

Catholic Parish of Lindfield-Killara

Diocese of Broken Bay

Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Church, Killara
Holy Family Parish Church, Lindfield

MASS TIMES:	LINDFIELD:	KILLARA:	
Saturday	6:00pm	Saturday Vigil:	5:30pm
Sunday:	8:15am 10:15am 12:00 (Chinese Community Mass) 6:00pm (for both our communities) (5:30pm on 2 nd Sun. of month)	Sunday:	9:15am
Weekdays:			
Monday	9:15am	7:30am	} see p. 2 re this week
Tuesday	No Mass	No Mass	
Wednesday	No Mass	No Mass	
Thursday	11am Funeral Mass (p.11)	No Mass	
Friday	No Mass	No Mass *	
Saturday	9:15am	~	

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION: Saturdays 5:00 – 5:30pm (Lindfield)

For 15 minutes after the 5:30pm Mass (Killara)

* NO 9:15 Mass at Lindfield nor 7:30am Mass at Killara on the 2nd Friday of each month

* Healing Mass on the 2nd Friday of each month at 10am at Killara

TENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

10 – 6 – 18

This week: Gen 3:9-15; 2 Cor 4:13-5:1; Mk 3:20-35

Next week: Ezek 17:22-24; 2 Cor 5:6-10; Mk 4:26-34

The ‘unforgiveable sin’. What is it?

Certainly not a sin that God refuses to forgive. But rather a situation where we close ourselves off from conversion and healing.

Half-truths are whole lies, and half-truths are all too often the language of politics, the media, social media, the gossip-monger. And perhaps of ourselves?

The Great Lie is to ‘demonise’ someone and we see it in today’s Gospel as it happens to Jesus himself.

His opponents don’t like what he says and they don’t like what he does.

So they demonise him. They write him off. He’s all bad. There is no nuance.

It’s the stuff of our modern western world, that ultimate hypocrisy of constantly pointing out the splinter in someone’s eye and being unable to see the plank in one’s own.

Demonisation of the other is the ‘unforgiveable’ sin because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth and can only find a way into the soul of the one who genuinely seeks and loves the truth.

Part-truths are whole lies. The peddlers of half-truths have shut the door in the face of the Spirit of Truth. And today’s Gospel asks us whether that reverence for the truth, the hard work of seeking the whole truth, the non-demonising truth, describes us? *Fr Colin*

PARISH OFFICE:**Parish Secretary: Philita Marundan:** philita@lindfieldkillara.org.au**Address:** Level 1, 2 Highfield Road (cnr Pacific Hwy) Lindfield NSW 2070
(Postal: PO Box 22, Lindfield NSW 2070)**Ph:** 9416 3702 **Fax:** 9416 3913 **Email:** parish@lindfieldkillara.org.au**Parish Office Hours:** Monday to Friday 9:30am-1:00pm and 1:30pm-4:00pm**Parish Priest: Fr Colin Blayney** colin@lindfieldkillara.org.au 9416 7195**Assistant Priest: Fr Thomas Alackakunnel VC** thomas@lindfieldkillara.org.au 0421 406162Please see the parish website (www.lindfieldkillara.org.au) for the full directory of staff and contact information.

Youth News ...



Fusion Youth at Lindfield Killara



youth.fusion

youth@lindfieldkillara.org.au

YOUTH@LINDFIELD KILLARA PARISH

TERM 2 2018 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NEXT YOUTH & FAMILY MASS..... Sunday, 10 June 5.30 pm

Youth mass features a youth choir and family-friendly service. The earlier time of 5.30 is to accommodate young families. As usual, after mass there'll be supper for everyone upstairs in Shirley Wallace.

**BLAST YOUTH..... Sun, 10 June 4.00-5.30pm**
(Primary School - Years 3-6)**FUSION YOUTH..... Sun, 10 June 7.00-9.00pm**
(High School - Years 7-12)**FUSION MOVIE NIGHT..... FRIDAY 29 June 6.30pm**

ALTERATION TO WEEKDAY MASS TIMETABLE THIS WEEK This week the mandatory Diocesan Clergy Conference takes place and so there will be no Mass in the parish from Tuesday to Friday. For security purposes caretakers will be resident in the presbytery throughout that time. For urgent sick calls and for funeral arrangements please call Fr Colin or Fr Thomas via the numbers given at the top of this page and leave a message.

RICHARD ROHR'S MEDITATION: VOCATION: DISCERNMENT VERSUS DECISION MAKING

The holiness of Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), like all holiness, was unique and never merely a copy or imitation. In his Testament, he tells his brothers, “No one showed me what I had to do,” [1] and then, at the very end of his life, he says, “I have done what is mine; may Christ teach you what is yours!” [2] What permission, freedom, and space he thus gave to his followers!

We are each unique incarnations of God, bringing to visible and tangible expression God's presence in the world. Sr Ilia Delio paraphrases Francis' message from his Later Admonition and Exhortation:

When love transforms our actions in a way that Christ is “represented”— then we become mothers, sisters and brothers of Christ. This birthing of Christ in the life of the believer . . . is a way of conceiving, birthing, and bringing Christ to the world in such a way that the Incarnation is renewed. It is making the gospel alive. [3]

So, how do we discover what is ours to do? How do we connect with our sacred vocation in service to the needs of the world? How do we give birth to Christ in the world? How do we renew the Incarnation and give flesh to the Word? First, we must go through a process of discernment. Henri Nouwen explains:

Christian discernment is not the same as decision making. Reaching a decision can be straightforward: we consider our goals and options; maybe we list the pros and cons of each possible choice; and then we choose the action that meets our goal most effectively. Discernment, on the other hand, is about listening and responding to that place within us where our deepest desires align with God's desire. As discerning people, we sift through our impulses, motives, and options to discover which ones lead us closer to divine love and compassion for ourselves and other people and which ones lead us further away.

Discernment reveals new priorities, directions, and gifts from God. We come to realise that what previously seemed so important for our lives loses its power over us. Our desire to be successful, well liked and influential becomes increasingly less important as we move closer to God's heart. To our surprise, we even may experience a strange inner freedom to follow a new call or direction as previous concerns move into the background of our consciousness. We begin to see the beauty of the small and hidden life that Jesus lived in Nazareth. Most rewarding of all is the discovery that as we pray more each day, God's will—that is, God's concrete ways of loving us and our world—gradually is made known to us. [4]

When I moved to New Mexico in 1986, Henri Nouwen personally told me to forget the many things I try to teach and just teach one thing—contemplation! This is why I am still doing it.

[1] Francis of Assisi, The Testament, line 14. See Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. 1 (New City Press: 1999), 125.

[2] Francis of Assisi, quoted by Thomas of Celano, The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul, chapter 162. See Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. 2 (New City Press: 2000), 386.

[3] Ilia Delio, Franciscan Prayer (Franciscan Media: 2004), 150-151.

[4] Henri Nouwen, Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life (HarperOne: 2013), 17.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

Robert Fitzgerald, a commissioner from the Royal Commission into Child Sex Abuse, and a committed Catholic, strongly believes we need to seek change and healing through conversation.

To start that conversation we need to join together as a community, ask questions, share how we are feeling and seek transparency and change from our church leaders. This will help us to move out from under the dark cloud which is shadowing us and move forward to a brighter and better place for our church community.

The PPC urges you to come along to this very important forum and join the conversation.

FORUM ON CHILD PROTECTION AND THE CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS WITHIN THE CHURCH
Tuesday 26th June 7:00-9:00pm
St Brigid's Hall, above the Holy Family church, Lindfield

Panel:	The forum will consist of:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fr David Ranson , the Vicar General of the Diocese; ➤ Jodie Crisafulli, our Diocesan Safeguarding and Child Protection Officer; ➤ Aaron Tang, parishioner & lawyer on the private sessions of the royal commission; Steven Crittenden, lead writer of the Royal Commission's final volume on religious institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ short presentations about: the findings from the Royal Commission; and the Diocesan response; ➤ Q&A with the audience, moderated by an independent moderator (Ky Chow, who is a lawyer, journalist, and freelance moderator with experience moderating forums/debates on Catholic issues). <p>Julie Blyth, who was the Clinical Advisor at the Child Abuse Royal Commission and has worked extensively with clients dealing with trauma resulting from violence and abuse will be on hand to provide support and counselling, if required.</p>

This is a free event, however, we would appreciate if bookings could be made via trybooking ~ <https://www.trybooking.com/WHUB> or through the Parish Office to provide an indication of numbers of attendees – which will help us in setting up for the event.

PARISH DIARY ~ JUNE

Sun. 10th June: Our new monthly combined Children's and Youth Mass at **5:30pm** followed by parish meal (p.4). **Blast Youth Group** meets prior to Mass and **Fusion** meets after Mass.

Sunday 24th June: morning tea after 9:15am and 10:15am Masses.

Tuesday 26th June: Forum on the Abuse Crisis (see article above).

CARING FOR EACH OTHER DURING THESE WINTER MONTHS

As we all know we're now heading into peak cold and flu season. Could we ask two things to help reduce the risk of spreading infection:

* if you have a cold or the flu, or feel that it might be coming on, please refrain from receiving from the chalice;

* likewise, if it is your custom to receive Communion on the tongue and you have a cold or the flu, or feel that it might be coming on, please consider receiving Communion on the hand during that time as germs can be passed to and thence on to the next person receiving

the Communion Minister's fingers and thence on to the next person receiving Communion.

NOTICEBOARD ? A reminder that our parish notice board is a 'virtual' one – notices of activities provided to us by groups outside the parish can be found on our website under 'News and Events' → 'Virtual Parish Noticeboard'.



YOUTH MASS

OUR NEXT COMBINED CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH MASS

will be celebrated again on the second Sunday of the month, **THIS Sunday 10th June, at 5:30pm (not 6pm)** in Holy Family church and will be followed by a 'pot luck dinner' in St Brigid's Hall above the church.



Our guest speaker at the Mass will be Sam French who is in third year in the seminary preparing to be ordained a priest for our diocese. Sam will speak about his own experience of discipleship and of seeking to be a priest in today's Church.

THIS WEEK'S FINANCIAL UPDATE – ANOTHER STEP BACKWARDS

As we approach the end of this Financial Year a further update on our progress:

Our **Second Collection** income (which provides all the operating funds for the parish) is now **\$20,289 behind compared to the same point last year**. Last week it was \$17,828 behind.

Please continue to help us to catch up on our shortfall over the next two weeks.

If you would like to make a one-off additional donation before the end of the Financial Year our account details are:

For donations to the First Collection:
BSB 062 784 Acct 1116 8002

For donations to the Second Collection
BSB 062 784 Acct 1116 8001

Please include your surname as the reference. *The Parish Finance Committee*

PLENARY COUNCIL 2020



Pope Francis has approved the Australian Bishops' decision to hold a Plenary Council in Australia in 2020 and 2021. All people are invited to reflect on the question: "What do you think God is asking of us Australia?"

The Plenary Council, an assembly representing the entire Catholic Church in Australia, through its preparatory listening and dialogue sessions, will give all people the opportunity to share what is on their mind and in their

heart toward the future of the Church in Australia. It is an opportunity to speak boldly but also listen with an open and humble heart. The official launch of the Plenary Council process was at Pentecost this year.

Learn more about the process by visiting the national Plenary Council website www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au and look out for the announcement of local listening sessions here in our own parish and school community.

THE PRAYERS AND RESPONSES OF MASS

GLORIA:

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you, we bless you, we adore you, we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION:

♩=60 *mf*
We pro-claim your Death, O Lord, and pro-
cresc. *ff*
fess your Res-ur-rec-tion un-til you come a - gain.

THE PSALM Ps 129. R. v.7

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,
Lord, hear my voice!

O let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my pleading.

If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt,
Lord, who would survive?

But with you is found forgiveness:
for this we revere you.

My soul is waiting for the Lord,
I count on God's word.

My soul is longing for the Lord
more than watchman for daybreak.

Because with the Lord there is mercy,
and fullness of redemption,
Israel indeed the Lord will redeem
from all its iniquity.

*At Masses at which the Psalm is sung
the response is: With the Lord there
is mercy and fullness of redemption.*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia The prince of this
world will now be cast out,
and when I am lifted up from the
earth

I will draw all to myself, says the
Lord. Alleluia!

RESPONSES TO THE PSALM FOR WEEKDAY MASS :

Monday: Our help is from the Lord
who made heaven and earth.

Tuesday: Lord, let your face shine on us.

Wednesday: Keep me safe, O God;
you are my hope.

Thursday: It is right to praise you in Zion, O God.

Friday: I long to see your face, O Lord.

Saturday: You are my inheritance, O Lord.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow at the following words in bold):
**who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,**
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand
of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come
to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Holy Catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen

Our Parish SCRIPTURE STUDY GROUP

will meet this month
on the **third (rather
than the second)**
**Wednesday of the
month (Wednesday week 20th June)** from
10am – 11am. The venue is the Library in
the Shirley Wallace Parish Centre.

Dive
into the
Scriptures!



We are working through John's Gospel and
so it would be helpful to have read John chp
16 for the coming meeting.
All welcome. *Fr Colin*

NEW!

WEEKLY EXPOSITION OF THE EUCHARIST

We now have an hour of Exposition of the
Eucharist following the 7:30am Mass at
Killara on Fridays as a time for quiet prayer
in the Lord's presence. This will take place
every Friday except when there is no 7:30am
Mass (for instance on the 2nd Friday of each
month when we have the Healing Mass).

YOU ARE INVITED to hear Bishop Vincent Long, Catholic Bishop of Parramatta, speaking about "the New Dawn of the Church" at 'Winbourne', the Edmund Rice Retreat and Conference Centre, 1315 Mulgoa Road, Mulgoa 11.00 am to 1.00 pm on Saturday 16th June. Entry by donation. Registration 10.00 am. For further information contact Dennis Farrar 0425209840. Organised by the Passionist Family Group Movement.

COULD YOU HELP US? REPLACEMENT COMPUTERS



The computers in our Parish Office are really showing their (great) age and with varying degrees of urgency need to be updated. If you would be willing to donate the cost of one of the new computers please let us know in the Parish Office.

CATECHIST CORNER – WANT TO HELP BUT DON'T FEEL ABLE TO TEACH?

BIBLE DONATIONS

If you would like to donate a Bible to our children, please go to

<http://www.trybooking.com/RTCU>

We will place a sticker in each Bible stating who donated it to the family with a blessing and prayer.

THE HONOUR OF BEING A CATECHIST

Have you been called? Answer 'yes' today!!!!

- Tues Yr 2 Beaumont Rd ~ 12-12.30pm

- Wed Yr 7/8 Killara High School 8:50-10am or 10:05-11:15am

- Thurs Yr 2/3 Killara ~ 9.20-10am

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Sue-anne@lindfieldkillara.org.au

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selling or renovation tips, I would be
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Pastoral Planning : Towards a Parish Vision Statement

As you may know, our Parish Pastoral Council hopes to produce a parish Vision Statement which will be more than merely a collection of words but hopefully a statement which is the fruit of reflection by us all and which can therefore be owned by us all and serve as a focus for the type of Christian community we want to be for now and as we move forwards.

To achieve this the PPC is ensuring that the development of the Vision Statement is a consultative one. You may recall that several months ago we asked all those at Mass to choose six words from a much larger list that stood out to you as the key issues for our parish as we move forward. We also went through this process with the parents involved in our First Reconciliation Programme and, more recently, with the parents involved in our Confirmation programme.

The results of these surveys have now been collated and we can report that the words which have risen to the top are as follows:

Faith
Prayer
Community
Spirituality
Loving others
Family
Welcoming
Kindness
Peace
Worship

The next part of the process is that the PPC has asked 5 different groups/individuals to prepare a draft Vision Statement based on these results. Once the PPC has received these drafts we will then enter into the next and final stage of discerning together with our parish community what our Vision Statement will be.

A Celtic Rune of Hospitality

*We saw a stranger yesterday,
 We put food in the eating place,
 Drink in the drinking place,
 Music in the listening place,
 And with the sacred name of the triune*

GOD

*We blessed us and our house,
 Our cattle and our dear ones.
 As the lark says in her song:*

Often, often, often goes the

CHRIST

In the stranger's guise.

CHINESE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

常年期第十主日

10/6/2018

讀經一（我要把仇恨，放在你的後裔，和她的後裔之間。）

恭讀創世紀 3:9-15

亞當吃了知善惡樹的果子後，上主天主呼喚亞當，對他說：「你在那裡？」

亞當回答說：「我在樂園裡，聽到了你的聲音，就害怕，因為我赤身露體，便躲藏起來。」

天主說：「誰告訴了你，赤身露體？莫非你吃了我禁止你吃的果子嗎？」

亞當說：「是你給我作伴的那個女人，給了我那樹上的果子，我才吃了。」

上主天主於是對女人說：「你為什麼做了這事？」

女人回答說：「是蛇哄騙了我，我才吃了。」

上主天主對蛇說：「因你做了這事，你在一切畜性和野獸中，是可咒罵的；你要用肚子爬行，畢生日日吃土。我要把仇恨放在你和女人，你的後裔，和她的後裔之間。她的後裔要踏碎你的頭顱；你要傷害他的腳跟。」——上主的話。（默想片刻）

答唱詠 詠 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

【答】：上主富於仁慈；他必定慷慨救援。（詠 130:7）

領：上主，我由深淵向你呼號；我主，求你俯聽我的呼號，求你側耳俯聽我的哀禱！【答】

領：上主，你若細察我的罪過，我主，有誰還能站立得住？可是，你寬恕為懷，令人對你起敬起愛。【答】

領：我仰賴上主，我靈期待他的聖言；我靈等候我主，切於更夫等待黎明。【答】

領：以色列，請仰賴上主，因為上主富於仁慈，他必定慷慨救援。

他必要拯救以色列人，脫離一切罪根。【答】

讀經二（我們也信，所以也說。）

恭讀聖保祿宗徒致格林多人後書 4:13-5:1

弟兄姊妹們：

我們既然具有經上所載的：「我信了，所以我說」那同樣的信心，我們也信，所以也說，因為我們知道，那使主耶穌復活的，也要使我們與耶穌一起復活，並使我們與你們一起，站在他面前。其實，這一切都是為了你們，為使獲得恩寵的人越增多，感謝也越增加，好歸光榮於天主。

為此，我們決不膽怯；縱使我們外在的人，日漸損壞，但我們內在的人，卻日日更新，因為我們現時輕微的苦難，正無可比擬地，給我們造就永遠的光榮賞報；因為，我們所注目的，不是那看得見的，而是那看不見的；那看得見的，原是暫時的；那看不見的，才是永遠的。

因為我們知道：如果我們這地上帳棚式的寓所，拆毀了，我們必由天主，獲得一所房舍，一所非人手所造，而是永遠在天上的寓所。——上主的話。（默想片刻）

福音前歡呼

領：亞肋路亞。

眾：亞肋路亞。

領：主說：現在，這世界的元首，就要被趕出去；當我從地上，被舉起來時，便要吸引眾人，來歸向我。（若 12:31-32）

眾：亞肋路亞。

福音（撒旦必要滅亡。）

恭讀聖馬爾谷福音 3:20-35

耶穌到了家裡，群眾又聚集起來，以致他們連飯都不能吃。耶穌家裡的人，聽見有人說：「他瘋了！」便出來要抓住耶穌。

有些從耶路撒冷下來的經師說：「他附有貝耳則步。」又說：「他賴魔王驅魔。」

耶穌於是把經師叫來，用比喻向他們說：「撒旦怎能驅逐撒旦呢？如果一個國家自相紛爭，那國家就不能存立；如果一個家庭自相紛爭，那家庭也將不能存立。如果撒旦起來自相攻擊紛爭，也就不能存立，必要滅亡。沒有人能進入壯士的家，搶劫他的家具，除非先把那壯士捆綁起來，然後才可搶劫他的家。

「我實在告訴你們：世人的一切罪惡，連所說的任何褻瀆的話，都可得赦免；但誰如果褻瀆了聖神，就永遠不得赦免，而且要永遠背負罪債。」耶穌說這話，是因為他們說：「他附有邪魔。」

耶穌的母親和耶穌的兄弟來了，站在外邊，派人去叫耶穌。那時，群眾正圍著耶穌坐著，有人對耶穌說：「看，你的母親和你的兄弟，在外邊找你。」

耶穌回答他們說：「誰是我的母親和我的兄弟？」於是環視坐在他周圍的人，說：「看，我的母親和我的兄弟！凡奉行天主旨意的人，就是我的兄弟、姊妹和母親。」——上主的話。（講道後默想片刻）

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Sunday School 主日學 12noon

Parish Meeting Room

(continued from p.12...) given that you will no longer want to be forgiven because you will see truth as a lie and a lie as the truth. The sin cannot be forgiven, not because God doesn't want to forgive it but because we no longer want to be forgiven.

Dictionaries tell us that blasphemy is the act of insulting or showing contempt or lack of reverence for God. We don't blaspheme when we use foul language when we're frustrated; nor do we blaspheme when we shake our fists at God in anger or turn away from him in bitterness. God can handle that. The one thing God cannot handle is lying, where we lie to the point of believing our own lies (the real danger in lying) because that eventually warps our consciences so that we can no longer tell truth from falsehood or falsehood from truth.

Theology teaches us that God is One, this means that God's inner integrity assures that all of reality also has an inner integrity, an intelligibility, meaning that something cannot be and not be at the same time; meaning that two plus two cannot equal anything but four; meaning that a tree is always a tree no matter what you say it is; and meaning that black can never be white. God's Oneness allows us to both trust reality and trust our normal perception of it.

That's what's under attack today, most everywhere. It's the ultimate moral danger: God is One and so two plus two can never be five—and if it is then we are no longer in touch with God or with reality, are warped in conscience, and are blaspheming the Holy Spirit.

Fr Ron Rolheiser omi, Centre for Liturgy, University of St Louis

PLANNED GIVING ENVELOPES FOR YEAR 2018-2019

New sets of planned giving envelopes are now available in both churches.

Lord, in Jesus your Son, you restored to us the gift of everlasting life.

Grant that life to:

Please pray for Peter O'Sullivan who died during the week. The Funeral Mass for Peter will be celebrated this Wednesday 13th at 11am in Holy Family church Lindfield.

Recently deceased: Sr Veronica McCarthy (aunt of Anthony Cassidy), Anthony Pittorino, Myrna Vallecort Amurao, Dr Bruce Carr, Helen Logan.

Anniversary: David Curtin, Dr Bruce Carr.

And for: Deceased members of the Curtin, Rolfe, Hughes and Egan families; Claudio Umali.

PLEASE PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ARE SICK : Joe Agius, Maureen Hobbs, Ian Coffey, Yvette Marie and Jeff Oras, John and George Agius, Fr Franciscus Choi, Ken Kan, Gizelle Tan, Basilisa Choi, Cyril Ferriere, Br Braden, Brian Couper, Kieran Norton, Sean Maguire, Pakie Maguire, Naneth Bernado, Michael Swan.

REFLECTING ON THIS SUNDAY'S SCRIPTURES

But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin. (Gospel)

PLAYING LOOSE WITH THE TRUTH

It can be quite disheartening to watch the news these days. Our world is full of hatred, bigotry, racism, and over-stimulated greed and ego. The gap between the rich and poor is widening and random, senseless violence is an everyday occurrence. One lives with hope, but without much optimism.

Among all of this, perhaps the most distressing thing of all is the erosion of our capacity to recognise and acknowledge the truth. From the highest government offices, to the major media outlets, to our local newspapers, to the thousands of bloggers, down to our dinner tables, we are becoming irresponsible, manipulative, and outright dishonest with the truth, denying it where it's inconvenient, bending it to suit our own purposes, or labelling it as "fake news," "an alternative fact," "misinformation," "a truth that's no longer operative," or as "political correctness" with no truth value. Studies from major scientific institutes are dismissed as just another opinion with the result that we are creating an entire society within which it's becoming more and more difficult for any of us to trust what's a fact and what isn't. That's dangerous territory, not just politically but especially spiritually.

Scripture tells us that Satan is the Prince of Lies and Jesus makes it clear that, among all sins, failure to acknowledge the truth is far and away the most dangerous. We see this motif particularly in the text that warns us that we can commit a sin that's unforgiveable because it's a blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

What's this sin? Why is it unforgiveable? And what has it got to do with telling lies?

The unforgiveable sin is precisely the sin of lying which can become unforgiveable because of what lying can do to us. Here's how one biblical text unfolds: Jesus has just cast out a demon. Part of the Jewish faith at that time was the belief that only someone who came from God had power to cast out a demon. Jesus had done that, but the Scribes and Pharisees who have just witnessed this found it to be an inconvenient truth since they denied Jesus' goodness. So in the face of truth they had to either acknowledge something that they did not want to or they had to manipulate the truth to give it a different meaning. They chose the latter and, clearly aware that they were manipulating the truth, accused Jesus of performing the miracle through the power of Satan. They knew better, knew they were lying, but the actual truth was too difficult to accept.

Jesus initially tries to argue with them, pointing out that there's no logic in suggesting that Satan is casting out demons. They persist, and it's then Jesus utters his warning: "In truth I tell you, all human sins will be forgiven, and all the blasphemies ever uttered, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, but is guilty of an eternal sin." (Mark 3:28-29 parallel text in Matthew 12: 31-32). What exactly is this warning?

Jesus is saying this: Be careful about what you are doing just now, putting a false spin on something because it is too awkward to accept as true. The danger is that if you continue doing this you may eventually come to believe your own lie. That will be unforgiveable,

(continued on p. 11):