction** (5 mins)



Read the introduction to the session which highlights the priority for the session.

### 3. Reading of the Gospel passage (15 mins)



Optional: In order for participants to prepare themselves well to hear God speak through the Sacred Scriptures, you may wish to pray the prayer of Saint John Chrysostom, offered on the following page, prior to reading the Gospel text.

#### Listen to the Gospel text.

An audio recording of the text is provided on the Lenten Program webpage. Alternatively, you may wish to invite someone from the group to read the text.

#### Pause.

Pause for silent reflection for a few moments.

#### Share an insight.

Invite people to share one insight into what they are hearing through the text. This is not a time for discussion, but only an invitation to offer a short comment. The group listens attentively to each person but does not respond.

### 4. Reflection with Guided Questions (30 mins)



A reflection is offered on the scripture text and how it intersects with the focus priority. This reflection could be read aloud by a member (or

members) of the group or read quietly by participants.

Invite conversation about what thoughts are arising in people so far during the session, drawing on the Scripture text and the reflection presented.

Invite conversation using the guided questions.

### 5. A Personal Story (15 mins)



A personal testimony is offered on the priority for the week. This testimony is presented as an audio file and can be accessed on the Lenten Program webpage.

Listen to the testimony and discuss how this story reflects and encourages the priority area being considered.

### 6. Response (10 mins)



Participants are encouraged to write down one or two personal or communal actions in response to their reflection during the session.

Participants are then invited to share and discuss their response with one other person.



## 7. Closing Prayer (5 mins)



To conclude, pray the final prayer.

### Suggested Music



A modern song as well as a more traditional song are offered for each week. Please visit [www.bbcatholic.org.au/lentenprogram](http://www.bbcatholic.org.au/lentenprogram) for online links.

**Week 1**  
**Spirit Move – Danielle Noonan**  
Veni, Creator Spiritus

**Week 2**  
**Open the Eyes of My Heart**  
– Audrey Assad  
O Sacred Head, Surrounded

**Week 3**  
**Lord, Have Mercy – The Vigil Project**  
God of Mercy and Compassion

**Week 4**  
**God So Loved – Hillsong Worship**  
Be Thou My Vision

**Week 5**  
**Little Things with Great Love**  
– Audrey Assad  
The Church's One Foundation

**Week 6**  
**Abide With Me - Audrey Assad**  
Soul of my Saviour

### Prayer of Saint John Chrysostom before reading the Scripture

O Lord Jesus Christ, open the eyes of my heart, that I may hear your word and understand and do your will, for I am a sojourner upon the earth. Hide not your commandments from me, but open my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of your law. Speak unto me the hidden and secret things of your wisdom. On You I set my hope, O my God, that You will enlighten my mind and understanding with the light of your knowledge, not only to cherish those things which are written, but to do them; that in reading the lives and sayings of the saints I may not sin, but that such may serve for my restoration, enlightenment and sanctification, for the salvation of my soul, and the inheritance of life everlasting. For You are the enlightenment of those who lie in darkness, and from You comes every good deed and every gift. AMEN.



## First Sunday of Lent

### *The Holy Spirit Leads us in the Way of Discipleship*

#### Opening Prayer



Loving and gracious God,

Amid our own wilderness, allow the Holy Spirit to comfort and reveal Jesus to us, so that as one community of the Church in Broken Bay, we may be strengthened, sustained and encouraged in our call to be witnesses to build up the Body of Christ.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

#### Introduction



“For the Christian, to live life in the Spirit is both an invitation and a command. The invitation is to be open to receiving the Word of God. The command is to allow the Word to come to birth in our every thought, word, and action. I urge and encourage you to pursue the Spirit in prayer and to look to the wonder of Christ whose dying and rising washes away our sins and restores us to new life.” (Bishop Anthony’s Pastoral Letter, *Jesus Christ, our beginning and end*)

We begin our Lenten Series with a focus on the Holy Spirit, the person of the Trinity that animates and renews. It is the Spirit that reveals Jesus to us, and it is with the Spirit’s help that we are led forward, encouraged and guided in our path of holiness and mission both personally and communally. It was the Spirit that led Jesus into the wilderness, as we read in today’s Gospel, for a time of discernment, testing and strengthening. We pray for an openness to the Spirit’s promptings and that the Holy Spirit will lead and empower each of us in the Diocese of Broken Bay as we seek to animate Bishop Anthony’s priorities in our lives and in our communities, and in doing so, continue Jesus’ mission of sharing His Good News that has been entrusted to us.

#### Gospel Reading



#### Audio: Week 1 Gospel Reading



#### Mark 1:12-15

The Spirit immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested; Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying,

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

### Pause for reflection.

You are invited to share a thought, feeling or insight that is arising in you as you hear this Gospel text today. Simply listen to each person, with no comment at this stage.

### Reflection

#### – Sr Josefa Mabini OSA

Pastoral Associate  
Our Lady of Perpetual Succour  
Parish, Toukley/Lake Munmorah



During this Season of Lent, the Church once again invites us to a wilderness experience. Like Jesus in the Gospel reading, we are invited to journey to a place where wild beasts and temptations abound. It is a journey to test one's steadfastness and faith in God. The Lenten journey into the wilderness calls for a movement away from our comfort zones and into the unknown. It is a journey away from the false security offered by material goods and human wisdom and strength and to appreciate God's gift of the Holy Spirit — our only true good and source of security.

Before Jesus' journey to the wilderness where the Spirit drove Him, Jesus was baptised in the Jordan by John the Baptist. During that event, the Spirit descended upon Jesus and a voice was heard from heaven saying, “You are my beloved

Son; with you I am well pleased.” (Mk 1:11). This was the inauguration of Jesus' public ministry – His mission had commenced. The mission was not going to be an easy one. It would be fraught with discouragement, betrayal, opposition, and threats to his life. Such was the fate that awaited God's beloved Son. The journey towards the Kingdom of God, a journey towards fullness of life, is filled with obstacles and crossroads. It is never easy. Hence, before embarking on the arduous task of proclaiming the Kingdom of God, the Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness where He stayed for forty days with Satan tempting him.

Although Mark does not provide us with a detailed account of the temptation, we are able to know more about this in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (cf. Mt. 4:1-11 and Lk 4:1-13). Jesus prayed. He fasted in the wilderness. He was surrounded by wild beasts. Amid the difficult conditions, Satan tried everything in his power to dissuade Jesus from fulfilling his mission and prevent him from obeying the Father's will. Yet, Jesus did not budge! Propelled by His love for the Father, He endured the hunger, the loneliness, and the danger in the wilderness and was steadfast in fulfilling only one thing – to do the Father's will, not His (cf. Mk 14:36). And He triumphed! The angels sustained Him and looked after Him.

Today, we who are followers of Jesus are invited to remain steadfast in our faith. Temptations and trials are a

reality in life, more so for those who follow the path of discipleship and holiness. Yet, Jesus promised us that we will never be alone in this journey. God gives us the Holy Spirit to strengthen, sustain, and encourage us. The Holy Spirit fills our hearts with love that enables us to endure all trials (Rom 5:3-5). For only with love are we able to pray, fast, and give alms as Christ commanded us. These are the three pillars of our Lenten observance. And doing these will only have meaning if we have love – the kind of love which only the Holy Spirit can give.

In his pastoral message to the Diocese, Bishop Anthony reminds us that “it is the Holy Spirit who animates and sanctifies the community of the Church. It is the Holy Spirit who reveals the gift of faith, and it is the same Spirit who equips the saints for mission, for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ.” Truly, when we are animated by the Holy Spirit’s gifts, no obstacles – no temptations – can dissuade us from becoming true disciples of Christ.

**Reflection Questions for Discussion:**



- 1. Share and discuss your insights from listening to the Gospel text and the accompanying reflection.**
- 2. How do you understand the action of the Holy Spirit in**

**leading you on your path towards discipleship?**

- 3. In which areas of your life is the Holy Spirit inviting you to grow?**
- 4. What temptations do you foresee blocking your journey towards spiritual growth?**

**A Personal Story**



**Audio:**  
**Week 1 Personal Story – Natalie**



*Natalie offers us a personal reflection on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in her life.*

*Natalie is part of the Lindfield-Killara and Corpus Christi St Ives parishes. She has started her first year working as a primary school teacher. Last year she completed the Alpha course and has felt the Holy Spirit more present in her life. She is excited to experience and learn more about the Holy Spirit and all of His wonders.*

**Listen to the testimony, and use the following questions to discuss:**



- 1. What aspects of the Holy Spirit’s action in Natalie’s life spoke to you most deeply?**

2. How is this story inspiring you to pray and to seek out the Holy Spirit in your faith life?
3. How could your parish / school / agency / community more

intentionally invite the power of the Holy Spirit in its activities?

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**Response**



What is your response to what you have heard and discussed during this session? What initiatives are you being called to action, both personally and communally? You are invited to share and discuss your response with another person.

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Lord, be the beginning and end  
 of all we do and say.  
 Prompt our actions with your grace,  
 and complete them with your all-powerful help.  
 Through Christ our Lord.  
 AMEN.







## Second Sunday of Lent

### *The person of Jesus Christ, and his message of Good News*

#### Opening Prayer



Loving and gracious God,

Your Son so loved the world that He gave Himself up to death for our sake. Grant us the grace to receive this love through our personal encounter with Jesus and to proclaim Him as our beginning and end. May each member of the community of the Church in Broken Bay be one in Christ and experience the promise of abundant life.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

#### Introduction



“In the moment of personal encounter, Jesus Christ was alive and living. He met me where I was, he accompanied me on the pathway, and he called me to himself. In the encounter, Jesus did not judge me, nor did he burden me. As he did to so many others before me, Jesus forgave me and liberated me. He loved me. The personal encounter was an invitation to life with Christ. It was a call to conversion, to turn away from sin and believe in the

Good News.” (Bishop Anthony’s Pastoral Letter, *Jesus Christ, our beginning and end*)

Jesus is at the very heart of the Christian faith. As fully-God and fully-human, Jesus uniquely takes His place as the one who restores our relationship with God through His life, death and resurrection. Through Him we gain a share in the fullness of His new life both now and in eternity. Each of us is invited into a relationship with Jesus that is personal. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we can know Jesus both personally and as the Church community, which is the Body of Christ.

#### Gospel Reading



#### Audio: Week 2 Gospel Reading



#### Mark 9:2-10

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves.

And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for

Moses, and one for Elijah.” He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, He ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.

### Pause for reflection.

You are invited to share a thought, feeling or insight that is arising in you as you hear this Gospel text today. Simply listen to each person, with no comment at this stage.

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#### Reflection - Pina Bernard

Team Leader,  
Parish Renewal & Discipleship  
Evangelisation Broken Bay



Have you ever experienced a sense of being overwhelmed by God? Perhaps it was a spectacular sunrise over the ocean at one of the many beautiful beaches in our Diocese; or perhaps it was the very first glimpse of a

newborn child, reflecting the wonder of God’s creation.

Thomas Merton, the American Trappist monk (d. 1968), experienced a moment such as this in 1958 - a moment of deep insight in the middle of the ordinariness of an inner-city street.

He describes his experience in this way: *“I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realisation that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers.*

*... I have the immense joy of being man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now I realise what we all are. And if only everybody could realise this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.*

*... It was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts, where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God’s eyes.” (Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, 1968)*

Merton’s remarkable experience was a moment of grace, where he caught a glimpse of a deeper reality that he had not been able to perceive before. He saw what was familiar in a transformed light. Indeed, you could

say that he saw with God's eyes the core essence that united each human being made in the image of God.

In a similar way in this week's Transfiguration text, Peter, James and John experience a moment of clarity and revelation as they see a new reality of Jesus. This is a powerful experience right at the time when Jesus begins to tell them that he is to suffer, die and rise again. We can imagine the confusion the disciples felt as they tried to come to terms with what Jesus was trying to tell them, his closest companions. Surely this revelation would have sustained them in the challenging times that awaited them.

Thankfully, we have a God who desires to reveal himself to us. I am reminded of the passage in the book of Revelation (Rev 3:20) where Jesus is standing at the door of our hearts and lives, knocking and inviting us to open the door to allow him to enter. Jesus is not aloof and far from us, but rather is very close, calling us into relationship.

At the heart of this relationship is the common thread that binds us together, the Good News of Jesus that we need to keep hearing again and again. This 'Gospel kerygma' or 'proclamation of the Good News' has been described by St John Paul II as "the initial ardent proclamation by which a person is one day overwhelmed and brought to the decision to entrust himself to Jesus Christ by faith." (*Catechesi Tradendae*, 25)

What is this proclamation that should overwhelm us? It is the Good News that "Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side every day to enlighten, strengthen and free you." (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 164)

Hearing this Good News, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, can 'overwhelm' us as we come to realise more and more deeply who Jesus is and the salvation that he offers us through his life, death and resurrection. Our response, as St John Paul II indicates, is to make a decision to say 'yes' to choose to follow Jesus as his disciple. This needs to be intentional. We also need to surrender and entrust ourselves to Jesus, accepting his way and not our own.

As we embark on this path of growing in discipleship, we grow in holiness as we seek to conform ourselves gradually to Christ. Along the way, we can encounter Christ and experience new insights. We encounter Christ in our heart-to-heart prayer, which is the foundation of our relationship. We also meet Christ in the Liturgy and in graced moments of encounter in the Sacraments; in the homily and through the ministry of the priest; in the words of our sacred Scriptures; through sharing our faith and witnessing to each other in our faith community; and in our selfless service of others. Within each of these experiences can lie real moments of revelation for us, as we may be given the grace to see with God's eyes. It is through the Holy Spirit that we come

to understand who Jesus truly is; as well as coming to see the divine spark that is in each person.

As we grow in holiness, we also grow in being missionary. The joy of our experience of faith in Christ starts to spill out to those around us. Unlike the disciples in today's Gospel, we are meant to tell the Good News of Jesus to everyone. It's not a secret to be kept to ourselves.

It is in this way, as each person grows in discipleship, holiness and mission, that our parishes and Movements are slowly transformed to be what they are called to be; communities who are one in Christ and who take the message of the Gospel to the world.

### Reflection Questions for Discussion:



1. Share and discuss your insights from listening to the Gospel text and the accompanying reflection.
2. How would you describe the 'Good News' of Jesus? What does it mean to you?
3. How would you describe your relationship with Jesus? In what ways are you a disciple of Jesus?
4. Can you share a personal encounter with Jesus that you have experienced?

### A Personal Story



Audio:

#### Week 2 Personal Story – Charbel Raish



*Charbel Raish offers us a personal reflection on the importance of Jesus and his message of Good News is his life.*

*Charbel is a parishioner at Arcadia parish and is married with seven children. Charbel is the founder of Parousia Media which was born in May of 2005. He has organised over 200 local events consisting of local and international speakers who have featured all over Australia. Charbel has a passion for helping people get closer to discovering the fullness of the Truth.*

### Listen to the testimony, and use the following questions to discuss:



1. What aspects of Jesus' message of Good News in Charbel's life spoke to you most deeply?
2. How is this story inspiring you to place Jesus and his Good News at the centre of your life?
3. How could your parish / school / agency / community more intentionally place Jesus and his Good News at the centre of all its activities?

## Response



What is your response to what you have heard and discussed during this session?  
What initiatives are you being called to action, both personally and communally?  
You are invited to share and discuss your response with another person.

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**Lord, be the beginning and end  
of all we do and say.  
Prompt our actions with your grace,  
and complete them with your all-powerful help.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
AMEN.**





## Third Sunday of Lent

***Justice and mercy place the poor at the heart of the Church***

### Opening Prayer



Loving and gracious God,

Turn our hearts to yourself that we may recognise Jesus Christ in every person we encounter. Let the Holy Spirit animate the virtue of humility in us, to place the poor at the heart of the community of the Church in Broken Bay and live in righteousness as we embrace the value and dignity of all your children.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

### Introduction



“People are never problems. People have issues, carry burdens, endure suffering, but they are never problems. To view a person as a problem is to rob them of their human dignity. While there may be challenges in a person’s life, those challenges do not define the person. To see it any other way is to compromise the integrity of the person and to inhibit their right to freedom.” (Bishop Anthony’s Pastoral Letter, *Jesus Christ, our beginning and end*)

In this week’s Gospel, we see Jesus confronting an injustice of his time. Jesus’ heart for the poor could not stand by and be silent while people were being taken advantage of through the unjust Temple practices. Reflecting on Bishop Anthony’s priority of ‘Justice and Mercy’ allows us to recognise poverty in ourselves and in others in all its forms, and to be able to consider our own attitudes and behaviours as we seek to follow the example of Jesus.

### Gospel Reading



**Audio:**

**Week 3 Gospel Reading**



**John 2:13-25**

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!”

His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.

### **Pause for reflection.**

You are invited to share a thought, feeling or insight that is arising in you as you hear this Gospel text today. Simply listen to each person, with no comment at this stage.

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### **Reflection – Fr David Ranson**

#### **Vicar General**

Parish Priest, Our Lady of  
Dolours Parish, Chatswood



There is a story about an American philosopher who went to Japan for a

conference on religion. He overheard another American delegate speaking to a Shinto priest. “We’ve now been to a good many of your ceremonies,” said the delegate, “and have seen quite a few of your shrines. But I don’t get your ideology; I don’t get your theology.” The Japanese paused as though in deep thought and then slowly shook his head. “We don’t have an ideology”, he said. “We don’t have a theology. We dance!”

Perhaps we have forgotten that Christianity, itself, began as a dance. There was no ideology, no comprehensive philosophy. Rather there was a series of extraordinary gestures in the life of Jesus which choreographed to tell a story. Jesus did not leave us with a document. Jesus left us with memories - memories of things he told, and memories of things he did - extraordinary memories through which his life remains present to us now. Through Jesus’ actions and gestures, God sings a song for us which leads us along in a new and different way from those around us. This song of the Father which Jesus dances is a different song to the one to which we are expected to dance along in the business of survival. The song that so easily overtakes our own hearts is one of competition, of control, of possessiveness - a song orchestrated by fear and anxiety. The song sung in Jesus, and by Jesus, however, is a song of resistance. The anthem of Jesus resists the melody by which we are ordinarily led. It refuses to buy into the logic that we can buy and sell the graciousness of



God. It undoes the illusion that God is ours to market.

With the song of resistance alive in his heart Jesus dances this day in the Temple in which the melody of the logic of commerce has drowned out all other sounds. It is a dance of anger, a dance of criticism, a dance of confrontation. It is a dance of sheer energy which sends the Temple into a spin. And it likewise sends the Temple of our own hearts into a spin to the extent that they too have been seduced by a logic of the market, by a “world where self-importance, personal success and a sense of unbridled freedom are billed as the highest ideals,” as Bishop Randazzo writes in his 2020 Pastoral Letter. The song of the Father is the song of attentiveness, compassion, service, fellowship and true worship in openness of spirit. This song is not a private affair. This song is about change: change here and now in this society. It is a song of criticism, a song of resistance to any force which marginalises and excludes. It is a song which puts the ‘poor’, those who are vulnerable, at the centre of our consideration and makes the hunger for justice and righteousness a priority of our life.

Lent is a time to listen again to the song by which we dance. To what melody are we dancing? Does our own dance of life confront the values around us which would make us less than who we are? Are our own lives ones of confrontation and resistance to a logic unknown by the Father’s

graciousness and gentleness? Or have we preferred to hum alone in the corner, tapping our fingers in the hope that nobody will notice us such that the world goes on unchanged by our presence in it? How disturbing is our dance? Does our own dance possess the passion of Jesus’ dance? Does Jesus dance at all in our hearts? Anything less is whistling in the dark.

### Reflection Questions for Discussion:



- 1. Share and discuss your insights from listening to the Gospel text and the accompanying reflection.**
- 2. Jesus brings about change in the way that we go about things. How mindful are we that as disciples we are to be agents of change in our society?**
- 3. What are the main changes that we discern as needed in our world today so that the song of Jesus may be heard more clearly?**
- 4. How might we envisage contributing to bring about this change, so that the marginal and the vulnerable are not traduced by the logic of the marketplace?**

## A Personal Story

### Audio: Week 3 Personal Story – Ashleigh Donnelly



*Ashleigh Donnelly offers us a personal reflection on the importance of justice and mercy in her life.*

*Ashleigh is a Social Worker and has worked at CatholicCare for four years with youth at risk and adults living with intellectual disabilities. Ashleigh is married to Justin and is a mum to Rosemary who was born in November 2020. They have recently moved into the Parish of St Patrick's East Gosford where they are blessed to be part of a vibrant and active parish community. In 2019 Ashleigh was appointed as a delegate on the*

*Vatican's International Youth Advisory Body following her involvement in the 2018 Synod on Youth. Ashleigh is a speaker and writer and is passionate about activating young people to make a difference in the world.*

### Listen to the testimony, and use the following questions to discuss:



1. What aspects of 'justice and mercy' in Ashleigh's life spoke to you most deeply?
2. How is this story inspiring you to more intentionally live out justice and mercy in your life?
3. How could your parish / school / agency / community give a greater focus to Bishop's priority to place the poor at the heart of the Church?

## Response



What is your response to what you have heard and discussed during this session? What initiatives are you being called to action, both personally and communally? You are invited to share and discuss your response with another person.

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Lord, be the beginning and end  
of all we do and say.  
Prompt our actions with your grace,  
and complete them with your all-powerful help.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
AMEN.





## Fourth Sunday of Lent

***Authentic Catholic education for the flourishing of human and faith development***

### Opening Prayer



Loving and gracious God,

Through the Holy Spirit, give us the gifts of knowledge, wisdom and understanding. Guide us in deepening our understanding of Christ and the Gospel message, and reveal in us our true identity. Make us bold in proclaiming this Truth with fidelity to your Word and your people. Help us to think, speak and live the Gospel in order to fulfil our evangelising mission of making disciples.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

### Introduction



“There is a long tradition in our Church that values and promotes education and learning. Authentic Catholic education is an essential support for a deeper understanding of faith and for communicating the truth of the Gospel to those who do not yet know it.” (Bishop Anthony’s Pastoral Letter, *Jesus Christ, our beginning and end*)

In this week’s Gospel passage Jesus

is revealing to Nicodemus, a learned Pharisee, some marvellous truths about Himself, His identity as the Son of God, and why He came into the world. This message of the identity of Jesus and His Good News for the world is one that the Christian community today continues to share and make known through evangelisation, catechesis and witness.

### Gospel Reading



**Audio:**  
**Week 4 Gospel Reading**



**John 3:14-21**

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

“And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and

people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

### **Pause for reflection.**

You are invited to share a thought, feeling or insight that is arising in you are as you hear this Gospel text today. Simply listen to each person, with no comment at this stage.

#### **Reflection – Kelly Paget**

Executive Officer  
Office of the Bishop



“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” This beloved scripture verse is one of the most widely recognised and used quotes from the Gospels; it encapsulates the meaning of Christ’s salvific action in the world. The quote, which is embedded in the Gospel reading for 4th Sunday of Lent, is part of an exchange between the Pharisee Nicodemus and Jesus. Earlier in the chapter, Nicodemus identifies Christ as Rabbi, a teacher who has come from God. He came to visit Jesus in the night, under the veil of darkness to begin a conversation. He appears as an inquisitive student, who seems

confused by the teaching of Jesus. Through the conversation, Christ reveals his nature and mission to him.

Jesus, through the Gospel writer John, explains very succinctly three key points; that He is the Son of God, that He was sent by God to give access to eternal life and that access will be given to those who believe in Him. Importantly this passage goes on to identify Christ as the Light of the World, and by this light, judgement of those who follow the Lord will be found. Those who sin remain in the darkness, but those who love the Lord will come into the light, despite the fact the light will illuminate their failings.

Is this not the call of Lent, or in fact the call of our whole Christian life? To step out of the darkness and into the light, even with the knowledge that our weaknesses and frailties will become known. What this passage points out to us, is that it is impossible to be a believer of Jesus and yet sit in the dark and do nothing. We are called to be in the light, with all our vulnerability, witnessing God’s love to all.

It is in this honest witnessing, exposed by the light of God’s merciful love, that others will come to know Christ’s love. So often we get caught up in the theory of teaching the facts and figures of life and faith. And yet, true faith, coming from a relationship with the loving and ever-present God, can only be learnt through experience. Nicodemus had the facts and figures, but it was only through his experience and

relationship with Jesus that he was ultimately able to be drawn to the light. J.R.R Tolkien, one of the modern world's most famous authors, was often asked if his writings, in particular the epic trilogy of The Lord of The Rings, was a Christian allegory. Although a devout Catholic, Tolkien himself would comment on his dislike of allegory, or a "purposed domination of the author." He instead noted the "applicability" of his stories to the Christian message, where the power resides with the reader. In this way his books were not written to shine the Light of Christ, but rather he allowed the Light to be refracted through them.

As the Body of Christ in the world today, Jesus gave the Church His mission. In doing so, we could rephrase the verse from John's Gospel to: *Jesus did not send the Church into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.* This call to evangelisation, to teach, will only be fruitful if we are first witnesses to an authentic Christian Life. May we continue to recognise the Light in the world, then like a mirror reflect that Light, so others may also be drawn into its brilliant and saving power.

### Reflection Questions for Discussion:



1. **Share and discuss your insights from listening to the Gospel text and the accompanying reflection.**

2. **In our moments of darkness, what questions do we bring to Jesus?**
3. **Who are the witnesses that have drawn us and continue to draw us, to the Light?**
4. **How are we allowing the Light of Christ to be refracted through our lives, our work?**

### A Personal Story




#### Audio: Week 4 Personal Story – Veronica Smith



*Veronica Smith offers us a personal reflection on the importance of Catholic education and formation in her life.*

*Veronica is a young adult, from the Diocese of Broken Bay, with a fire for God and a zeal for His holy Church on earth. She is a member of the Asquith Parish youth group, as well as President of the St. Vincent de Paul Society Asquith Youth Conference. Veronica is also a student of Law and Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame. In her spare time, she works at Kmart and is a lover of Matcha Iced Lattes.*

Listen to the testimony, and use the following questions to discuss: 

- 1. What aspects of Catholic education and formation in Veronica's life spoke to you most deeply?
- 2. How is this story inspiring you to more intentionally

incorporate faith formation and education in your life?

- 3. How could your parish / school / agency / community give a greater focus to the Bishop's priority of an authentic Catholic formation for the flourishing of human and faith development of all parishioners?

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Response



What is your response to what you have heard and discussed during this session? What actions are you being called to pursue, both personally or communally? You are invited to share and discuss your response with another person.

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## Fifth Sunday of Lent

***A united message reflecting the voice of the bishop at the service of his people***

### Opening Prayer



God our Father,

In this season of Lent, pour out on us your abundant graces of love and mercy and show us a new way of living the Gospel. Fill the community of the Church in Broken Bay with the Holy Spirit, renewing us in our unity, as many parts of one body. Help us to move towards the joy of Easter as the unified Body of Christ.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

### Introduction



“While we make a special effort during Lent to repent and believe in the Gospel, for the Catholic Christian, each day brings opportunities for the Spirit to change our minds and hearts, to guide us on the way and to bring us to a radically new way of living the Good News of Jesus Christ.” (Bishop Anthony’s Pastoral Letter, *Jesus Christ, our beginning and end*)

Jesus prayed earnestly for unity amongst His disciples. Our unity is

grounded in our common faith in Jesus Christ and membership of the faith community, the Body of Christ. In this week’s Gospel Jesus speaks about drawing all people to Himself. We are united in Him, despite all our many differences, in the common radical love that the Gospel calls us to.

### Gospel Reading



**Audio:**  
**Week 5 Gospel Reading**



#### John 12: 20-33

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

“Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say - ‘Father, save me from

this hour? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

### Pause for reflection.

You are invited to share a thought, feeling or insight that is arising in you as you hear this Gospel text today. Simply listen to each person, with no comment at this stage.

### Reflection – Tomasz Juszcak

Director,  
Evangelisation Broken Bay



We are living in a world that is divided in many respects, but perhaps most notably in ideology. Those on both the left and right side of the spectrum are seemingly becoming more radical in their beliefs and practice. At times, it almost looks as though humanity has lost its common grounding. This Sunday’s Gospel is also just as, if not

more, radical. Radical, however, in its call to unity rather than division.

From the outset, the Gospel speaks of the “Greeks” who come to ask Jesus a question. Already this implies that Jesus’ answer is for all, rather than simply God’s chosen people, Israel. At the end of the Gospel, Jesus gives us the answer to how humanity will be truly united; “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” The first thing we see is that true unity comes through Christ Himself. We also understand that the way that Christ will unite “all people” to Himself, will be through His death on the cross, resurrection and ascension into heaven.

What is it about the cross that is so powerful? How exactly will we as humanity be able to unite through what is essentially our Saviour’s death on an instrument of torture? Quite simply, the answer is love. Christ’s death is the most radical and the greatest example of love that the world has ever witnessed. Bishop Anthony states “the cross is God’s work of love and mercy, bringing us to conversion.” This is what this Sunday’s Gospel calls us to most clearly. A radical conversion to love.

What does this look like? Well, it doesn’t look easy. Christ challenges us to radical love in this Gospel by calling us to die to self, “hate” our lives, follow Him and serve Him. Doesn’t exactly sound like a piece of cake does it? But neither is it too complicated. Jesus simply wants us

to love Him and love others. Bishop Anthony tells us that we need to find opportunities to be guided “to a radically new way of living the Good News of Jesus Christ.” This doesn’t always mean we need to look for the most impressive ways to become a martyr. It means we simply need to look at how we can die to self in small ways. To make a habit of choosing to serve others over our own interests. Perhaps we can help out at home a little more without being asked? Maybe we can give up watching the footy to spend more quality time with our family or with God in prayer. We might even choose to spend less money shopping and give that money to those in need instead. Whatever it is, putting Christ and others first in small ways is how we start to live out this radical call to conversion; this radical call to love.

Finally, this call to love is how true unity in our world will manifest. Bishop Anthony reminds us that “Love and harmony are signs of unity in the community of the Church.” True unity in our world can only come through Christ. The more we follow and serve Christ, the more we open ourselves to Christ’s love and the more that His love manifests in us. It’s our right and duty now to look to the cross for inspiration. We need to bring this message of Good News to the world so that all will be drawn to Him, and it is in Him that we will find true unity.

## Reflection Questions for Discussion:



1. **Share and discuss your insights from listening to the Gospel text and the accompanying reflection.**
2. **Our unity comes from Christ and our shared faith in him. Do you feel a sense of unity with your brothers and sisters in Christ? In what ways?**
3. **In what ways are you living out the Gospel? Is there an area of your life in which you are being called to greater love?**
4. **How is Christ’s death an example to us of love?**

## A Personal Story



### Audio: Week 5 Personal Story – Linda and Andrew Hearne



*Linda and Andrew Hearne offer us a personal reflection on the importance of unity in their lives.*

*Linda and Andrew Hearne are parishioners at Lindfield-Killara Parish. Linda is the Director at a day care centre, and Andrew is a Regional Catholic School Operations Coordinator. They have three children aged 8, 9 and 12.*









## Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

***Building together a culture of vocation for all the baptised***

### Opening Prayer



Loving and gracious God,

As your baptised sons and daughters, you have called us to a vocation of holiness. Let us hear your call, and fill our hearts with Divine love so that all in the community of the Church in Broken Bay may clearly understand and live out their Christian vocations, responding to the needs of your people.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

### Introduction



“God’s call is charged with a task. The person is called to do something, to lead, to guide, to teach, to go on a mission (e.g. Abraham, Gen 12:1-9; Mary Magdalen, John 20:17). However, they are never sent alone. God promises to be with them (e.g. David, 1Sam 16:13). God pledges fidelity, and the one called is often surprised that with God, all things are possible.” (Bishop Anthony’s Pastoral Letter, *Jesus Christ, our beginning and end*)

In our final gathering together, we reflect on the Passion of Jesus, and His steadfastness in carrying out His mission to the end. He was firm in His conviction to finish that which He was called to, even when faced with the immensity of what was before Him. Each of us is also called to discern and embrace our own vocation, wherever God will lead us, knowing with confidence that the Holy Spirit accompanies us each step of the way.

### Gospel Reading



**Audio:**  
**Week 6 Gospel Reading**



### Mark 15:16-39 (Excerpt)

Then the soldiers led Jesus into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus. Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of

a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left. Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days; save yourself, and come down from the cross!" In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. Let the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe."

Those who were crucified with him also taunted him. When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the

centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

### Pause for reflection.

You are invited to share a thought, feeling or insight that is arising in you as you hear this Gospel text today. Simply listen to each person, with no comment at this stage.

### Reflection – Deacon Samuel French

Deacon in the Diocese of Broken Bay  
Holy Name Parish, Wahroonga



This week on Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord we hear Mark's powerful account of the passion and death of Jesus. In this account, Our Lord is stood before Pilate, delivered up to be scourged and then crucified. The passion of Christ serves as a powerful symbol of the Christian vocation. Whether God has called you to marriage, religious life, single life, or the ordained life, he asks all to: "deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me" (Mk 8:34).

A vocation is not, however, a matter of suffering for suffering's sake. Rather, Jesus calls us to follow him into his suffering and death so that we may emerge with him into the new life of his resurrection. Just as Jesus, in a supreme act of love, shouldered the cross to complete his salvific work on earth, so too must we accept the weight of our vocation to fulfill our earthly mission and receive

our eternal reward. It is important to remember that suffering has no value on its own, but when accepted willingly as part of our vocation, it serves as a necessary and powerful path to holiness and, ultimately, love.

Bishop Anthony, in his recent pastoral letter *Jesus Christ, our beginning and end* encourages us to work together to build a culture of vocation for all the baptised. Beyond a mere “process of belonging” or “club membership,” our bishop reminds us that “the goal of baptism is eternal life, and that through baptism we participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus.” As faithful Catholics, we cannot accept in baptism the joy of eternal life without acknowledging the pain and sacrifice that made it possible. To live as such would be a denial of the true nature of our baptism. An authentic understanding of our baptism helps us to live our authentic vocation.

The bishop reminds us in his letter that, as baptised Christians, “our first vocation is holiness.” It is natural, however, that every member of the baptised will express ‘holiness’ in different ways – each according to their gifts and state of life. One thing is certain, however, a growth in holiness will always mean a growth in love. Jesus teaches perfect holiness when he says: “love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12). The way that Jesus has loved us is on full display in this Sunday’s account of his passion. The quality of his love is free and self-sacrificial. Jesus freely gave his life over to the Father, saying: “not what

I will, but what you will” (Mk 14:36). His love is also self-sacrificial because he willingly underwent the pain of the cross not to save himself, but to save us. Therefore, the love of Jesus in his passion exemplifies for us the deepest meaning of vocation – a free and self-sacrificial response to the will of the Father.

Responding to such a call is never easy. Jesus himself underwent the agony in the garden in preparation for his passion, exclaiming to his disciples that “my soul is sorrowful even unto death” (Mk 14:34) and even asking the Father: “remove this cup from me” (Mk 14:36). Bishop Anthony notes that when we are called to a particular vocation – marriage, religious, single, or Holy Orders – there is often a similar time spent “grappling with God’s call.” In such moments, we feel the tension between the will of God and our own. Like Jesus, we must reach out to the Father, imploring God’s help to give us the freedom to take on the sacrifices He is asking of us. This can be like a mini-passion – a death to self – preparing us for a lifetime of self-sacrificial service to the Church, our spouse and family, or particular mission.

The connection between Christ’s passion and our vocation should not scare us. The suffering to which we may be called is never experienced alone and is never more than we can bear. Jesus always walks with us and gives us the strength we need. Like Christ’s own passion, the pain we experience in response to God’s call

is never for nothing. It purifies us; it makes us holy; it demonstrates our love for God and neighbour; it leads to our fulfillment in this life and the everlasting joys of the next.

### Reflection Questions for Discussion:



1. Share and discuss your insights from listening to the Gospel text and the accompanying reflection.
2. Our Christian vocation arises from our Baptism. How would you describe your vocation?
3. Have there been instances where it has been difficult for you to live this vocation? How have you persevered?
4. In what ways is your vocation a 'self-sacrificial response to the will of the Father'?

### A Personal Story



#### Audio:

Week 6 Personal Story –  
Shayne D’Cunha



*Shayne offers us a personal reflection on his own vocational call.*

*Shayne D’Cunha is a seminarian being formed in the Discipleship Stage for the priesthood. His home Parish is St Agatha’s, Pennant Hills. Throughout 2020, Shayne had pastoral placements at Holy Name Parish, Wahroonga and St John Fisher & St Cecilia’s Parish, Wyong. He loves talking about God, the Holy Catholic Church and vocation!*

### Listen to the testimony, and use the following questions to discuss:



1. What aspects of ‘vocation’ in Shayne’s life spoke to you most deeply?
2. How is this story inspiring you to more intentionally live out your own vocation?
3. How could your parish / school / agency / community give a greater focus to Bishop’s priority of Christian vocation of all the baptised so that each person’s gifts are utilised?



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Notes and personal reflections

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