FIRST READING

A reading from the book of Wisdom
12:13, 16-19

There is no god, other than you, who cares for everything, to whom you might have to prove that you never judged unjustly. Your justice has its source in strength, your sovereignty over all makes you lenient to all. You show your strength when your sovereign power is questioned and you expose the insolence of those who know it; but, disposing of such strength, you are mild in judgement, you govern us with great lenience, for you have only to will, and your power is there. By acting thus you have taught a lesson to your people how the virtuous man must be kindly to his fellow men, and you have given your sons the good hope that after sin you will grant repentance.

The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

R/. Lord, you are good and forgiving.

SECOND READING

A reading from the Letter of St Paul to the Romans
8:26-27

The Spirit comes to help us in our weakness. For when we cannot choose words in order to plea in a way that could never be put into words, and God who knows everything in our hearts knows perfectly well what he means, and Heaven who knows the pleas of the saints expressed by the hearts knows perfectly well what he means, and God who knows everything in our hearts.

The Word of the Lord.

GOSPEL READING

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
13:24-43

Jesus put a parable before the crowds, ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. While everybody was asleep his enemy came, sowed darnel among the wheat, and made off. When the new wheat sprouted and ripened, the darnel appeared as well. The owner’s servants went to him and said, “Sir, was it not good seed that you sowed in your field?” If so, where does the darnel come from?” “Some enemy has done this” he answered. And the servants said, “Do you want us to go and weed it out?” But he said, “No, because when you weed out the darnel you might pull up the wheat with it. Let them both grow till the harvest; and at harvest time I shall say to the reapers: First collect the darnel and tie it in bundles to be burnt, then gather the wheat into my barn.” He put another parable before them, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest shrub of all and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and shelter in its branches.’ He told them another parable, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like the yeast a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour till it was leavened all through.’ In all this Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables; indeed, he would never speak to them except in parables. This was to fulfill the prophecy: I will speak to you in parables and expound things hidden since the foundation of the world. Then, leaving the crowds, he went to the house; and his disciples came to him and said, ‘Explain the parable about the darnel in the field to us.’ He said in reply, ‘The sower of the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world; the good seed is the subjects of the kingdom; the darnel, the subjects of the evil one; the enemy who sowed them, the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; the reapers are the angels. Well then, just as the darnel is gathered up and burnt in the fire, so it will be at the end of time. The Son of Man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all things that provoke offences and all who do evil, and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. Then the virtuous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Listen, anyone who has ears!’

The Word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom.
Alleluia!

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH
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16th Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A
18th/19th July, 2020

God most powerful and ever patient,
You sustain us by the word
Your Son Jesus has planted.
Hear our pleas and send your Spirit
to become the leaven in our lives.
We make this prayer through
Christ, our Lord. Amen.

FOCUS ON THE READINGS

Today’s reading features three parables about the kingdom: the weeds in the field; the mustard seed; and yeast in the flour. They are three fascinating parables about something undesirable or unwanted being mixed in with something that is apparently good – and Jesus presents them as descriptions of what the kingdom of heaven is like. I don’t know about you, but this parable about the darnel and wheat used to really perplex me. I mean, let’s be honest. How could a trained farmer not be able to identify weeds from the crop he was growing? The interesting thing about this darnel seed is that it looks exactly like wheat in its initial stages. It is only at the end that one can truly tell whether the plant before you is a weed or wheat. Suddenly, understanding this, I gained a whole new perspective on this Gospel. And frankly, it is a much more difficult one to live out. See, I have found that it is much easier to place people into recognizable labels from the get go. Don’t we often find ourselves quickly assessing a person and dropping them into any number of boxes that we have built? We assume we know someone because we know their skin color or their ethnicity, their sexuality or their political ideology, their postcode or their profession. We define a person by a single mistake that they have made. We struggle to acknowledge that people can change. That there is gray area in life. That someone may not fit easily into the box we wish to put them in. But what if we’re wrong? What if we are seeing weeds, when they might just be wheat? Maybe the farmer was wiser than I had ever given him credit for. Because the farmer realized that it takes time before one can tell what a seed will become. Time for the seed to grow. Time for the seed to bear fruit. See I am convinced that each of us is a good seed. That our heavenly farmer made no mistakes. But I am also convinced that there are many days when we must look like weeds. Maybe that is why this Gospel gives me so much hope. For our lives need not be defined by those moments when we fail. There is still time for us to grow. We can still become that wheat that we are destined to be.

(Based on an extract from Fr. Brian Zumbrum’s homilies, posted weekly at Leaven in the World)

FEAST DAYS THIS WEEK
Mon 20th July: St Apollinaris
Wed 22nd July: St Mary Magdalen -
Tues 21st July: St Lawrence of Brindisi
Sat 25th July – St. James, apostle.

I have come that you may have life and have it to the full
(John 10:10)
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PRAYING FOR...  
All who have died recently:  
Margaret Haines, Jean Bekker, Adriana Beckers, Jack  
Tumer, Martin Pelgrim, John Addicott, Thomas Barrons,  
Greg Hilder, Clara Covello, Palma Kaai-Nagy  

The sick: Wilma Neville, Ruby Sannty, Fame  
Pelgrim, Elsie Johnson, Barbara Kenny, Army  
Jayawardena, Lea Hartley, Cosimo Petracca,  
Giuseppina Zarro, Catherine Turner, Patricia Quinn,  
David Merton, Michael Byrne, Mary Edmonds, Bev  
McNamara, Anthony McNamara, Victoria Lewis,  
Nicole Moore, Peter Fairhurst, Hans Whitaker,  
Edward Osborne, Allida Serafin, Clive Geach.  

INVITATION TO BISHOP MARK EDWARDS OMI  
The Liturgical Reception and Solemn Mass for the Installation of Bishop Mark Edwards will take place on 22nd July via  
live-stream from 10:45am AEST, you can view the installation of Bishop Mark Edwards to the Archdiocese of Wagga  
Wagga using the following link:  

KEEP IN TOUCH: Please let us know your current email address or/and phone number. We are happy to email the  
bulletin to you! Or check it on our new website!  

PARISH THANKSGIVING/STEWARDSHIP  
If you require an annual statement for your contributions to our Thanksgiving / SteWARDSHIP Program, please contact the Parish Office via Email or phone to let us know, on Mondays/Tuesdays between 10.30am-12.30pm, if possible. With  
lockdown, we cannot distribute them in the usual manner, and it would be great to save on postage  
costs. Thank you for your generous support to this program.  

COMBINED PARISH RAFFLE TICKETS: The  
Draw has moved out to 26th September 2020, however, all unreturned books sold/unsold must be  
returned to the parish by Friday 7th August. We understand that the Victorian lockdowns does not permit anyone from going out for  
other than essential reasons. It would be appreciated if you have a book outstanding could you kindly please  
either post it into the parish at 19 Forest Road, Ferntree  
Gully 3156, or drop it into the letter box or parish office  
as you drive past to do shopping. We are liable by the  
Victorian Commission of Gambling and Liquor  
Association to have all books returned. We thank you for  
your help in these unprecedented times.  

CARITAS NEWS  
The lasting impact of COVID-19 on the  
local communities, education and health of those who  
already live on the edge is potentially disastrous. With  
your support, over the past few months, you have made  
possible for us at Caritas Australia to expand and adapt  
our programs to prevent the spread and reduce the risk  
of coronavirus in these vulnerable communities. We have  
been overwhelmed by your generosity, giving hope to  
people you will never meet. Thank you. Here at Caritas  
Australia, we never lose hope that the transformation of  
communities and indeed our world can occur. I’ve  
seen the power of hope in communities from Timor-Leste to  
India, from Indonesia to Bangladesh. Your support gives  
them hope and empowers them to realise their  
dignity. Together, with God’s grace, we can build a more  
just world. With gratitude, - Kirsty Robertson  

LIGHT IN THE MIDST OF DARKNESS  
Archbishop Peter A Comensoli has recorded a message  
for 'Light in the Midst of Darkness' that can be viewed  
here: https://www.catholic.org.au/Mass  
or  

THANKSGIVING PAYMENTS ONLINE: Can’t make it to the church because of the Covid 19 restrictions?  
The CDFPay for PARISHES – ONLINE PAYMENT PORTAL is AVAILABLE NOW: This site enables you to  
make quick and easy online thanksgiving. The Ferntree Gully Parish site is now live and can be found via this  
link. CDFPay for St John the Baptist Parish, Ferntree  
Gully. We thank all of you who have already used this  
wrongful tool, and hope many more will try it!  

PARISH THANKSGIVING/STEWARDSHIP  
If you require an annual statement for your contributions to our Thanksgiving / SteWARDSHIP Program, please contact the Parish Office via Email or phone to let us know, on Mondays/Tuesdays between 10.30am-12.30pm, if possible. With lockdown, we cannot distribute them in the usual manner, and it would be great to save on postage costs. Thank you for your generous support to this program.

COFFEE MORNING  
The Last Cofee Morning of the Year is this Sunday 16th May at 10.30 am in the Church Hall.  

FAITH SEEKING UNDERSTANDING: Reflection entitled “Unique” by Carolyn is attached for you this weekend. A great read!

THE WORLD ON A FORCED SABBATHIAL: It has taken a deadly, invisible and microscopic enemy to force the whole world to stop dead in its tracks. Susanne North explores the upside to the world-wide forced sabbatical: It became law, overnight, everywhere. It was weird at first. Then, slowly, an almost collective sigh as people were given the permission to slow down and simplify their lives, especially from parents who are run ragged shipping their children from one activity to another. Perhaps we required a worldwide lockdown to awaken us: that less is more, that living a slower and simpler life is actually more beneficial for us long-term, especially for our children.

Many families are struggling big time with the lockdown, fiscally, mentally and emotionally. There have, however, been some surprising positives in the coming together. Many families have discovered a new sense of calmness, connectedness and coherence. Our own homes have become hot houses that no longer provide the calm and safe haven allowing children to slow down. Yet, what our children really need are regular pockets of ‘slow’ or ‘doing nothing’ time. Time to just ‘be’, hang and play. Free time where children can explore their own interests, imaginations and creative abilities without having to succumb to expectations or performance pressures. Time to just lie in the grass and marvel at the sky. Sabbatical (from the Jewish word ‘Sabbath’) is a period of rest from work. When our children slow down, so do we as parents. When we allow ourselves to disconnect from all the external pressures, we actually connect with our children on a much deeper level. We create space to tune into the needs of our children and be present with and to them, one of the greatest gifts that we can give them. Slowing down helps families to create pockets for family prayers, expressing gratitude, savouring those precious moments and nurturing spiritual growth. The lessons of ‘freedom time’ for our children will hopefully remain influential. Many parents will soon have to return to the previous rat race even more ferociously than ever, to reopen their businesses and just provide for their families as the world economy struggles to recover. The forced sabbatical however may have been very beneficial. It has given our children a chance to slow down allowing them to be a child.

This is an edited version of the article that was first published in the school newsletter of St Margaret Mary Catholic Primary, Randwick North Website: www.susannenorth.com.au