21ST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - YEAR A
22ND & 23RD AUGUST 2020

HOMILY NOTES

Many of you have read The Hobbit and its sequel The Lord of the Rings (or seen the films). In J.R.R. Tolkien’s world of Middle-Earth, hobbits were creatures who loved their comforts and their homes. However, when the wizard Gandalf comes to call on Bilbo Baggins in The Hobbit, and Frodo Baggins in The Lord of the Rings, he has a sense that these two hobbits are up for committing themselves to an adventure worth giving one’s life to. Gandalf represents the force of Goodness in Middle-Earth which is under assault from the power of darkness and evil.

Jesus’ question to his disciples (and us) in today’s gospel is something like Gandalf’s invitation to Bilbo and Frodo. Like the hobbits, most of us like our comfort zones… however, Jesus is calling us to believe in him as the Son of God and follow him. And indeed, as our local scripture scholar Brendan Byrne points out, the mission of God’s people, the church, is to wrest the human world from the grip of the Evil One and reclaim it for the rule of God. And the church, the people of God, can “rest assured that no matter how grievous the onslaught of the powers of death, the building so founded will stand. This will be not simply because of the firmness of its foundation, but because the church will have the living Lord present with it until the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Peter and the other disciples called to answer Jesus’ question and follow him are weak. They will desert him in his darkest hour. And, we too, as disciples, know weakness and failure...so we can pray the words in today’s responsorial psalm,

“On the day I called, you answered,
You increased the strength of my soul”.

I feel that it’s important that we hear again Jesus’ promise that the community called the Church will stand firm no matter what destructive powers are hurled against it. In recent times, as we know, destructive powers have assailed the community called the Church from within through the sexual abuse scandal. Yet the church will stand firm, because as Jesus says, it’s “my church”. We have to remember it is the Lord’s Church. At this Covid19 time, when in many ways we’re really struggling, and have the task of re-building our community again, we go into it with confidence because it is the Lord’s church and the Lord remains with us. Perhaps the world as we know it will be changed forever by our Covid19 experience. Whatever we face, we believe in One who brings good out of evil, and new life from death, and will guide this community which is his Church.

In this year when we read Matthew’s gospel, the last words of the gospel promise us that Jesus walks with his disciples and church to the “end of the age”. And we experience the Lord, strongly present with us on our journey, every time we gather in prayer for the Eucharist. So, like Bilbo and Frodo in Tolkien’s world, we also experience being strengthened and accompanied for the adventures into which we are called.
MACLEOD NEWS!!!!

ALL PUBLIC MASSES CANCELLED AT SMOT:
Now that we are in stage 4 COVID restrictions, the doors to the Church and the Community Centre remain closed. The Parish Office is NOW CLOSED. Staff are working from home. For all enquiries please either phone the parish office on 9401 6338 or email macleod@cam.org.au and we will return your call/emails. We strongly encourage you to stay at home in line with Victorian Government stage 4 guidelines. Please see our resource guide on page 4 of this bulletin.

NEXT WEEK’S READINGS: (22nd Sunday in OT) Jer 20:7-9; Ps 62:2-6. 8-9. Rom 12: 1-2; Mt 16: 21-27

RECENTLY DECEASED Jan Keogh, Ma. Theresa Cabihe (Philippines)


LORD THAT I MAY BE WELL AGAIN - PRAY FOR THE SICK–
Des Reardon, Ines Favrin, Sr. Mary Fankhauser, Fredie Assouad, Cheryl Parker, Patricia Valente, Robyn Atherton, Philomena & Leo Boek, Fr Kevin Mogg, Silvana Gennai, Danilo Mikac, Anne-Maree Silfo, Michael Nicholls, Elizabeth Martin, Tony Ryan, Sr Margaret McHugh, Michael Burgess, Bob McAalieve, Annette Lewis, Richard Mc Alieve, Katrina Jackman, Brian Flynn, Maria George, Maureen Miller, Brigid Harding, Joan McKeegan, Terry Walsh, Noel Murray (nephew of Kay Ford), Janice Brandon, Sr Joyce Shillito, Sr Brigid Maloney

ST MARTINS MENTAL HEALTH CHECK INS
Hi St Martins Community, this is Chris one of the youth leaders. During this lockdown period, many of us are at risk of the negative effects that social isolation can have on our mental wellbeing. This can be especially true for the members of our community as weekly masses have been halted. That’s why from the 23rd of August to the 19th of September, 2 other Nursing student volunteers and I will be offering mental health check-up calls to those who feel they need it or to those who think a family member or friend may need it. In these weekly calls we will offer guidance, advice, and support regarding your quarantine experience, staying safe and possible referrals and recommendations to services you may find useful. Most of all we are here just to listen to anything you want to say, these calls are confidential and if you would like can simply be for you to socialise. If you think you, a friend or a family member may benefit from this service, email christopherwebb4321@gmail.com and send me the name and number of the person and we will follow up with a phone call. Stay Safe everybody and God Bless.

FOR PEACE IN ANXIETY DURING THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Loving God, we come to you full of anxiety about what may happen in the coming days and weeks. Shower us with the peace Jesus promised to his disciples, and make us into steady pillars for those around us. In this time of uncertainty and epidemic, wake us up to the reminder that we are not alone. Even as we are asked to keep our distance from others, help us to find ways to reach out to those who need our support. We pray especially for those whose incomes and livelihoods are threatened. For the children who will miss meals due to school closures. For those already isolated, lonely and scared. Loving God, give them your peace, and through our hands ensure they have what they need. Sustain, strengthen and protect all caregivers. Bless them as they offer compassionate care and show selfless courage in the face of risk. Remind us, each time we wash our hands, that in our baptism you call us to let go of our fears and live in joy, peace, and hope. Amen.

CATHOLICCARE SERVICES
In these challenging and unsettling times, many families and communities have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Some have lost jobs and are in financial crisis. There is emergency relief available. Others are experiencing increased anxiety and depression due to social isolation. Meanwhile, couples and families are facing relationship issues while in prolonged lock-down. It is important to look after your health and wellbeing during these difficult times. Whether you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed, anxious or sad; talking to a counsellor can help. If you are having relationship problems, CatholicCare can also provide couples or family counselling. We are offering FREE counselling via phone and video conference during the COVID crisis. You do not need a referral or a mental health care plan to access this service. Learn more about how counselling can help or call to make a booking. Call 9287 5555. Or visit www.ccam.org.au

To view our Safeguarding Children & Young People Code of Conduct, go to www.smot.org.au
CURRENT CARITAS CAMPAIGNS...

MIDDLE EAST APPEAL Caritas Australia has committed to provide a response as part of its already established Middle East Regional Appeal. Additionally, through its in-country staff and partners in Lebanon, the wider Caritas network is working to deliver: Food and water, hygiene kits including masks and soap, material for shelter repairs and the clean-up of debris and medication and other health services.

If you feel you can offer any support please call 1800 024 413 or click on the following link, https://www.caritas.org.au/learn/emergency-response/middle-east-emergency-appeal

COVID-19 IT’S NOT OVER UNTIL IT’S OVER FOR EVERYONE

COVID-19 continues to impact parts of Australia, while around the world, millions of people are dealing with the impacts of the virus. Many of these communities were already facing poor sanitation, overcrowding and limited access to healthcare. How can you combat COVID-19 without access to adequate sanitation and healthcare?

Caritas Australia has joined churches and aid agencies for #EndCOVIDForAll, a pledge of support that will be taken to government to show our support for vulnerable communities, because it’s not over until it’s over for everyone.

SMOT Parish has signed the pledge to end Covid for all.

For more information on #EndCOVIDForAll or to sign the pledge go to www.caritas.org.au/end-covid-for-all

#ENDCOVIDFORALL PRAYER

God of Compassion,

We pray today for those across the Earth being impacted by Covid19. We bring before you the vulnerable, the poor, the displaced, and ask that you protect them.

We pray today for an end to this crisis. Inspire us all to be generous in our response to assist those in need, recognising that we are all interconnected, and that this crisis is not going to end for anyone, until it ends for everyone.

We pray that our world leaders work actively for the common good, and our Australian Government will continue to provide vital support to vulnerable nations. We desire to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with you, Lord.

St Oscar Romero, patron saint of Caritas, pray for us.

Our Lady Help of Christians, pray for us.

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, pray for us.

Amen.

SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY 30 AUGUST

The Australian Catholic Bishops’ Social Justice Statement for 2020–21 is titled ‘TO LIVE LIFE TO THE FULL: MENTAL HEALTH IN AUSTRALIA TODAY’. It encourages faith communities, governments and each one of us, to make mental health a priority. It is a timely message in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic is affecting many members of our parishes, schools and communities. Understanding mental health will help us to be aware of those who need our support. The Statement encourages us all to reject stigmatisation, to work for the transformation of social determinants of mental ill-health, and to call for policies and service provision that meets the needs of the poorest and most marginalised members of our community.

The Statement calls us to invite all people to an abundant life that engages the whole self physically, psychologically, and spiritually. It acknowledges that God created us out of love and for love, to live life to the full in community. It examines how our social, economic and cultural life can be welcoming and inclusive of those who live with mental ill-health. It also offers ways of supporting people when they are most vulnerable, and it explores how to sow hope and opportunities for all people to thrive in body, mind and spirit.

Download this years statement at Download the Statement or visit socialjustice.catholic.org.au

No time to read? You can listen to the Social Justice Statement on your favourite podcast platform. Our podcast, The Revolution of Tenderness, features a series on the mental health statement. The first 3 episodes of the series present the full text of the statement, one section at a time. Future episodes will discuss its content.

“Our challenge is to accompany people from the margins into a journey towards the fullness of life and love. We are meant to be in the coalface, in the messiness of it all, and at the same time, in fidelity to the Gospel... Like Christ in his ministry among the sick and the lost, we are called to meet God in the most unlikely people and places. We, too, must be in that frontier space.”

Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv.
RESOURCES TO ACCESS DURING LOCKDOWN

MASSES AVAILABLE TO WATCH ON LINE...
SMOT Weekend Mass can be found on our website www.smot.org.au or on our facebook page @SmotParish
SMOT Weekday Mass livestreamed Tuesday, Thursday & Friday this week at 9.15am on our facebook page (for any anniversaries or special intentions please advise the parish office by phone).
St Patrick’s Cathedral The 11am Sunday Mass at St Patrick’s Cathedral is televised free to air on C31 (often listed as Channel 44 on digital TVs) as well as live streamed on its website and YouTube channel. We invite you to share the news widely, particularly with those who might be limited to TV viewing.
Watch here: https://melbournecatholic.org.au/Mass

Mass for you at home This program has been allowing the faithful – particularly those with mobility problems – to participate in Mass from their homes for many years. Mass for You at Home is broadcast on Eleven and Network Ten on Sundays and Aurora Channel on Foxtel every day. It is also the fourth-longest running television program in Australia.

Mass on Demand Hosted through the CathNews YouTube platform, this is the first Mass of the Day at St Mary’s Church in North Sydney. It is available for 24 hours until it is replaced with the new Mass of the day. Watch here: http://bit.ly/MassOnDemand

RESOURCES FOR HOME PRAYER......
Richard Rohr, OFM - Action & Contemplation: Daily meditation
https://cac.org/2020-daily-meditations/
Joan Chittister, Benedictine Sister of Erie
http://www.joanchittister.org/node/9231 or http://www.joanchittister.org/

Pray As You Go Is a daily prayer session, designed to go with you wherever you go, to help you pray when ever you find time. A new prayer session is produced every day of the working week and one session for the weekend. It is not a 'Thought for the Day', a sermon or a bible-study, but rather a framework for your own prayer. Lasting between ten and thirteen minutes, it combines music, scripture and some questions for reflection. Our aim is to help you to: become more aware of God’s presence in your life, listen to and reflect on God’s word and grow in your relationship with God. The style of prayer is based on Ignatian Spirituality. It is produced by Jesuit Media Initiatives, with material written by a number of Jesuits, both in Britain and further afield, and other experts in the spirituality of St Ignatius of Loyola. It is available free to download from the App Store and is also available on Google Play. Just search ‘Pray as you Go’.

Children’s Liturgy
If you would like any additional children’s liturgy resources to use at home during this time please drop us an email at macleod@cam.org.au and we can send them to you.

BIBLE REFLECTION GROUP ....
We will meet again online in Zoom, from 7:30-8:30pm this Tuesday night 25 August
To join, click on this zoom link: https://latrobe.zoom.us/j/92296803601
If you have any questions, or want help setting up your Zoom, contact Dennis Wollersheim on dewoller@gmail.com or 0414529454.

POPE FRANCIS: A MAN OF HIS WORD
This is a 2018 documentary film produced, co-written and directed by Wim Wenders, focusing on the life and goals of Pope Francis, the 266th and current Pope and sovereign of the Vatican City State. A Swiss-Italian-French-German co-production, the film premiered at the 2018 Cannes Film Festival and was released in the United States on May 18, 2018. It is currently available on NETFLIX and is definitely worth seeing because we get to hear Pope Francis in his own words. Just check out the YouTube link - you will definitely want to see this documentary. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOmY8iuBcY

MILESTONE OCCASIONS Do you have a significant marriage milestone or significant birthday coming up?? Parishioners may like to receive a blessing at Mass on these special, important occasions. A certificate will also be given to commemorate the milestone. Please let us know via email of your milestone and we can arrange to have the occasion celebrated during Mass.