



## The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly

74 Grange Road, Glen Huntly VIC 3163

Telephone: (03) 9569 2099

Email: [glenhuntlycaulfield@cam.org.au](mailto:glenhuntlycaulfield@cam.org.au)

ABN: 70548 570 366

---

### Homily at Mass 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year C – 17 February 2019

Australia is a land of many blessings – all of us can begin to count them off. It is a land of abundance, a land of plenty. It is a peaceful place; well governed; well ordered; our neighbourhoods are relatively peaceful; our relations with those we live with, work with, deal with from day to day are generally respectful, agreeable, cooperative, happy. All Australians have the opportunity of a good education; meaningful employment; freedom to pursue hobbies, sports and recreation that appeal to us. No one stood in our way as we made our way to the Church for Mass today. We enjoy a quality standard of living. Australians are decent people: loyal, honest, generous, law abiding, big hearted, welcoming, hospitable.

So many blessings! And yet as we hear St Luke's brief account of our Lord's Beatitudes today, there are many Australians who perhaps find themselves in woe – the sort of woe expressed by the prophet Jeremiah today: the woe of drought in large parts of New South Wales; the woe of destructive floods in northern Queensland; the woe of bushfires and loss of property and homes in Tasmania. We're all familiar with Dorothea McKellar's poem about Australia – we live in a sunburnt country, a land of droughts and flooding rains, and all the rest. As many fellow Australians ponder their future on the land or wonder how they are going to rebuild their devastated homes and towns, we know that as Australians we will all pull together, and that our government – for all its faults – will kick in and help. The recent 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the terrible Black Saturday fires that took many lives and destroyed small country towns on the edge of Melbourne is evidence of that I think.

Let's think about the 4 blessings Jesus pronounces in the Gospel today:

Happy are you who are poor

Happy are you who are hungry

Happy are you who weep

Happy are you when people hate you

Of course, there's something counter – intuitive about the 4 “blessings” – the apostles and the crowds who first heard Jesus would have reacted as we might, as many comfortable Australians would. Happy are the poor? Happy are the hungry? Happy are you who weep and mourn? Happy are you who suffer insult and abuse? This makes no sense at all. Of course the word “happy” doesn't really translate all that well the Greek *makarios* and the Latin *beatus*: these words are better translated as ‘blessed’. “Blessed are the poor ... the hungry ... those who weep ... those who are persecuted”. Now we understand it better – and it is that sense of blessing that has caused Christians to think twice about their own many blessings and the call God makes to all of us to be – we could say – a blessing for others.

One of my uncles was a long time member of St Vincent de Paul. At the time of the Ash Wednesday bush fires in 1983, that destroyed much of Mt Macedon in the west of Melbourne, I remember him saying that St Vincent de Paul men and women were there on the ground from day 1 with food, furniture, clothes, bedding, offering help and accommodation and friendship for months and years afterwards. This is the heroic and generous love that is the blessing God extends to the poor, the hungry, people who feel sad and hopeless, abandoned and distressed, especially through the goodness and sense of humble responsibility that people like you and me – lovers of God, faithful Christians, big hearted Australians – express, live and share in big ways and small every day.

Some years ago the UN sponsored the “Year of the Volunteer”. Sometimes you see this still commemorated on the occasional \$1 coin in your change. That year a special survey was carried out by the Commonwealth government and commented on by our political leaders. The report noted that much volunteer work in Australia was carried out by faithful and active Christians, church goers like us. Does that come as a surprise?

After all, what motivates us to come to Sunday Mass? Haven’t all of us been trained, even from childhood, to look out with eyes of compassion and hearts ready for service? St Mary McKillop used to tell her sisters over and over “never see a need without doing something about it”.

There are famous words of St Teresa of Avila:

Christ has no body now on earth but yours; no hands but yours; no feet but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which the compassion of Christ must look out on the world.

Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good.

Yours are the hands with which He is to bless His people.