



**St John
Vianney**
Parish Morisset



THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME YEAR A 12 NOVEMBER 2023

It's easy to become complacent about life, our faith and our commitments, when we are caught up in the demands of daily life. As we approach the end of this liturgical year, we are called to pay attention to what really matters.

The Sundays of November ask us to ponder if we have been faithful and humble servants. Have we done all we could? Did we trust and believe in God's mission, and to continue the reign of God, that Jesus initiated?

Today's readings remind us to focus on the bigger picture, and to question our focus, on how we use our resources. We are called to look away from the superficial, and to remember that time is limited.

For us then it would be wise and prudent, to keep ourselves always ready, by being faithful to the Gospel, and firm in faith.



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Awabakal People who, long before us lived, loved, educated and raised their children on this Country. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and we recognise the young people who are our future. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in our communities. We respect their deep physical and spiritual connections to Country through their stories, traditions and living cultures.

PARISH LEADERSHIP TEAM: Uta France
John France

PRIEST SUPERVISOR: Fr Joseph Figuardo
SACRAMENTAL PRIEST: Fr John Purnell

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL: Juliet Hutchins
Mal Melvey
Pam Melvey
Kerry Lendon
Rod Hay

PARISH SECRETARY: Rosanna Suckling

OFFICE: 60 Yambo Street, Morisset, PO Box 87, Ph: 02 4973.6859
Office Hours: 9.00 am to 2.00pm—Monday to Friday (except public holidays)
(We ask that you make an appointment to come to the office)
Morisset Parish Office email: morparish@mn.catholic.org.au
Morisset Parish Web site: www.vianneymorisset.org
Morisset Parish Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/stjvparish>
Morisset Parish Instagram : https://www.instagram.com/stjvparish_morisset/
Morisset Parish Bulletin Items: morparish@mn.catholic.org.au
(Please submit all Bulletin Notice requests to the parish office by 2pm Wednesdays)

Email the Parish Office to Subscribe for an Electronic Bulletin .

UPCOMING WORSHIP TIMES :

Saturday	11th November 5pm Mass—Cooranbong
Sunday	12th November 9.30am Mass—Morisset
Tuesday	14th November 9.30am Liturgy—Morisset
Friday	17th November 7pm Reconciliation Service Morisset
Saturday	18th November 5pm Family Mass—Morisset
Sunday	19th November 9.30am Mass—Morisset
Tuesday	21st November 9.30am Liturgy—Morisset
Wednesday	22nd November 7pm Memorial Service Morisset
Saturday	25th November 5pm Mass—Cooranbong
Sunday	26th November 9.30am Mass—Morisset
Tuesday	28th November 9.30am Liturgy—Morisset

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Reflection for The Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A — 12th November 2023

As we approach the close of the liturgical year, our readings begin to take on an Advent-like theme: It is an opportunity for us to review our 'Stewardship Inventory'. That is why Jesus closes with, "So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour." In the Gospel, Jesus uses the Parable of the Bridesmaids to remind his disciples of the need to be alert and responsive.

What does it mean to stay awake? Surely Jesus cannot be intending this to be taken literally, to suggest that Christians should fight sleep, and become perpetual insomniacs. No, Jesus comes in every moment of our lives and wants to find his disciples engaged in service.

The inspiring story of Eric Little was made famous in the movie 'Chariots of Fire.' In the movie there is a scene with crowds gathering around the victorious Eric, after winning an important race. This is what he said at his victory presentation. 'You came to see a race today, to see someone win. But I want you to do more than just watch a race, I want you to take part in it.'

Faith is like running a race. It's hard and requires concentration of will, energy and soul. Living faith, not just professing faith, is the call of today's readings. The Christian journey is not a 100-metre dash. It's a 1,000 km marathon. Repeatedly, Pope Francis has begged us to do more than listen to the Word of God. He has encouraged us to not just 'watch the race,' but also to 'take part in the race.' But if all we do is admire the man, then we have missed what the man is all about.

To live the faith, to run the race, is easier said than done. But the strength to do this comes from the power of God that lies within each one of us. To live the faith, to witness to the faith, is to live for God and to act for others who are in pain, and who seek our help.

We live in uncertain and challenging times. Christianity may be returning to the earlier times in terms of being an unpopular minority. But, if we follow the example of the early Church in being an alternative society, a community of justice, inclusivity, solidarity, prayer, and support, then it is the future worth dedicating our lives to.

Let us pray that we have the courage to follow Christ humbly and faithfully, even during doubt and uncertainty. May we be able to live between the pain of the present, and the hope of the future in our lives. John France

Memorial Service 22nd November 2023

We began the month of November with the feasts of All saints and All Souls Day, calling to mind all those who have gone before us, some recognised Saints and others very much Saints on earth to each one of us, through their good works, faith lives, acts of mercy, kindness and love to many. The feast of All Souls waited for some centuries to be part of the Church calendar, but the practice of remembering and praying for departed relatives and friends has been longstanding.

To help us to remember our departed relatives and friends, a Memorial Service will be held on Wednesday 22nd November at 7pm in the Morisset Church. All welcome.

Please RSVP at www.vianneymorisset.org.au or the link: [Memorial Service RSVP](#) or P 02 4973 6859

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for November 2023

That the Holy Father, Pope Francis, as he fulfills his mission, may continue to accompany the flock entrusted to him, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Christmas Volunteers

Thank you to the people who volunteered for Christmas Duties and Ministries. A member of the Christmas Planning Team will be in contact with you shortly with further details.

Parish Meetings

The Parish Finance Council will meet this coming Thursday 16th November 9.30am

The Parish Pastoral Council/Christmas Planning Team will meet Wednesday 22nd November 9.30am.

Anointing Mass

Next Sunday 19th November during 9.30am Mass. Fr John Purnell will administer the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. Anybody with an illness, serious or otherwise, who needs healing, may receive the sacrament. After Mass, a 'cuppa and biscuits' will be held in the Callinan Centre – All welcome

Reconciliation

On Friday Evening 17th November at 7pm, the Parish will have the opportunity to participate with Fr John Purnell and Fr Priyantha Fernando, in a Liturgy of Reconciliation in the Morisset Church.

The primary function of any Christian Community is to be a group of people who accept others and help others accept themselves. The Christian church is called by God to be a community in which mutual acceptance and forgiveness is a reality.

Reintroduction of Chalice VOTE

Bishop Michael Kennedy has been approached by some people in the Diocese, for the reintroduction of the Chalice at Mass. To help Bishop Michael and the Council of Priests discern the feeling of congregations, a show of hands was held at the end of Mass last weekend at Morisset. 20% of those present voted Yes for the reintroduction of the Chalice .

We await further advice and direction from Bishop Michael as other parishes respond.

Christmas

As you are probably aware Christmas Eve 2023 is on Sunday 24th December.

Mass Times 23/24/25. December

Saturday 23rd December Vigil Mass 5pm Cooranbong. Church
Sunday 24th December Mass 9.30am Morisset. Church.

Sunday 24th (Christmas Eve) Mass 6pm Morisset Showground.

Monday 25th (Christmas Day) Mass 9.30am. Morisset Church.

Some Points to Ponder.

Traditions have always been an important dimension of celebrating faith. Each age is a time of special grace, including our age of high technology.

Did you Know?

What's the Difference between Ecumenical and Interfaith

Jesus prayed 'that they all may be one' and in those words the splintered Christian Church finds the inspiration and the reason to continue dialogue with the vision of restoring the unity of God's Church.

Ecumenical relationships are those among Christians and Christian denominations who are seeking to discover, not just the difference between us, but our shared strengths and concerns.

Interfaith relationships are among those Christians and other faith traditions in which Jesus is not regarded as Lord, including but not limited to Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism.

Watagan Deanery News

Recently the Movie Fr Stu, was advertised as a social event for the Watagan Deanery. Unfortunately, this event had to be cancelled, due to insufficient interest. Next year 9th February 2024, 6.30 for 7pm, another attempt to bring the Watagan Deanery together socially, will be held (Watagan Deanery: -Shotland, Wallsend, Glendale, Boolaroo, Warners Bay, Booragul, Toronto, Morisset.) The movie 'The Two Popes' will be screened in the Warners Bay Parish Hall. Cheese, wine, nibbles provided. \$10 donation. More about this in 2024

Safeguarding Standard 10 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES SUPPORT THE SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Policies and procedures document how the entity is safe for children and adults.

Standard 10 ensures that the safeguarding policies and procedures are well documented and managed. This ensures consistent application of safeguarding practices across the entity.

These policies and procedures should be publicly available, in formats that are easily understood. They should be developed and reviewed in consultation with a broad range of stakeholders.

Safeguarding policies and procedures should not be static but be 'living' documents. The Standards work together to emphasise the importance of adopting multiple strategies to address safeguarding and avoid an over-reliance on any one Standard.

Prison Sunday 2023

This year Prison Sunday falls on 12 November.

DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 08, 2023

Prison Sunday commenced in 2016, during the Year of Mercy, as an initiative of Pope Francis to observe the Jubilee for Prisoners.

"We need to nourish the roots of our hope so that they can bear fruit ... despite whatever evil we have done. There is no corner of our heart that cannot be touched by God's love," Pope Francis said at the time.

Each year on the 32nd Sunday in Ordinary, the Catholic Church in Australia marks Prison Sunday, bringing attention to the plight of prisoners and highlighting the important work that prison chaplains undertake.

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Let's think of our incarcerated brothers and sisters, and let's think about the tenderness of God for them and pray for them so that they may find in that window of hope a way out toward a better life.

POPE FRANCIS

PRISON SUNDAY 2023
NOVEMBER 12

catholic.au/s/article/Prison-Sunday



St Vincent DePaul Christmas Appeal

The Annual St Vincent de Paul Christmas Appeal will be held on the weekend of the 18th and 19th of November.

Get your tickets to First Draft!

Presented by the ASPIRE Young Scriptwriters program, First Draft is an evening of staged readings and performance of original scripts from the writers.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 08, 2023

From hilarious to the tragic to the absolute absurd, there is something for everyone!

Book your tickets to one of the three shows below:

Show 1 - First Draft - Upper Hunter Writers

Tuesday 14 November 2023, 5:00pm - 6:00pm

Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music, Level 1/80 Bridge Street, Muswellbrook, NSW Tickets available at: <https://www.ticketebo.com.au/catholic-schools-office-diocese-of-maitland-newcastle/first-draft-upper-hunter-writers>

Show 2 - First Draft - Lakes Region Writers

Thursday 16 November 2023, 6:00pm - 7:30pm

Warners Bay Theatre, Lake Street, Warners Bay, NSW

Tickets available at: <https://www.ticketebo.com.au/catholic-schools-office-diocese-of-maitland-newcastle/first-draft-lakes-region-writers>

Show 3 - First Draft - All Saints Writers

Thursday 23 November 2023, 6:00pm - 7:30pm

Maitland Town Hall, 281 High Street, Maitland, NSW

Tickets available at: <https://www.ticketebo.com.au/catholic-schools-office-diocese-of-maitland-newcastle/first-draft-all-saints-writers>

Advent 2023: With Anticipation and Joy

We are called during this holy time to wait with anticipation knowing the joys of what is to come with the arrival of Christ. With Anticipation and Joy is a Diocesan resource that invites all members of the community to gather a circle of people – family, friends, colleagues, ministry teams to reflect mystagogically on the Advent Gospels and associated artworks. This is an opportunity to encounter Christ where we are, to pay attention to what Christ reveals in the scripture and the living tradition of our faith, to share this, to connect it to our life now, and to be changed by it.

To access the resource, go to:

<https://www.mn.catholic.org.au/church-mission/catholic-life/liturgy/liturgical-year/>

Pastoral Placement Program

Applications are now open for the 2024 Pastoral Placement Program!

The Pastoral Placement Program offers participants an experience of ministry in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. The purpose of this program is to enable participants the opportunity to experience different workplaces and ministries across the diocese. These 'on the ground' ministry work placements help participants explore the opportunities that are available to them to serve God and the local community of the Catholic Church in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. The Pastoral Placement Program provides participants a year-long discernment journey, involving the see, judge, act philosophy, to make an informed choice about the possibility of their future ministry or career choices.

For more information and to learn to how to apply go to:

www.mn.catholic.org.au/church-mission/catholic-life/pastoral-placement-program/

SUPPORTING THE CLERGY / 1st Collection

If you would like to make contributions to support the Clergy / 1st Collection please do so at Mass in the BLUE bucket or electronically using the Online Payments button on the Parish Website Home page, Diocese App, Bank Account Name: CCF BSB: 062815 No: 00328161 Ref: 5016 1st Collection or set up a direct debit contact the parish office for this option.

SUPPORTING OUR PARISH / 2nd Collection

If you would like to make contributions to support our Parish please do so at Mass via the RED bucket or deposit directly into the Parish Account our details are: Account Name: CCF BSB:062815 Account Number: 00328161 one of the following Payment References are required by CCF for all deposits: 5004 or 5004 + SURNAME or 5004 + PG + your Giver Number, or 5004 + PG + SURNAME, or you can use the Online Payments button on the Parish Website Home page or the Diocese App. If you are considering taking up **planned giving** you may like to know that **a percentage of the contributions are tax deductible**. If you would like to know more or set up planned giving please contact the Parish Office.

WEEKEND ROSTERS			
		<u>THIS WEEK</u>	<u>NEXT WEEK</u>
<u>PRESIDERS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	Mass Mass	Mass Mass
<u>PROCLAIMERS:</u>	5PM 9.30AM	P Robertson M Foo	J Vipan L Hutchinson
<u>PSALMIST:</u>	5PM 9.30AM	J France D Whitten	R Hay R Hay
<u>GIFTS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	H White P Melvey K Amon J Vipan	H White F Pascoe L McRae L McRae
<u>SERVERS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	M Melvey J Lawandos R Lawandos	M Melvey F Dyson V Paulo C Lawandos
<u>Av</u>	5PM 9.30AM	U France M Fowler	J Vipan J France
<u>WELCOMERS</u>	5PM 9.30AM	J France P Melvey A Dussin	A Walker G Walker J France P Herbert
<u>CHURCH CLEANING</u>	COOR MOR	A Dussin R Hay C Hay	XXXX C Lawandos

Our Parish supports The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle in its zero-tolerance approach to abuse. Every one of us must each day commit ourselves individually and collectively to safeguard each child and every vulnerable person to whom we minister and interact with. If you have any concerns for a child or vulnerable adult please contact the Office of Safeguarding P:02 4979 1390 or email: childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au, or visit their website for further information www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au.

UPCOMING FEAST DAYS MEMORIALS AND SOLEMINITIES

SAINT ELIZABETH OF HUNGARY (M) - 17TH NOV
PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (M) - 21ST NOV
SAINT CECILIA (M) - 22ND NOV
SAINTS ANDREW DUNG LAC AND COMPANIONS (M) - 24TH NOV
SAINT ANDREW (F) - 30TH NOV
SAINT AMBROSE (M) - 7TH DEC
THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY (S) - 8TH DEC
SAINT LUCY (M) - 13TH DEC
SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS (M) - 14TH DEC

Please pray for all those who are sick: in hospital or at home, especially those living with a life threatening disease:

Margo Cluff, Clare Wallington, Donna Hazzard, Pam Mullaly, Mary Johnson, Tintumol Thomas, Les Findley, Peter Martyn, Bernadette Martin, Joan Gillett, Bruce Gillett.



Please pray for those who have been called to eternal life may they always be in our prayers.

Prayer Requests for the Bulletin

If you would like the parish to pray for a family member who is sick, recently deceased or you would like remembered please call or email the parish office or complete a prayer card for each person and place in the mail box near the parish office door. Cards are available at the back of the church and at the Parish Office.

All prayer requests require permission from a family member or the person. Due to Australian privacy laws.

An Act of Spiritual Communion

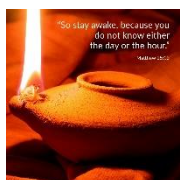
My Jesus,
I believe that You
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament.
I love You above all things,
and I desire to receive You into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment
receive You sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace You as if You were already there and unite
myself wholly to You.
Never permit me to be separated from You.
Amen.



Live stream Mass every Sunday at 9.30am at www.mn.catholic.org.au/places/live-stream



We are committed to the
**NATIONAL CATHOLIC
SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS**



SUNDAY PRAYER SERVICE

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year A

Sunday 12 Nov 2023

The Introductory Rites

Acknowledgement of Country

We Acknowledge the Traditional Custodians who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of reconciliation. We especially acknowledge the Awabakal and Darkinjung peoples who were the original custodians of the land this parish sits on.

Gathering

The Lectionary/Roman Missal or a Bible may be placed on a table together with a candle and a cross.

Sign of the Cross

Leader:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All:

Amen.

Greeting

Leader:

Blessed be Jesus who makes us one,
and strengthens us
by the power of his Spirit.

All:

Blessed be God forever.

Introductory Remarks

Leader (in these or similar words):

Friends in Christ,
although we cannot celebrate the Eucharist this day,
we gather in God's name
for when two or more come together
God is always with us.

We worship in union with the whole Church
keeping this day of the Lord holy.

Opening Rite

LITANY OF PRAISE

Leader:

Before listening to the Word of God
let us praise the Lord Jesus Christ
who has raised us to new life.

A brief period of silence follows.

Leader:

Lord Jesus, you invite us to your banquet: Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you call us to be prepared for your coming: Christ,
have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are the wisdom of God: Lord, have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader:

May almighty God have mercy on us,
forgive us our sins,
and bring us to everlasting life.

All:

Amen.

Opening Prayer

Leader:

Let us pray.

All pause for silent prayer.

God of light
you ask us to listen to your voice
and stand ready to meet Jesus
when he comes again.
Help us to keep our lamps lit
and stay awake
so that we are ready to answer your call.
We ask this through Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.

All:

Amen.

The Liturgy of the Word

First Reading

Wisdom 6:12-16

A reading from the book of Wisdom

Wisdom is found by those who look for it.

Wisdom is bright, and does not grow dim.
By those who love her she is readily seen,
and found by those who look for her.
Quick to anticipate those who desire her, she makes herself
known to them.

Watch for her early and you will have no trouble;
you will find her sitting at your gates.
Even to think about her is understanding fully grown;
be on the alert for her and anxiety will quickly leave you.
She herself walks about looking for those who are worthy of her
and graciously shows herself to them as they go,
in every thought of theirs coming to meet them.

All reply:

Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 62:2-8. R. v.2

(R.) My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.

1. O God, you are my God, for you I long;
for you my soul is thirsting.
My body pines for you
like a dry, weary land without water. (R.)
2. So I gaze on you in the sanctuary.
to see your strength and your glory.
For your love is better than life,
my lips will speak your praise. (R.)
3. So I will bless you all my life,
in your name I will lift up my hands.
My soul shall be filled as with a banquet,
my mouth shall praise you with joy. (R.)
4. On my bed I remember you.
On you I muse through the night
for you have been my help;
in the shadow of your wings I rejoice. (R.)

Second Reading

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

Those who died as Christians, God will bring to life with Jesus.

We want you to be quite certain, brothers, about those who have died, to make sure that you do not grieve about them, like the other people who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus: God will bring them with him. We can tell you this from the Lord's own teaching, that any of us who are left alive until the Lord's coming will not have any advantage over those who have died. At the trumpet of God, the voice of the archangel will call out the command and the Lord himself will come down from heaven; those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and then those of us who are still alive will be taken up in the clouds, together with them, to meet the Lord in the air. So we shall stay with the Lord for ever. With such thoughts as these you should comfort one another.

To indicate the end of the reading, the reader acclaims:

The word of the Lord.

All reply:

Thanks be to God.

Gospel

Reader:

From the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All:

Glory to you, O Lord.

Look, the bridegroom comes. Go out to meet him.

Jesus told this parable to his disciples: 'The kingdom of heaven will be like this: Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five of them were sensible: the foolish ones did take their lamps, but they brought no oil, whereas the sensible ones took flasks of oil as well as their lamps. The bridegroom was late, and they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight there was a cry, "The bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him." At this, all those bridesmaids woke up and trimmed their lamps, and the foolish ones said to the sensible ones, "Give us some of your oil: our lamps are going out." But they replied, "There may not be enough for us and for you; you had better go to those who sell it and buy some for yourselves." They had gone off to buy it when the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding hall and the door was closed. The other bridesmaids arrived later. "Lord, Lord," they said, "open the door for us." But he replied, "I tell you solemnly, I do not know you." So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour.'

Reader:

The Gospel of the Lord.

All:

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

All are seated.

Reflection on the Word

Q. In what ways is this story a parable of the Kingdom of God?

Q. If this story were to be put in a contemporary setting, what is a modern metaphor for preparedness that might be used?

Q. How can we properly prepare for the coming of the Kingdom?

Q. In what ways are some Christians today like the foolish bridesmaids?

Profession of Faith

Leader:

In union with the whole Church
let us profess our faith.

All:

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,

and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,

At the words that follow, up to and including the Virgin Mary, all bow.

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of the Faithful

Leader: Dear friends, in faith and hope, let us bring our prayers before the Lord.

Reader: That all the baptised will proclaim God's kingdom in their words and deeds.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That world leaders will work together to bring about peace and justice for all.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That organisations who work for the poor will be encouraged by our generous and prayerful support.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That leaders of all faiths will continue to take strong steps towards collective action in halting the damage caused by climate change.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That we heed the plea of Pope Francis that children will always be welcome, loved, and accepted, regardless of their circumstances.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That we will not forget those Australians who have died in the line of duty and that they will dwell forever in the Kingdom of God.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That students who are completing their studies will find meaningful opportunities in the next phase of their lives.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That our parish community will always remain awake and alert to the voice of God.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That all the sick and those who care for them will be supported by our prayers and assistance

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Reader: That all who have died, especially those who were members of our community and families, will be welcomed into God's loving embrace.

In your mercy:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Lord God, you teach us to be attentive in faith and heart. Hear our prayers, and help us to be ever watchful and always ready to respond to the Lord's call. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Leader:

At the Saviour's command
and formed by divine teaching,
we dare to say:

All:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

The Concluding Rite Blessing

Leader:

May the Lord be with us, and protect us now and for ever.

All make the sign of the cross during the blessing.

All:

Amen.

Dismissal

Leader:

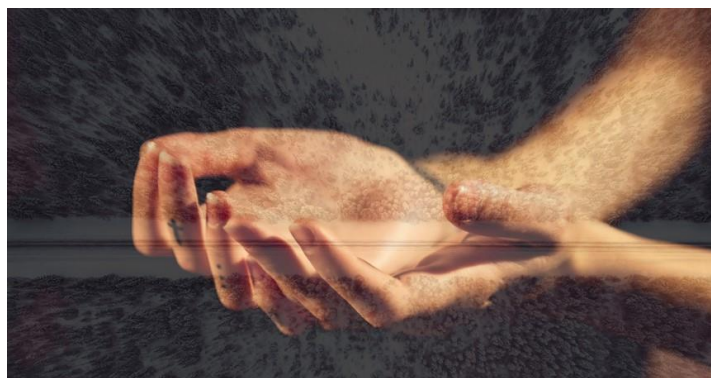
Let us go in the peace to love and serve the Lord.

All:

Thanks be to God.

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FAITH MATTERS: Make your Paths Straight

On Monday 6 November Morgan Owens shared her testimony at 'Pints with a Purpose', we thank her for being so open and honest about her life's journey. What Morgan shared is a true indication that Faith Matters as she commenced her talk with a quote from Mystic Padre Pio, "Blessed is the crisis that made you grow, the fall that made you look to heaven and the problem that made you look for God".

The following quotes are from Morgan's testimony.

ROSEMARY MCALLISTER PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 07, 2023

"Throughout the process of writing this testimony I've been reminded of how important it is to give praise and thanks to God, particularly for our hardships. I feel like the only difference between a blessing and a curse is the role we think God plays in it. If we can wrap our head around the idea that God never really abandons us, but rather we are often we are quick to abandon God, it can help shift perspective a little bit. Ultimately, I wouldn't be standing here tonight if God hadn't allowed me to experience the things I've faced. The hardships I'm going to talk about are not merely things of the past, but rather daily struggles I still live with but seek to endure through the goodness of His love."

"My 20's have been a wild-ride and over the last few years I've carried a lot of shame around the path I took during this period. And what we know about shame is that it carries with it incredibly powerful implications. Shame keeps us hidden. It keeps us locked away. Shame has kept me from sharing this journey that I've been on up until now. Shame has made me feel like a hypocrite and a fraud."

"From a young age I guess you could say I was always searching for a deeper meaning in life. My mum was raised in the Methodist Church but hasn't stepped foot in one for over 40 years. My Dad on the other hand was baptised Catholic but has spent the entirety of his life searching for answers outside of the Church. When I was five my parents divorced, my father met someone else, and I was now faced with learning how to be a mediator and a social chameleon from a very young age. I lived in a constant state of duality, torn between each of my loving, well-meaning but at the time misguided parents. The only positive to come from their messy divorce was and is still the extended family I gained, many of which are here and present tonight. Even then, God was planting the seeds of staunch Catholicism in my life well before I realised it."

Morgan achieved academically at school, was well liked and went on to become Vice Captain. She developed a strong outspoken sense of identity, taking a keen interest in Feminist Literature. Morgan was intrigued by how gender roles impacted society and began to identify with sexual fluidity, where she dated women for several years as she had grown to fervently believe that men weren't capable of deep emotional intimacy.

"Looking back, I was so wounded and lost. Lost in a hardened protective shell that kept me from facing what I believe to be the childhood sorrows I carried with me into early adulthood. I was wrestling with severe anxiety and depression. I was pharmaceutically medicated and with little to no coping skills I began to medicate myself."

In her early 20's Morgan's world was surrounded by many different types of drugs, during these encounters she thought she was experiencing some sort of higher consciousness and moments of clarity.

"I was now heavily entrenched in the ambiguity of new age and found myself drawn toward Eastern religions. I clung onto the fact that in Buddhism they talk about suffering as being an inherent part of the human condition. And I guess I clung onto this because deep inside I was suffering with something I could never quite identify."

This stage of Morgan's life was chaotic with heavy drug taking, cycling through relationships, and falling into the trap of being taken advantage of from a group running a sophisticated identity theft syndicate.

"I often look back at that period of my life, when everything was just starting to unravel but no one really knew yet and I often wonder how I even made it that far. I'd been drowning for years. Metaphorically speaking I'd been treading water just trying to keep my head up, gasping for air. By the time I'd finally succumb to addiction, I was spiritually and emotionally tired."

"In amongst the chaos that was my life I was introduced Harry; a man twenty-five years my senior. He became my best-friend, my confidant, and my protector. He provided me safety, shelter and comfort in some of the darkest days of my life. He saw through my false sense of bravado and quietly showed me that men could be everything I thought they weren't. He managed to do all of this whilst keeping me at a gentlemanly arm's length."

"I look back at the relationship that Harry and I had forged in those early days and the verse from Matthew 11:28 comes to mind, "Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy burdened, and I will give you rest". And that's what Harry did for me. He provided me safety and comfort during a time of complete and utter vulnerability. I didn't know it at the time, but this man would go on to become my future husband. He would be the man who ultimately acted as a catalyst for me to encounter Christ."

"Over the 12 months of knowing him our relationship evolved and together we decided to leave the fast life behind us in the hopes of embarking on a new journey together. And two weeks later we found out that the journey awaiting us was parenthood. My pregnancy with our baby girl seemed to go smoothly, a low-risk pregnancy with two very excited first-time parents. I was starting to develop a newfound sense of identity around becoming a mother and it was all becoming very real for Harry, who up until now had thought he'd missed his opportunity in life to have a child. It became apparent that something was changing in him and one day, seemingly out of nowhere he casually says to me, "I feel as though Jesus is calling me back to him. I hadn't ever heard Harry talk about Jesus before. Suddenly I thought to myself, "God, I'm having a baby with one of these Jesus people". I was perplexed. I said to him, "I didn't know you were into Jesus", to which he replied, "Just because I haven't been a practicing, doesn't mean I'm not a Christian".

Around the 33-week mark of Morgan's pregnancy she started having strange experiences of waking up and being panicked in the middle of the night, feeling a profound presence in her bedroom, and dreaming that she lost her baby.

At 38 weeks Morgan and Harry received the news that Eden their unborn child didn't have a heartbeat. Harry sought out God's strength and protection as the couple endured the 18-hour labour, knowing that were not bringing a baby home.

"In that moment of holding my first child it almost didn't matter that she wasn't alive, through giving birth to death I gained some concept of eternal life. It was in Eden's delicate little features that I saw the face of God and profoundly understood for the first time that life truly is a gift, one that can be taken away as quickly as it's given."

"I was desperate to have Eden blessed, but as my husband is Greek Orthodox by baptism, I came to find out their church couldn't oblige my request, as we were having her cremated. I was so hurt and deflated. But as it turned out God would hear my pleas. The very next morning Harry took himself to the chapel and returned to tell me that a Catholic Nun had walked in at the very time he was in there and was on her way up to bless our baby. I came to find out only a few months ago that this Nun was Sister Mary O'Hearn and I was reunited with her the same day that I was giving this testimony for the very first time. This had to be a God-incidence."

"The weeks following Eden's birth were incredibly sorrowful. More often than not I found myself on my knees begging for God's mercy and it was in these moments that I was shown the meaning of true surrender. For the first time in my life, I knew I was completely powerless, all I could do was try to hand this grief over to God because I couldn't withstand it on my own. The verse from Psalm 34:18, "The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit".

"The series of events that led to my baptism were nothing short of a calling from our Blessed Mother. After I had lost Eden I craved religious consolation, feeling like a fraud because I had never been remotely interested in the church. I remember telling a friend of mine that I wanted to get a tattoo of Mother Mary and she just looked at me stunned. I had no relationship with Jesus but here I was feeling so drawn to his mother. I tried to convince myself that I was experiencing some sort of grief related trauma response, but the signs from God just keep coming."

"On the 11th of July 2021 our family celebrated a beautiful proclamation of faith. I was baptised and received my first Holy Communion. I did so alongside our second child Lily who was 9 weeks olds, my husband and I also went before God and had our marriage convalidated within the Church, and we did all of this while recognising our baby Eden who's first birthday and anniversary was only 3 days earlier. I used to be one of those misinformed people that believed the Catholic Church was an institution created to elevate the status of men to great power. But the reality of our faith traditions is that we give the upmost respect to the Mother of God; "Hail Mary, full of Grace the Lord is with thee" - that says it all."

"I've only just come to terms with the fact that this journey with God can often feel like a wrestling match. As life experience has shown me the flesh is strong and it wants what it wants. I'm never going to stop being tested, I'm never going to stop repenting for my failures, and I'll always have that prompting of the Holy Spirit that says "be careful, is this worth risking your soul?"

"My life today is so much more fruitful than I ever could have imagined. I feel free from the grips of addiction, I'm a married woman something I never ever thought I'd be, I'm growing strong in my faith and seeking to serve God through serving others. I have been blessed, despite not feeling worthy, God has shown me I am."

"And with that I'd like to finish with Proverbs 3, verse 5-6: Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

I have come to know Morgan through the Pastoral Placement Program and the Christian Formation Course, both experiences have assisted explore her calling to a life of ministry. If you would like to learn more about these programs visit www.mn.catholic.org.au/

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