



# Sacred Heart of Jesus Cathedral

DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

**St Benedict's Inner Newcastle Parish:** Sacred Heart Cathedral, Newcastle West; St Joseph's Church, The Junction; St Mary, Star of the Sea Church, Newcastle; Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Tighes Hill; St Laurence O'Toole Church, Broadmeadow. **Mayfield Parish:** Christ the King, Mayfield West. **Stockton Parish:** St Peter-in-Chains, Stockton.

## SUNDAY 25TH FEBRUARY 2024

### 2ND SUNDAY OF LENT, YEAR B

#### Our Clergy

Fr John Lovell  
Fr Paul Chackanikunnel  
Fr Anthony Coloma  
Fr Anil Kumar Kuchipudi  
Deacon Kevin Gadd

#### Regional Office—St Benedict's Centre

25 Farquhar Street, The Junction  
PO Box 6, The Junction 2291  
P: (02) 4979 1101 F: (02) 4962 4644  
E: [newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au)  
W: [www.newcastlecatholic.org.au](http://www.newcastlecatholic.org.au)  
W: [www.sacredheartmilton.org.au](http://www.sacredheartmilton.org.au)

#### Our Staff

Margaret Cox (*Reception & Administration*)  
*Monday, Tuesday, Friday*

Anne Warren (*Business Manager*)  
*Tuesday and Thursday*

Thelma Dickson (*Administration*)  
*Wednesday and Thursday*

Elul Teclé (*Administration*)

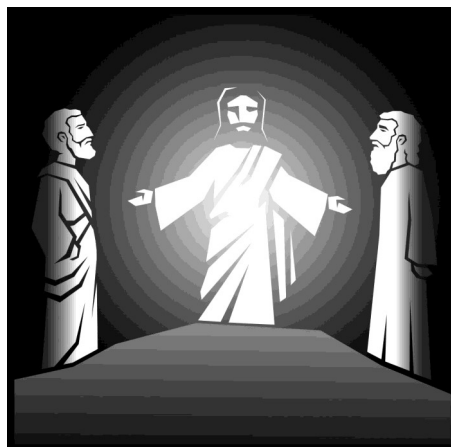
Dr Anne Millard (*Music, Liturgy, Sacraments*)

#### Other Contacts

**Bereavement Team:** P: (02) 4979 1252

**Mercy Pastoral Team:** Sr Patricia Whitten rsm  
0448463679

**St Joseph's Pastoral Team:** Contact the Parish Office



#### THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

The Lord has always given signs to those He has called to be His messengers, so they could have no doubt amidst whatever trials they faced, they were acting in the service of the one true God. In today's readings, Abraham on Mt Moriah and the Apostles on Mt Tabor received powerful signs vindicating *their* faith in God. Though perhaps less dramatic, there will also be powerful signs from God in *our* lives too. Fr John

**Parish Bulletin:** Prayer requests and items for the Bulletin should be received at the Parish Office by 5pm on Wednesdays.

#### Promoters of Safeguarding

Fr John Lovell p: (02) 4979 1106

Gail Lovell P: (02) 4979 1256

Anne Millard P: (02) 4979 1252

*Sacred Heart Cathedral sits on the traditional country of the Awabakal and Worimi peoples.*

*We acknowledge their cultural heritage, beliefs and their continuing relationship with the land, pay respect to their Elders past, present and future, and commit ourselves to working together for reconciliation and justice.*

## THE PARISH DIARY...(for the week ahead)

*Second Week of Lent, Year B*

Monday 26th February

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

Tuesday 27th February

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

9:00am Mass @ Stockton

Wednesday 28th February

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

9am Mass @ Christ the King, Mayfield West

Thursday 29th February

8:15am Mass @ The Cathedral

9:00am Mass @ Stockton

Friday 1st March

10:15am Mass @ St Joseph's

11:00am Exposition, Adoration & Reconciliation @  
The Cathedral (until 12pm)

12:05pm Mass @ The Cathedral

6:00pm Stations of the Cross (in Polish)

Saturday 2nd March

9:15am Mass @ The Cathedral, followed by the  
Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help  
(followed by Reconciliation)

5:30pm Mass @ The Cathedral

5:30pm Mass @ The Junction

5:30pm Mass @ Mayfield West

Sunday 3rd March

*3rd Sunday of Lent, Year B*

7:30am Mass @ St Mary's

8:00am Mass @ Tighes Hill

9:00am Mass @ Stockton

9:30am Mass @ The Cathedral \*

11:00am Mass @ The Junction (Italian)

11:30am Mass @ The Cathedral (Polish)

1:00pm Men's Rosary @ The Cathedral

3:00pm Divine Mercy Devotion @ Mayfield West

5:00pm Mass @ The Cathedral

5:00pm Taize service @ Tighes Hill

6:00pm Mass @ Mayfield West (Vietnamese) \*\*

\* Livestreamed on the Cathedral's YouTube channel—  
[www.youtube.com/c/SacredHeartCathedralHamilton](http://www.youtube.com/c/SacredHeartCathedralHamilton)  
and on the Diocesan website

\*\* The Vietnamese Mass is now celebrated fortnightly

### NEXT WEEK'S READINGS++

Third Sunday of Lent

Exodus 20:1-17,  
1 Corinthians 1:22-25  
John 2:13-25



## PRAYER REQUESTS

**RECENTLY DECEASED:** Craig Neal Wheatley (Kaiser),  
Sr. Rosemary Jackson rsj Estelita Diwa

**ANNIVERSARIES:** John Tully, Isabella Haggerty, Joan  
Levy, Helen McCullen, Norman Woodland

**SICK:** Tui Innes, Ronoel Diwa, Jolina Joyce Saranillo,  
Maureen Francis, Angela Cottier, Patrick  
McInerney Cowan, Joshua Zalanardo,  
Rosa Silivinec, Harry Melville, Doreen  
Mason, Elaine Johnson, Stewart  
McKinnon, Mark Caesar, Peter Kefecek,  
Carlo Rossi, Neil Thomas, Kathryn Gray,  
Emilie Tseronis



*Names may be placed here by contacting the Parish Office. Please  
refer to the Policy Document on the Parish website—visit  
[www.newcastlecatholic.org.au/downloads](http://www.newcastlecatholic.org.au/downloads).*

## OUR BELOVED DEAD

We remember those in our Sacred Heart Columbarium  
whose anniversaries occur in February:

|                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Robert Bartholomew      | Patricia (Trish) Leishman |
| Jean Belcher            | Alan James Long           |
| Gwenneth Bennett        | Frank Monaco              |
| Anthony Bookallil       | Stan O'Brien              |
| Beryl Jean Clarke       | Kathleen O'Neill          |
| Marie Forrest           | Roger Saunders            |
| Edna Jean Hancock       | Robert Smith              |
| Michael Henessy         | Gregory Smith             |
| Ronald Jarrett          | Toni Van Schyndel         |
| Czeslaw (Cec) Kizeweter | William (Bill) Warren     |
| Xuyen An Le             | Clare Alice Withers       |
|                         | Joan Woodcock             |

*Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord, and let perpetual  
light shine upon them, may they rest in peace, Amen.*

## NEXT WEEK'S READINGS++

Because the Year A gospels for the 3rd, 4th, and 5th  
Sundays of Lent are of major importance in regard to  
Christian initiation, the readings of Year A are used on  
these three Sundays when we have adults to be  
baptised at Easter. At Sacred Heart Cathedral we are  
blessed to have candidates for Baptism this Easter.  
Therefore, we celebrate the Scrutinies (a special  
blessing for those to be baptised) at one of the  
Masses over the next three weekends. At that Mass,  
we will have the readings for Year A:

Third Sunday of Lent (Year A)

Ex 17:3-7  
Rom 5:1-2, 5-8  
Jn 4: 5-42

## SEASONS FOR GROWTH

*No season lasts forever, not even winter.*

Our lives, like the seasons, are constantly changing. These changes often involve many losses and deep grief. Learning how to recognise and adapt to the stressful events and changed circumstances we experience, as well as the ongoing challenges these may bring helps to bring peace and hope into our lives. The Seasons for Growth small group, peer-based educational program offers the opportunity for individual reflection and group discussion by gently and symbolically using the metaphor of the seasons to support adults to:

- **Learn** about how different people respond to change, loss and grief
- **Understand** that it is normal to experience a range of grief reactions
- **Explore** new approaches to dealing with change, loss and grief in their lives
- **Build** communication, decision making and problem solving skills
- **Participate** in a supportive network of peers and adults
- **Integrate** their new learning into their relationships with family, friends and others.

Please consider joining this supportive space in 2024 if you would like to share conversation and learn together with others who are also navigating the different seasons of life and loss.

Seasons for Growth is a four week program, which we will offer during Lent, 2024. The program will run for four Saturday afternoons from 1pm until 4pm on the 2nd, 9th, 16th, and 23rd of March in the Parish Centre. Contact the office to sign up.



## FOOD BASKETS FOR THE NEEDY

If you would like to donate, any of the following types of non-perishable items would be most gratefully received: UHT milk, cereal, jam, vegemite, peanut butter, tinned veggies, fruit, soup, fish, meat, dried pasta, rice, pasta sauces, teabags, coffee, biscuits, crackers, custard, jelly, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, conditioner (even the travel sized ones from hotels), deodorant.



## 2024 - LENTEN REFLECTION -

### TRANSFORMATION THROUGH REVELATION

During the season of Lent, we are called to look deeply at the human condition, just as Jesus, the Son of God, experienced. We are reminded during this time of hardship, suffering, and ultimately dying that we must stretch ourselves. We must pray and fast from whatever is taking hold of the fullness of life. This time calls for personal reflection and encourages us to look out with missionary eyes to intentionally give to those in need. Access the resource at <https://www.mn.catholic.org.au/media/6680/0003733-dio-2024-lenten-program-06.pdf>

You are welcome to participate in the Lenten Reflection group which will be held each Friday, 23 February to 22 March in the Diocesan Library from 9am - 10am. Register at: <https://forms.office.com/r/Jrj4Ngi1vu>

### LENTEN DISCUSSION GROUP

Each Wednesday following 9am Mass in Mayfield West Church. All welcome.

### VIEW, CHEW, CHAT, AND LECTIO

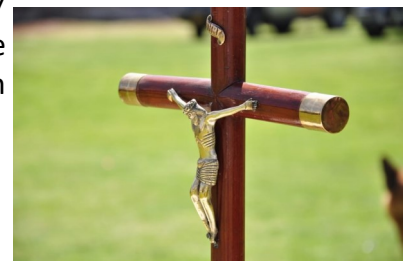
View, Chew, and Chat continues with the Lenten program on February 28. To participate, please email the parish office. We will return to the first series of The Chosen after Lent.

### WAY OF THE CROSS

Our Diocese is blessed with rich diversity. This year's Ecumenical Way of the Cross, held on the 5th Sunday of Lent, invites us into a multicultural journey of remembrance. As we relive the story of Jesus' Passion, we recall the stories that have brought us together. This event is a celebrated gathering of our wider community and one not to be missed.

When: Sunday 17 March, 3pm (you are invited to gather from 2pm)

Where: St Joseph's Toronto Church, 140 Wangi Road, Toronto



### MEN'S ROSARY GROUP

The Men's Rosary will be held on the first Saturday of each month @ 1pm at Sacred Heart Cathedral, 841 Hunter St, Newcastle West. For more



## POPE FRANCIS' HOMILY

from March 1, 2015

Last Sunday the Liturgy presented Jesus tempted by Satan in the desert, but victorious over temptation. In the light of this Gospel, we are again made aware of our condition as sinners, but also of the victory over evil for those who undertake the journey of conversion and, like Jesus, want to do the Father's will. In this second Sunday of Lent, the Church points out to us the end of this journey of conversion, namely participation in the glory of Christ, which shines on the face of the obedient Servant, who died and rose for us.

The Gospel page recounts the event of the Transfiguration, which takes place at the height of Jesus' public ministry. He is on his way to Jerusalem, where the prophecies of the "Servant of God" and his redemptive sacrifice are to be fulfilled. The crowds did not understand this: presented with a Messiah who contrasted with their earthly expectations, they abandoned Him. They thought the Messiah would be the liberator from Roman domination, the emancipator of the homeland, and they do not like Jesus' perspective and so they leave Him. Neither do the Apostles understand the words with which Jesus proclaims the outcome of his mission in the glorious passion, they do not understand! Jesus thus chooses to give to Peter, James and John a foretaste of his glory, which He will have after the Resurrection, in order to confirm them in faith and encourage them to follow Him on the trying path, on the Way of the Cross. Thus, on a high mountain, immersed in prayer, He is transfigured before them: his face and his entire person irradiate a blinding light. The three disciples are frightened, as a cloud envelops them and the Father's voice sounds from above, as at the Baptism on the Jordan: "This is my beloved Son; listen to him" (Mk 9:7). Jesus is the Son-made-Servant, sent into the world to save us all through the Cross, fulfilling the plan of salvation. His full adherence to God's will renders his humanity transparent to the glory of God, who is love.

Jesus thus reveals Himself as the perfect icon of the Father, the radiance of his glory. He is the fulfillment of revelation; that is why beside Him appear transfigured, Moses and Elijah appear; they represent the Law and the Prophets, so as to signify that everything finishes and begins in Jesus, in his passion and in his glory.

Their instructions for the disciples and for us is this: "Listen to Him!". Listen to Jesus. He is the Saviour: follow Him. To listen to Christ, in fact, entails taking up the logic of his Pascal Mystery, setting out on the

journey with Him to make of oneself a gift of love to others, in docile obedience to the will of God, with an attitude of detachment from worldly things and of interior freedom. One must, in other words, be willing to "lose one's very life" (cf. Mk 8:35), by giving it up so that all men might be saved: thus, we will meet in eternal happiness. The path to Jesus always leads us to happiness, don't forget it! Jesus' way always leads us to happiness. There will always be a cross, trials in the middle, but at the end we are always led to happiness. Jesus does not deceive us, He promised us happiness and will give it to us if we follow His ways.

With Peter, James and John we too climb the Mount of the Transfiguration today and stop in contemplation of the face of Jesus to retrieve the message and translate it into our lives; for we too can be transfigured by Love. In reality, love is capable of transfiguring everything.

Love transfigures all! Do you believe this?



## DIOCESAN LIBRARY

We are excited to invite Library Patrons to the Diocesan Library located within the Diocesan Resource Centre, 12 Tudor St (corner of Tudor and Parry St). While the space is yet to be officially opened, patrons will be able to physically access and borrow resources from **Monday 26 February**.

We have a number of formation opportunities occurring in the space before 26 February which are included below, as well as opportunities that will be ongoing each month.

On the *first Friday* of each month commencing the 1<sup>st</sup> of March there is an opportunity for parents and children to join us in *Storytime* from 10.15am - 11.00am and at 1.00pm - 2.30pm patrons are invited to come together for *Faith Formation*. Each month Faith Formation will focus on a different theme, the emphasis in March is on Lent. In addition, on the *last Friday* of the month from 10.00am - 12.00pm patrons are invited to a *Human Library Experience* where we listen and learn from others' life and encounters.

**Library Opening Hours:** Monday - 10am-6pm, Friday - 10am-6pm, Saturday- 10am-2pm

If you would like to become a **volunteer** at the library, please complete this form: <https://forms.office.com/r/5CLnqMwZLm>

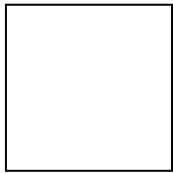


## REVIEW OF CONFIRMATION GUIDANCE AND PROCEDURES

All parishioners, parents and sponsors, ministers and anyone else involved in the preparation and celebration of Confirmation over recent years, are invited to participate in our review process. Ideally please read [‘Liturgy Matters: It’s Time – Christian Initiation and Confirmation Review \(13 Feb 2024\)’](#) where everything is explained and the ‘Review Document’ is available. You can access the Review Document directly by using the following link: <https://www.mn.catholic.org.au/media/6754/confirmation-review-process.pdf>

Otherwise, you can access the questionnaire but NOT the background information via this QR code. The closing date is 17 March.

With thanks, Louise Gannon rsj



### aMeN caMiNo

The purpose of pilgrimage is journey. Camino has a long and established Christian history, it means ‘road’ or ‘way’. A famous Camino is St James Way or Camino de Santiago in Spain. The first Christian movement in the 1st Century was known as ‘The Way’.

The aMeN CaMiNo is a response to a desire to be in communion with each other and our sacred earth. It is an opportunity to pause from routine, immerse yourself in reflection, contemplation and to provide a moment of space for each person to be conscious of God’s gift of Grace.

Amen is the word Christian’s use to say ‘Yes, we are on our way to God.’ By joining us on the “aMeN CaMiNo”, you are saying yes to something in your heart which is calling you.

The aMeN caMiNo takes place over five consecutive days. The pilgrimage starts at St John’s Chapel, Maitland and concludes at the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Hamilton. Pilgrims will walk an average of 20km per day through the beautiful landscape of bush, beach and beyond which we are blessed to have in our backyard. We will also be holding a weekend experience.

Dates: 6-10 July, 3-7 August and 7-8 September. Flyer: [amen-camino-flyer-for-2024.pdf](#)

Expression of Interest: <https://forms.office.com/r/>

## IRELAND PILGRIMAGE THE WAY OF MERCY

In 2024, Maitland-Newcastle Diocese will be journeying to Ireland to explore “The Way of Mercy”. Embark on a soulful 15-day Irish spiritual journey, drawing inspiration from Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Sisters of Mercy in 1831. Traverse Dublin’s sacred sites and the serene landscapes of Glendalough and the Ring of Kerry, immersing yourself in Ireland’s rich religious legacy. Marvel at the majestic Cliffs of Moher, pilgrimage to the Holy Shrine of Knock. This pilgrimage covers seven captivating cities of Ireland, instrumental in building the foundations of our Christian faith.

As we journey together we will take time, to pray, reflect and care for one another. The spirit of Mercy, compassion, respect, justice, reconciliation, hospitality service and courage will be reflected upon each day in our journeying together.

Date: Thursday 26 September – Saturday 12 October 2024

Contact: Erin McCort (Pilgrimage Coordinator)  
[erin.mccort@mn.catholic.edu.au](mailto:erin.mccort@mn.catholic.edu.au)

### BOOK CLUB

**Sunday, 3rd March @ 6:15pm:** Bookclub meets to discuss *Small Things Like These* by Claire Keegan. If you would like to participate in book club meetings, please email [newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au)



### ENROLMENTS FOR 2024 SACRAMENTAL PROGRAM

A child’s catholic faith journey began with the Sacrament of Baptism and continues by the reception of the Sacraments of Initiation, Confirmation and First Eucharist.

The preparations for these sacraments in the Inner Newcastle Parish run between February and June of every year and are designed for children going into Year, 4, 5 or 6 in 2024. Preparations are completed as a family with online activities and volunteer work within the community.

Enrolments are now open for the 2024 program. If you are interested in being apart of the program this year please visit the parish website and complete the online enrolment form.

<https://www.newcastlecatholic.org.au/sacramental-enrolment-form/>

For more information please contact the office on 49791101 or [newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:newcparish@mn.catholic.org.au)

## UNDERSTANDING THE BEATITUDES

One of the most striking examples of Jesus' teaching is the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel. The Beatitudes are the foundation on which that sermon is built. They are also one of the most beautiful statements of Christian ethics. Yet at the same time, they are also some of the trickiest verses in the Bible to interpret. In this subject, we'll tackle the meaning of the blessings by putting them into the context of the gospels, the Hebrew Bible, and wider Jewish literature, like the Dead Sea Scrolls. We'll think about what the Beatitudes contribute to our understanding of Jesus' teaching and mission. And finally, we'll think about how the Beatitudes still matter today.

Dates: Thursdays 7 & 14 March (4.00pm-5.30pm)

Venue: Library in Diocesan Resource Centre Register at: <https://forms.office.com/r/cGXZ545eRX>

## gospel focus

### A new vision

*Part of Peter's mistake is to see the appearance of Elijah and Moses as a confirmation that Jesus has come to continue the work of the great prophets of the past. Rather than placing Jesus in the old tradition of the prophets, the appearance of Elijah and Moses, together with the voice of God, is to endorse the new direction that Jesus' ministry is taking. Jesus' new vision for the world is informed by the relationships forged between God and the prophets of the past, but it is a vision of a completely different way of relating to God: a much more personal relationship that calls us to respond from the heart to those around us.*

### THE CHUCKLE

An Irish man was given the job of painting white lines down the middle of a road.

On his first day, he painted eight miles, on his second day he painted three miles, and on his third day he painted just one mile.

The boss was not pleased.

He asked "why is it that you are painting less each day?"

"Because each day I get further away from the can of paint."

\*\* The editor advises that three of her four grandparents are Irish.



## EPIC (EVERYTHING POSSIBLE IN CHRIST) YOUNG ADULT GROUP

Are you aged between 20 and 40? Are you interested to share your faith with like-minded young adults? Then our new faith sharing group might be for you! We meet Wednesdays @ 7pm in the Cathedral precinct.

Email [Elul.tecle@mn.catholic.org.au](mailto:Elul.tecle@mn.catholic.org.au) to find out more.

### TAIZE SERVICE

Sunday 3rd March

Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church Tighes Hill  
5.00pm – 6pm *followed by a shared supper.*

### ART AND SPIRITUALITY WORKSHOP

Creation of art provides an opportunity for a deepening awareness of oneself and the world, and can act as a catalyst for evoking the Spirit. Art is a means to see-to-re-search and find the living meaning of what it means to open the heart. Everyone has the ability to create art, but in order for it to be theological, the artist needs to explore ways that it makes sense of faith. Opening the heart through art involves making meaning through the creation, then reflecting on the art itself and the unfolding the moment-to-moment direct experience of the process.

This workshop will provide an opportunity to awaken the Spirit through the beauty of God's creation, prayer, and reflection. Participants will engage in art making experiences which will nourish their faith.

Date: Thursday 14 March (9am-3pm)

Venue: Kilaben Bay Community Centre

Cost: \$25 per person

Register at: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/art-and-spirituality-workshops-2024-tickets-808605269127>

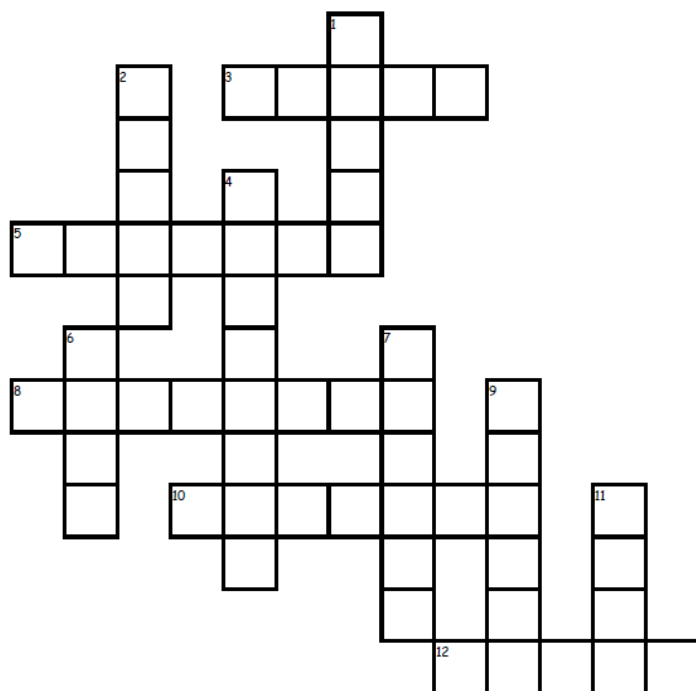
### MOUNTAINTOP MOMENTS

Throughout the Bible there are instances of important encounters with God on mountaintops. Even this week's first reading, the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham, occurs on a mountaintop. It is not the potential sacrifice, but the new relationship between God and Abraham that is a mountaintop moment. In modern language, we often speak about 'peak experiences' – moments of exceptional clarity, intense emotion or extraordinary accomplishment. Sometimes, like Peter, we are tempted to try to remain 'in the moment' rather than using the peak experience as a motivator for when we go back down the mountain to our normal (if perhaps changed) existence

# CROSSWORD

## Nothing can separate us from God's love

Rom 8:31. 38-39  
Ps 103:1-2. 8 & 11. R. v.8a  
Mk 9:2-10



### Across

- 3: Jesus and the disciples heard God's voice coming from this  
5: Jesus' \_\_\_\_\_ became much whiter  
8: Jesus and some of his disciples went up a high \_\_\_\_\_  
10: if something is happening now, it is happening in the p\_\_\_\_\_  
12: this man wanted to build three shelters

### Down

- 1: \_\_\_\_\_ and Elijah appeared and spoke to Jesus  
2: the opposite of above  
4: Peter wanted to build three of these for Jesus, Moses and Elijah  
6: nothing can separate us from God's \_\_\_\_\_  
7: heavenly beings  
9: if something hasn't happened yet, it might happen in the f\_\_\_\_\_  
11: certain

# SENIOR WORDSEARCH

## Nothing can separate us from God's love

Rom 8:31. 38-39  
Ps 103:1-2. 8 & 11. R. v.8a  
Mk 9:2-10

K I M T G Q U C S V C J I W M W A  
Y A I R U R E X U Q S E S O M C T  
A K C F S Y Q F Y F P Y C Q I T Q  
N V G L N I A T N U O M F Q C J E  
I Y I U W C T P F M U Y K L M R X  
T B D P L R T E Q X E V O L U E R  
M F C P D M Z T O C O T H S D J T  
D X X Y O N Z E H A H D X J V I H  
U S H E L T E R S E N O P V L R J  
V L B D A M K V S M X G K M X J Y  
M K J A S H I H T I W Z E B M Y A  
T N E S E R P U D I I F E L E V C  
T V J X G D P B N Q Z L J S S L I  
W V L Q P V Q U N Y O V X Q O Y N  
I N M U C P P W K W E Z N U P C K  
I D R L Y C D U V U Z N D A F F F  
F J I X R T X F U T U R E B J S K

Try to find these words:

angels  
below  
clothes  
cloud  
future  
love  
Moses  
mountain  
Peter  
present  
shelters  
sure

## REFLECTION

At the end of *The Laws of Our Fathers*, Scott Turow has one of his characters, Seth Weissman, preach at a memorial service. The text for that service is today's first reading and his words capture the challenge before us.

'I always return to the story of Abraham and Isaac ... the founder of the Western faiths ... He was a visionary, a prophet ... But despite this, Abraham's God decided to test him. He asked Abraham to make a sacrifice of his and Sarah's only child, Isaac, their miracle, who was born to them when Sarah was ninety years old and Abraham was one hundred. And ... Abraham complied.'

'He did not ask what was wrong with a God who would demand such a thing, or question whether He was worth worshipping. He did not, so far as the Bible tells us, even beg for Isaac's life, as he had done for the people of Sodom. Abraham simply walked his child up Mount Moriah. I imagine he even made the boy carry the wood for the fire ... '

' ... I have regarded for some years now the story of Abraham and Isaac a strange story, a grim tale of how a father would sacrifice his son to his own faith ... What kind of a starting point is this for ... all the Western faiths? ... Why do we re-tell this story? Is it to remind us that every parent since has been better?'

' ... One of the thousand morals of the story of Abraham and Isaac is that ... it is also a tale of survival and of mercy. In the end Abraham heard his God instruct him not to set his hand against his son ... Isaac survived ... He became a parent, blind to Jacob's defects, but one who, pointedly, attempted no sacrifices of his own ... '

'So let us think of Isaac ... the first son of the Western faiths – and think about the story that is told again and again. We hear it first as children, and repeat it throughout our lives. We tell it by way of apology. And warning. We tell it with some measure of hope. We tell it because we have all been the child, we have all been Isaac, and we know the part of the story that is never mentioned. For the Bible does not record Isaac's responses. We do not know if he, like Jesus, asked, "Father, why have you forsaken me?" We do not know if he begged the way most of us would, for his life. We know only this: that he obeyed ... That because he knew nothing else, he did as his father required. We know he allowed himself to be bound in rope. We know that he let his father lay him on the altar of pyramided firewood which together they had raised to God. We know he watched his father on the mountaintop raise the gleaming knife above his

breastbone. We know ... he was a child, the son of a man with a Big Idea, who in his longing and confusion, even in his final instant, could only look to his father with that eternal if foundering hope for love.'

May this story and our Eucharist give us hope that no matter what altar of sacrifice we feel sometimes laid upon, God does not abandon us in our need, and never wants us to sacrifice ourselves, or anyone else. Lent is about mercy and survival because true obedience to God, even in its demands for a hard love, ALWAYS leads to life.

© Richard Leonard SJ

## OUR CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOLS

### St Joseph's Primary School

Karen McGinlay (*Principal*)

Union Street, The Junction NSW 2291

P:(02) 4961 2827

W:[www.merewether.catholic.edu.au](http://www.merewether.catholic.edu.au)

### Holy Family Primary School

Ann Jackson (*Principal*)

Pell Street, Merewether NSW 2291

P:(02) 4963 3009

W:[www.merewetherbeach.catholic.edu.au](http://www.merewetherbeach.catholic.edu.au)

### St Columban's Primary School

Penny Banister (*Principal*)

Church Street, Mayfield NSW 2304

P:(02) 4968 3315

W:[www.mayfieldsc.catholic.edu.au](http://www.mayfieldsc.catholic.edu.au)

### St Peter's Primary School

Michael Punch (*Principal*)

Dunbar St, Stockton NSW 2295

P:(02) 4928 1861

W:[www.stockton.catholic.edu.au](http://www.stockton.catholic.edu.au)

## MEDITATION GROUPS AT LIVING WATERS CENTRE

LIVING WATERS CHRISTIAN MEDITATION CENTRE, 34 Kenrick Street, The Junction, offers meditation sessions on Wednesdays at 7.30am and Fridays at 11.00am – and has done so for the last 25 years, in which time many hundreds of people have taken up this prayer form. After meditation on Fridays *Lectio Divina*, a personal interaction with Sacred Scripture, is offered. Through both practices we open ourselves to the fullness of life; we come to know ourselves by knowing that we are known and loved by God. For more information: Carmel Moore rsj -0412122297 - or just come.