

NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY by Mary Coloe PBVM

‘What you did to the least of these you did to me’


The Gospel today recalls the vivid image of Michelangelo's famous depiction of the final judgment. A powerful Christ figure gathers the blessed with one arm and with his other condemns the wicked to the ravages of the demons. Both Michelangelo and Dante have provided the Christian imagination with a portrait of the afterlife. It is important to make the distinction between art and theology. For most of the Old Testament the people of Israel had no conception of any life after death. At times they spoke of Sheol as the realm of the dead, but this was not really life. This was a vague underworld; it was not considered a place of life, of punishment or blessing. Such punishment or blessing was thought to occur in this life, thus illness, or an early death was considered a sign of sin, while a good life was thought to be rewarded with long-life and wealth. Around two hundred years before the birth of Jesus, some began to think that if God were really just then surely God would reward the just who in this life had suffered for their faith and even been martyred. This was the view the Pharisees adopted. In this theology, at the end of time God would raise all the dead, then there would be a final judgment and the good would go to their reward and the others would be banished from God's presence. Much later, around fifty years before Jesus, a second theology developed which considered that right now, while a person lives, they are already being judged on the choices they make, choices to live according to God's ways or not. The person choosing the way of God was given in this life, the gift of God's own life in eternity – this was called Wisdom, in the Book of Wisdom. In this theology, the person who receives the gift of God's life never really dies. While their body may experience death, this only appears to be death, in fact they live on 'in the hand of God'. Judgment has already happened. There could be a final resurrection of the body at the end of time but even this was not quite determined.

In the Gospels we get both of these theological perspectives. Matthew's Gospel takes up the position of the Pharisees and the Gospel today depicts their view about a final resurrection and judgment. John's Gospel presents the other theological view that here, now, we can participate in God's eternity life and this life will not come to an end, even though bodily life may cease. Both views have continued in Christianity, with Matthew's being popularised in art and poetry, and so this is a common understanding most have of life after death.

While I have spent time looking at views of life after death in the first century, in fact the Gospel today is far more interested in life before death. How we live now matters. In today's Gospel we see Matthew's understanding of what lies at the heart of our Judeo-Christian tradition. The King in the story identifies *himself* with the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and imprisoned. Responding to God necessarily involves our response to the needy in this world. Christianity is not simply a set of pious practices, dogmas or rituals; the spiritual person is necessarily ethical. It means making real choices here and now with an eye to the most vulnerable around us.

As I write this reflecting on the past year I fear our society may be found wanting in this judgment. Strangers to our shores have not been made welcome; the hungry and thirsty have not found nourishment; the sick and naked have been turned away; prisons have been renamed as detention centres. The Gospel of Jesus rebukes our lack of compassion, 'in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.'

In Matthew's infancy story last Christmas, the name of Mary's child is Emmanuel, 'a name which means God-with us'. This final episode in Jesus' ministry continues this proclamation. God is with us in the poor and the destitute of our world, 'what you did to the least of these you did to me'. As we leave this year of Matthew and move into a new liturgical cycle and prepare again for the coming of the child, may we keep this Gospel image in mind so that we will truly recognise God-with-us in a naked child lying in an animal's feed bin. God comes to us among the least of this world but will God find a welcome?

ANOINTING MASS

Photos from the Anointing Mass at St. Theresa's Church, followed by lunch.



CHRISTMAS CHILDREN'S PERFORMANCE

If your child/grandchild is interested in participating or reading in the Christmas Eve performance, please reach out to Carmen 0421 796 522.

The performance is held during Christmas Eve Mass at Queen of Heaven Church, 8pm.



On November 12th 2023, Zachary Aaron Pereira was baptised at St Theresa's Catholic Church. The sacrament was included in the 10:30 mass and it was a lovely celebration with family, friends and parishioners. A big thank you to Fr. Barry who made the day so special for Zachary and his family.



We take the opportunity to also thank Zachary's mum Teneille, who has been a teacher at St Theresa's School for 10 years. She will begin a new position at Greensborough next year. We thank her for her great service at St Theresa's and wish her well in her new role.



Congratulations to Inoka and Rojar on the baptism of their daughter Amora at Queen of Heaven Church on the 6th of August. We look forward to watching Amora grow in her faith journey.

Parish Priest: Fr Barry Hughes
Presbytery: 17 Drummartin St., Albion 3020
Phone: 9311 3091
Fax: 9311 5406 Mob: 0428 533 391
Email: caalbion@netspace.net.au
Polish Chaplain: Fr Marian Szeptak
Residence: 185 William St., St Albans 3021
Phone: 9310 9057



"Do Small Things Well"

St. Theresa's Primary School - 93119070
16 Drummartin St., Albion 3020
Principal: Rob Macklin

Mother of God Primary School - 93631734
Blanche St., Ardeer 3022
Principal: Assunta Iacovino

FEAST OF CHRIST THE KING

Year A 25 & 26 November 2023

MASS TIMES

ST THERESA'S

Drummartin St, Albion
9.00am Friday
10.30am Sunday

MOTHER OF GOD

Blanche St, Ardeer
10.00am Wednesday(Pol)
9.00am Thursday
6.00pm Friday (Polish)
5.30pm Saturday
10.15am Sunday (Polish)

QUEEN OF HEAVEN

Holt St, Ardeer
8.00am Wednesday
9.00am Sunday

CHRIST'S CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Prayer Group meets every
Thursday, 7.00 - 8.30pm, at
QofH Church. All are welcome.

CUPPA AFTER MASS Join us next weekend after each Mass for a cuppa and a chat. Why not take this opportunity to enjoy the company of our fellow parishioners and get to know one another better? Please bring a plate to share.

COVID-19 As there is a current wave of infection going around, sanitiser is available as you enter the Church.

STILL NEEDING CLEANERS

Volunteers required to clean St Theresa's Church, you would be rostered on once every 6 to 8 weeks, please talk to Ann-Maree or ring the office.

COLLECTIONS RECEIVED

Thanksgiving \$886 Loose Money \$335 Presbytery \$540

COUNTERS 3rd December Team 4: M Poulter, AM Sanford

FEAST DAYS St Andrew, Apostle, 30 November

READINGS Today

Ezekiel 34.11-12,15-17
Ps 23.1-3a,3b-4,5,6(R1)
1 Corinthians 15.20-26,28
Matthew 25:31-46

Next Week

Isaiah 63.16b-17;64.1,3-8
Ps 80.1ab+2,14-15,17-18(R3)
1 Corinthians 1.3-9
Mark 13.31-37

2024 COLUMBAN ART CALENDAR Calendars are on sale this weekend - \$10each. The first Columban Calendar was published in 1923. Be part of History! The Columban Art Calendar is an iconic Catholic Calendar, well-known for its traditional religious paintings and liturgical information and is a major fundraiser for Columban Missionaries Buy one today.

PARISH MOVIE MORNING Last Parish Movie for the Year!

Mon 27th November 10.00am, Sunshine Village Cinema, RSVP required to Ann-Maree 0401 192 079 by Sunday 26th November.

LAST PARISH SOCIAL DINNER FOR 2023 Tuesday 28th November, 6pm

At Braybrook Hotel, Ballarat Rd, Braybrook. Buffet style meal....RSVP Ann-Maree by Monday 27th November on 0401 192 079 All welcome.

PARISH CARAVAN, Safety Beach / Dromana

If you would like to use our Caravan please call the Parish Office on 9311 3091 to book. It sleeps up to six (very cosy) and costs \$60 per night. Great opportunity to get away during the summer holidays. Days available from 7th to 19th January, 28th January onwards. Please contact us.