



## The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly

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### Homily at Mass 3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C – 27 January 2019

The remains of the man who popularised the word ‘Australia’ have been discovered in a cemetery uncovered at Euston railway station in London. His name was Matthew Flinders. The name Flinders is not unknown to us – we have Flinders Street in Melbourne and Flinders Street Station; perhaps you’ve visited the small town of Flinders on Mornington Peninsula. In South Australia there is Flinders University and the Flinders Ranges. In 1814 Flinders published an account of his epic voyage around the coast line of the Australian continent and Tasmania. During his voyage he met up with French explorers who were also mapping the Australian coast. Flinders certainly deserves his statue in the grounds of St Paul’s Cathedral, Melbourne.

Matthew Flinders had an aboriginal companion with him on this great voyage: a man named Bungaree. The boat they travelled in was called HMS Investigator. On a day like Australia Day names like Flinders, Captain James Cook and Captain Arthur Phillip come tumbling out. The long list of names announced in the Australian Day Honours list join these names from our early history. In a certain sense too you and I add our own names and our personal and family history to the Australian story – some of us perhaps can trace our family story in Australia back to the early days of European settlement, or the Gold Rushes 1850s or the immigration after the Irish potato famine or after the World Wars, or more recent decades. We speak of Australia as an immigrant society; a rich and diverse multicultural society; Australia is a great country; it’s often spoken of as the lucky country. Australians like you and me thank God for our life here, our freedom and safety; we acknowledge our forebears and today, with Australia Day yesterday and the public holiday tomorrow, we pray for Australia, our leaders, and citizens and for God’s blessing on our future.

History is important to St Luke as he begins his Gospel today, a Gospel which will guide us throughout this year. St Luke brings his skills as a writer of fine New Testament Greek, his qualifications as a medical doctor, his eye as an artist, and his experience illuminated by his friendship with St Paul, to his account of Our Lord’s birth, public ministry, preaching and miracles as well as Christ’s suffering, death and resurrection. St Luke’s Gospel contains unique stories about Our Lady, as well as Zacchaeus, the good thief, and the one leper who returned to give thanks when Jesus had healed him and 9 others. Pope St Leo the Great said that the Gospel of St Luke is the Gospel of Mercy: and that is highlighted especially in the story of the Prodigal Son, the Gospel within the Gospel – a great story of mercy, repentance, forgiveness and joy.

St Luke tells us today that he prepared for his Gospel by careful study, interviews and conversations with others. Did he have access to the Gospels of St Matthew and St Mark? Apart from St Paul, which of the apostles had he spoken to? St Luke refers to “eye witnesses”

– Tradition tells us that Luke had spoken with Our Lady; had he also met the lucky leper, some of the holy women who cared for Jesus and the Twelve including Martha and Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalene, and women whose names he mentions like Joanna whose husband Chuza served in the court of King Herod.

2 or 3 things we pick up from the scripture readings at Mass today. First of all, the Bible readings we listen to at Mass, especially the Gospel, speak to us always of real events, real history, real people, real conversations, real teaching, real healings. We listen to these stories and reflect on these as they tell us about ways that ordinary people like you and me encountered God.

Today Jesus announces a year of the Lord's favour. We could also speak of this as a year of grace, a year of mercy, a year of friendship with God, a year in which we follow Jesus our Lord and friend faithfully, humbly, closely. God never holds back in his relationships with us. He is a faithful and loving Father. He sees our needs, he hears our prayers, he showers on us blessings of love and grace, mercy and goodness. At the outset of this year of favour we also remember that our Sunday Mass stands at the heart of Christian life. "Without Sunday we cannot live" was the catchcry of some early Christian martyrs. You and I give loving priority to Mass each Sunday. Let's aim to attend Mass from the start Sunday by Sunday. Sunday Mass is an encounter with Christ our Lord; in his life-giving Word and in the Sacrifice he offers at the Altar and the Eucharist we share.