*St. Theresa’s Parish Community Newsletter*



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*“Do Small Things Well”*

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THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME Year B 20 & 21 January 2024

Dear Parishioners,

The Leadership team invites you to farewell Fr Barry after 39 years of service to our parish.

 Date: Sunday 25th February

 Location: St Theresa’s School Multipurpose Room

 Time: Midday onwards for a share lunch

Please RSVP and advise your Parish contact with dish to be provided (either main or dessert) by the 18th February.

Mary Azzopardi 0418 308 843, Mary Poulter 0404 101 632,

Ann-Maree 0401 192 079, Jadzia 0417 776 427

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| MASSES THIS WEEK ST THERESA’SDrummartin St, Albion 9.00am Friday10.30am SundayMOTHER OF GODBlanche St, Ardeer10.00am Wednesday(Pol) 9.00am Thursday 6.00pm Friday (Polish) 5.30pm Saturday10.15am Sunday (Polish)QUEEN OF HEAVENHolt St, Ardeer 8.00am Wednesday 9.00am SundayRECONCILIATION (Individual Confession)Saturday 27th January, 10.00am at Mother of God or other times and places on request |  | ANNIVERSARY MASS for Angelo DelMastro on Tuesday 23rd January, 7pm at St Theresa’s ARE YOU AVAILABLE…?Volunteers needed for Reader/Commentators at Mother of God, and Counters and Cleaners for the Churches. Any extra volunteers would be greatly appreciated. Call the Parish Office.CHRIST’S CATHOLIC COMMUNITYPrayer Group meets every Thursday, 7.00 - 8.30pm, at Queen of Heaven Church. All are welcomeCOLLECTONS RECEIVED Thanksgiving $660 Loose Money $237Presbytery $574 Christmas Offering and collection $870COUNTERS 28th January Team 2: J Meilak, P PaceFEAST DAYSSt Francis de Sales, 24 JanuaryConversion of St Paul the Apostle, 25 JanuaryREADINGS Today Next WeekJonah 3.1-5,10 Deuteronomy 18.15-20Ps25.4-5a,6+7b,8-9(R.4) Ps 95.1-2,6-7ab,7c-9 (R7c+8a)1 Corinthians7.29-31 1 Corinthians 7.17,32-35Mark 1.14-20 Mark 1.21-28 |

JOSEPH'S CORNER A support service for families of Drug Addiction.

Located at 3 Birmingham St, Yarraville. Phone 9315 2680. More information is available from Fr Barry, the Parish Office, or a leaflet in the pamphlet rack.

*St Theresa’s Parish is* committed *to the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults*

REFLECTION ON TODAY’S FIRST READING

 AND RESPONSORIAL PSALM

*These reflections are from Father Mark O’Brien, a member of the Passionist Order, also known as the Order of Preachers, and a scholar of the Old Testament (Hebrew Scriptures). They provide both insightful comments on these two passages and helpful clues on understanding some Old Testament readings.*

*Father Barry*

**Jonah 3:1-5, 10**

Most readers would now be happy to regard the book of Jonah as a parable like those that Jesus told. These are fictional tales created by people with fertile imaginations in order to make a point. There are some amusing features in the story that signal its fictional nature, in particular the ‘walk-on’ parts of a number of animals – the huge fish in which Jonah spends three days singing a psalm, the sheep and cattle in Nineveh that join the people in praying to God for forgiveness, the worm that God appoints to eat Jonah’s shady bush. The name Jonah son of Amittai is probably borrowed from 2 Kgs 14:25 where a prophet by the same name is mentioned but whose prophecy has nothing to do with the prophecy of this Jonah. The point of the parable is to challenge Israel and any reader about their attitude to the hated foreigner. We spend a lot of our lives fighting battles against evil of various kinds (it’s one of the most popular forms of storytelling, movie making, TV serials, etc) and we need to identify the locus of evil in our midst. The temptation is to ‘play the blame game’, fingering anyone but ourselves as the source of it. Nineveh was the capital of the superpower of the day, Assyria. Assyria threw its weight around the Ancient Near East for a number of centuries and no doubt was envied, admired or hated by many, rather like contemporary superpowers. It conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in the late 8th century and took many away into exile. For Israelites, and Judeans in the southern kingdom, Assyria and Nineveh became the epitome of the foreign oppressor.

In the parable Jonah is sent to announce that God will punish the city with destruction within forty days. But surprisingly, the citizens of the mighty city repent ‘from the greatest to the least’ – even the sheep and cattle – and God forgives them. The text beyond our reading tells of Jonah’s angry reaction to God’s forgiveness and his refusal to change. God should not forgive such oppressors even when they repent; Jonah has found his evil monster and he wants the satisfaction of seeing it destroyed. There is a basis for this in the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament because it proclaims many times how the just God will punish the wicked. But there is the other side of the Bible’s portrait of God that Jonah is reluctant to accept, namely that ‘you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in merciful love, and ready to repent from punishing’ (Jonah 4:2). For texts that present these two ‘sides’ of God see Exodus 20:5-6; 34:6-7 and Numbers 14:18. The Old Testament teaches that God is the one who judges and decides who is deserving of punishment and who of mercy. It can be hard to let God be God and Jonah wants to play God. A telling irony in the tale is that earlier on Jonah himself is a beneficiary of God’s mercy when he prays for it. This occurs in the famous episode of his sea voyage; how he ends up in the belly of a ‘monster’ fish, prays to God who speaks to the fish who very obligingly spews Jonah back onto dry land. The message here is pretty clear; we deny others what we ourselves obtain. Another irony in the story is that the animals, unlike that ‘stubborn beast’ Jonah, all do what God wants.

**Psalm 24:4-9 [MT 25]**

The responsorial psalm is the kind of prayer that a character like Jonah needs to take on board. The psalmist prays that God will teach him/her the ways of God so that he or she can follow them rather than one’s own way or will. This is a foundational prayer for the good life because God is our saviour; the psalm teaches that it is only when we follow God’s ways that we find salvation – the fullness of life. If we try to find our own way we won’t make it. The second stanza seems to envisage the psalmist walking along the way or path of life. But in trying to follow God’s ways we human beings will almost inevitably stumble at some stage. We will need God’s merciful help to get back on the straight and narrow and this is what our psalmist prays for. God is merciful and compassionate because God is good and God’s mercy is consistent, in accord with ‘the love you have shown from of old’. The final stanza celebrates the universal that is manifest in the particular. The personal experience of the psalmist inspires a confession of God’s universal goodness. God shows the right path to whoever strays and whoever is humble. All that is required is that one acknowledges one’s poverty, that I cannot do it under my own steam. But God always ‘teaches his way to the poor’.

BEFORE THE FIRST READING - Commentator

In the first reading, God instructs the prophet Jonah to call the people of Nineveh to repentance in the view of a threatened punishment by God – a punishment which is averted by their repentance.

FIRST READING Jonah 3:1-5, 10 - Reader

A reading from the book of the prophet Jonah

The word of the Lord came to Jonah, saying,

“Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.”

So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord.

Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across.

Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk.

And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast,

and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

‘When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways,

God changed his mind about the calamity

that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

The word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM - Commentator

Today we will pray the responsorial psalm together.

Response: Teach me your ways, O Lord.

1. Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.

 Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation. R

2. Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love,

 for they have been from of old. According to your steadfast love remember me,

 for the sake of your goodness, O Lord. R

3. Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

 He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way. R