



St Bernard's Parish Belmont

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11th February 2018

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year B

Facing our 'lepers' recognizing our punishers

We humans are good at creating lepers. It seems we need some group to put down, in order to feel better about ourselves and so we deem certain people to be unworthy, undesirable, untouchable and unwanted. Right alongside this put down is a desire to punish the outsider as "good riddance to bad rubbish". We see this in our prison system and the great willingness to push out punishing agendas onto refugees, welfare recipients and or any other sub group we can gang up on. Take this mentality far enough and you have the Nazis with their 'final solution' for all those deemed leprous.



I cannot and will not exclude myself from this human pathology at the heart of our gospel today. I remember going to school in the Bad Lands of North Frankston. No one was taxed by fussing parents in those days. One of the boys who walked to school had an intellectual disability and clearly came from a dysfunctional family. I did not tease him or brutally bully him, but day after day, at school and on the way to and fro, the disabled boy was physically and psychologically tormented relentlessly. My crime was complete cowardice. Although I did not join in the tormenting, I was too afraid of being coupled with him, should I say something in his defence.

Unfortunately prisons reinforce such punishing mentality, with their own harsh social code of ostracization and exile creating further lepers. During my cameo stint of prison chaplaincy some years back, I discovered this the hard way. As I pressed the flesh lamely walking through the units, my status was often directly contingent on to whom I was speaking. In one particular unit for instance, there was a former captain of organized crime, who had probably been framed for a murder he probably did not commit (he had enemies in high places). He was a large intimidating man, with a 4th dan black belt in karate, a former altar boy, who came once a year to mass at Christmas. Once while alone in his cell some of the 'enemies' rushed in with shivs (improvised weapons) to stab him. Calmly he lent back in his chair and when all four had entered, gave them the death stare and said "only four?" They all left in meek terror. So whenever I was in his unit and speaking to him, I was on top of the food chain and everyone's 'maaate.'

In the same unit there happened to be a former C.E.O. of a largish company, who was done for serious white-collar crime. He felt very aggrieved and victimized and complained about this hugely. As a consequence he was on the bottom of the food chain. Whenever I spoke to him my former rising star status sank without trace. I too became shunned as he was. Once this was made palpably clear to me, when as we spoke in a corner of the unit, a white billiard ball came whizzing through the air, lethally close, a sort of 'accident on purpose' moment. At that moment I too was a leper with that former once proud C.E.O.

The God of Jesus Christ in Mark's gospel wants to free us from this. He is not just compassionate about the excluded, he is angered by it. Jesus always rejects any religious system that wounds and defeats our humanity.

In our time we need some of his angry compassion, to be hope for those rejected and reviled. We also need to recognize the punisher and the bully hiding out in our own hearts.

Fr Vincent Jewell PP

We pray for those who are unwell :
Vincent Daniels John Orders
John Condon Tulli Seabert (6 yr old)

We welcome for baptism :
**Cooper, Averleigh and Nyah
Thorley**
Connor and Grace O'Neill

Special prayers for :
Mohammad Rahmani still awaiting
the decision of Minister Peter Dutton,
whether he can remain in Australia.

Noura Kka, former parishioner, now in Iraq
and in danger.

May God hold them all in the palm of his hand.

Ash Wednesday masses at St Bernard's
12 noon and 7.30pm

Lenten regulations from the
Vicar General are on the
notice board.

In sorrow for child sexual
abuse and for the healing of victims, the
Australian Bishops recommend that the days
from Ash Wednesday until the Saturday after
Ash Wednesday (Wed 14 to Sat 17 Feb),
be **days of fasting and reparation**,
www.catholic.org.au/fastingandreparation
(see noticeboard)

Archbishop's **Pastoral Lenten message**
"Repent and believe the good news!".
(see noticeboard)

Upcoming Meetings

St Vincent de Paul

Monday 12th February at 7.30pm.
Prospective volunteers welcome to call Anne:
0458 294 526 prior to the meeting.

Knights of the Southern Cross

Wednesday 14th February at 7.30pm in the
Clairvaux Meeting Room. Please bring a plate.

Widowed and Social Group

Monday 19th February at 10.30am in the
Fitzpatrick Room. Guest Speaker.
Bring lunch to share. New members most
welcome. Enquiries Mary 5243 2673.

Book Nook News

Discovering Prayer: a 30 day prayer journey
of encountering God, and love. \$4

Beads from Mannya :

Necklaces \$10 Bracelets \$5
Purchase will directly support the
Mannya community.



The Coffee Processing Plant will benefit many generations of people at Mannya.

In response to Fr Nestus' urgent need, we have emptied the Mannya account & loaned some 'extra' from parish funds, so he could pay for the coffee plant & shipping by the 'special offer' date.

Significant additional costs will be :
transport
from Kampala
to Mannya &
installation.

Fr Nestus
has great
faith that it
will all come
to fruition.

It is not
possible, or expected that St Bernard's cover
all expenses, but *all donations will be most
gratefully received.*

Direct bank transfer : BSB 063 504
acc number : 008 005 74.

Bank reference : 'Coffee & your surname'.
Cheques : 'St Bernard's Church Mannya acc'.
Please contact the Office for further
information. *Thank you*



Planting the first crop of coffee

Blessed and Broken

'Pray, Share and Live the Gospel :
a small group Lenten Program'.
Please contact St Mary's Parish Office
5222 1977 for more information.

Sunday 25th February after 11.00am Mass

Farewell Fr Maurice Barry in the
Hibernian Hall. All welcome. Please RSVP
St Mary's 5222 1977. Please 'bring a plate'.

Friday 2nd March at 11.00am

World Day of Prayer

"All God's Creation is Very Good "
Wesley Uniting Church, 100 Yarra St
All welcome

Saturday 17th March

Geelong St Pat's Cup

Ph : 0409 007 913 or visit
[country.racing.com.au/
geelong-stpats](http://country.racing.com.au/geelong-stpats)

Collect a brochure after mass.

Tuesday 20th March, 4pm

Discovery Day at Sacred Heart College.

Explore the College from 4.00pm.
Gates close at 6.30pm.
Please RSVP ww.shcgeelong.catholic.edu.au
Enrolment applications for Year 7 2019



Project Compassion 'For a Just Future'.

The theme relates Project Compassion to the *Year of Youth* which the Church is observing. The weekly stories concentrate on *young people making a difference in their communities*.

No one epitomises the future like the young, who with their lives before them, offer us hope for a better tomorrow.

The world looks to the young to be reassured that 'the Father's Mercy has an ever-youthful face and constantly invites us to be part of His Kingdom.'

Pope Francis



Project Compassion Prayer

*God of all peoples and nations,
you accompany us on our Lenten journey.*

*Through the life and mission of your Son,
you give us the gift of mercy.*

*May we learn to walk your way of justice and
compassion with all your people.*

*In a special way, we keep in mind the
children, women and men around the world,
who are most vulnerable to extreme poverty
and injustice.*

*In this Year of Youth, may we support young
people, as they recognise that through their
efforts, their desire to change and their
generosity, they too are participating in the
building of a better world.*

*Bless our prayers, our fasting and our
Lenten gifts to Project Compassion.*

*Through these actions, may our hearts
be open to receive your grace as we work
towards a just future for all your creation.*

*We ask this in the name of Jesus,
Amen*

Project Compassion boxes or envelopes are available in the church foyer today

Anxiety

We can be too anxious about how we are *perceived*, about having a *good name* and about being *respected* in the community. Jesus warns us to imitate the lilies of the field in their trust in God and *not do things to be seen by others as being good*. He invites us to move beyond this.



More deeply, beyond our anxiety for our physical needs and our good name, we nurse a much deeper fear, that, in the end, we are really only, 'vanity, vapour, something insubstantial blown away in the wind'.

Jesus, often and gently, points out that no success, no monument, no fame, no tree, no child and no book, will ultimately still the anxiety for substance and immortality inside us. Only God can do that.

We see one of Jesus' gentle reminders of this in the Gospels, when the disciples come back to him buoyed-up by the success of a mission and share with him the wonderful things they have done. He shares their joy, but then, in essence, gently reminds them that real consolation lies in knowing that our "names are written in heaven", that God has each of us individually, lovingly, and irrevocably, locked into His radar screen.

Ron Rolheiser, OMI

God loves each of us, as though there were only one of us.

St Augustine

The **Mums 4 Refugees** group — a network of women working with and for asylum-seekers and refugees — wanted to bring 'humanity back into the conversation'.

They drop hundreds of colourful children's books at places around Brisbane, hoping to **spread positive messages about refugees**.

The books are labelled "pick me up" and tell stories of refugees and people seeking asylum, written by Australian authors.



"We found that over the last 20 years politicians and certain media outlets have been demonising people seeking asylum ... creating an 'us and them'. We just want to remind people in creative ways that *we're all just people and we all want the same things*."

Cath News

