



Our Lady of Mercy *parish newsletter*

21 January 2024 | Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

Repentance, Belief, and the Kingdom of God

In the Gospel of Mark, the first words spoken by Jesus are rich with depth and mystery. "The Kingdom of God is at hand," He announces, introducing a concept that is central to Christianity and will become a cornerstone of His teachings. The 'Kingdom of God', despite its regal terminology, is not a physical location but a spiritual state where people live according to God's will.

The arrival of this Kingdom, according to Jesus, necessitates two actions from us: repentance and belief in the gospel. But what does this really mean? To 'repent' is to abandon our inherent selfish tendencies, a default

setting that has plagued human nature since Adam and Eve committed the original sin. To 'believe in the gospel' is to trust in God's way and God's will, to have faith that they always represent the best choice.

This trust is not a blind leap into the unknown but an informed decision based on a relationship with God. Consider the encounter between Jesus and the first apostles in the Gospel. Jesus had a grand plan for Peter, Andrew, James, and John. However, He knew He couldn't explain everything to them. Instead, He spent time with them, built a relationship of mutual trust, and then invited them

to follow Him. It was a significant ask, requiring them to abandon their livelihood, reputation, and stability symbolised in their fishing nets. John and James even had to leave behind their father and family business.

Why would they agree to such an upheaval? The answer is simple: they trusted Jesus. The Kingdom of God had begun to rule in their hearts. The result of their trust was nothing short of extraordinary. They became saints and changed the course of history, discovering a purpose, a wisdom, a joy, and a meaning far beyond what their old lives could have offered.

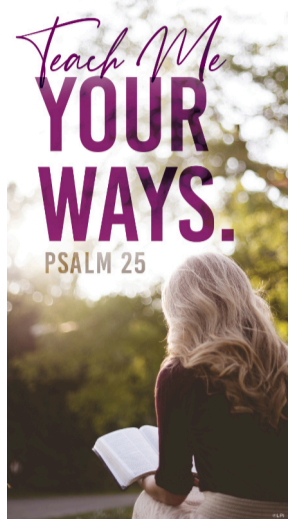
Yet, the journey of faith is not always smooth. There are moments, particularly during crises, when our trust in God is tested. One such moment is when a loved one is stricken with painful suffering. We often grapple with questions about why God, who is all-loving and all-powerful, would allow such pain. Theological explanations can help, reminding us that God didn't create evil. Evil is a consequence of the original sin, much like pollution in a river affects all the water downstream. Yet, we also know that God can bring good out of evil, just as the resurrection followed the crucifixion.

Another moment of crisis

occurs when we receive a special vocation from God. This calling can require us to alter our personal plans, perhaps even radically. The initial reaction might be to resist, much like Jonah did. But as John and James discovered, trusting in God and accepting His call can lead to unimaginable rewards.

In both these moments of crisis, our trust in God becomes our anchor. It gives us the strength to face suffering and the courage to accept our vocation. The world, as St. Paul reminds us in the Second Reading, "is passing away." Yet our friendship with God, the life of His Kingdom, endures eternally.

As we navigate our paths of faith, let us strive to trust in God more than any other voice. Let us repent, believe in the gospel, and let the Kingdom of God rule in our hearts. For in doing so, we enter a realm of unequaled vitality and meaning, a Kingdom truly like no other.



Third Sunday of the Year

Fr John Muir

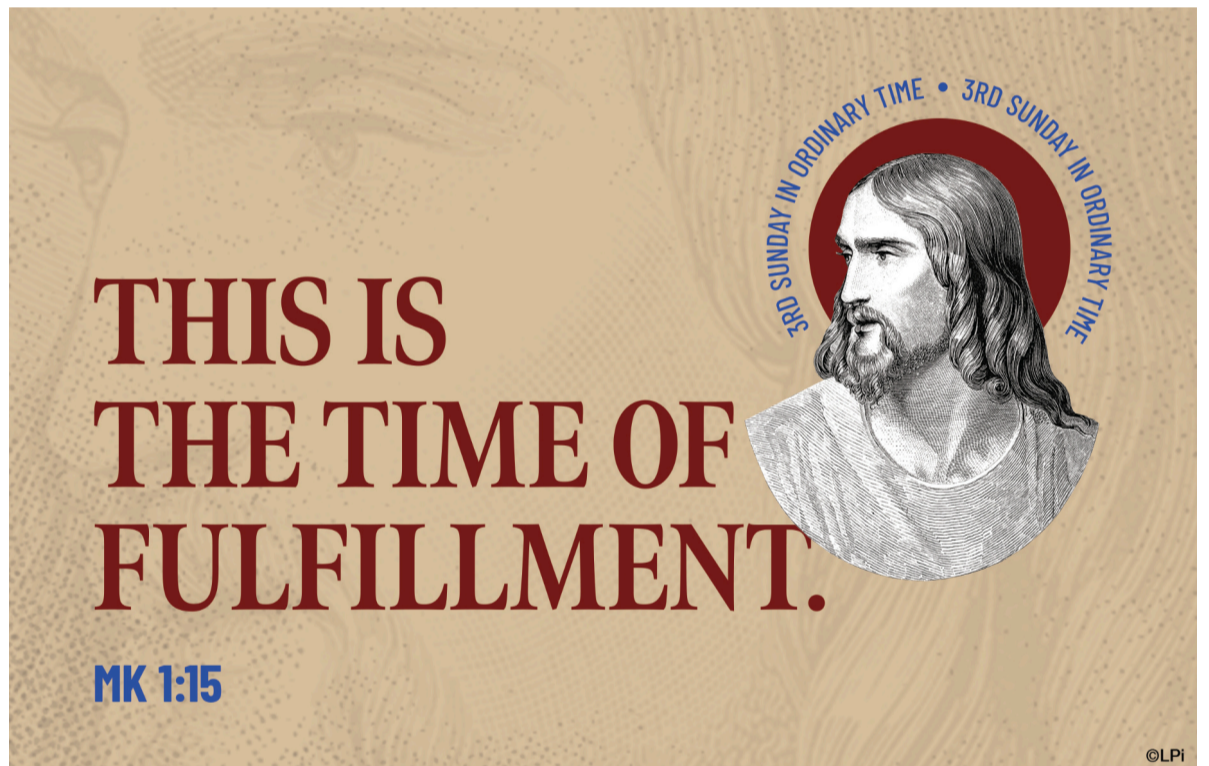
We start telling lies around the age of three, the experts tell us. It's understandable. Lying is a god-like power. Whatever I want, I need only say it, and the world rearranges itself accordingly. It's amazing at first. But soon reality snaps back and I'm faced with a dilemma. If I remain committed to my lie I start to fracture into pieces. My words and reality drift apart, and I find myself lost in a lonely world of further falsehoods and fear of being found out.

How marvellous, then, that Jesus begins his ministry by proclaiming: "Repent!" We

tend to think it means "stop doing bad things" but it doesn't. It literally means "go beyond the mind you have." Think in a new way. It's painful to admit, but some portion of my mind is addicted to lie-telling, usually to protect my ego or make life easier. To repent means to admit this tendency, to say, "I'm done lying," and to move beyond my split mind into a complete commitment to the truth. Perhaps that's why at Mass we together proclaim, "I have sinned in my thoughts, and in my words..." Repentance and truth-telling work together.

Those who know the twelve-step process of addiction recovery know this pro-

cess well. The fourth step requires radical truth-telling: listing our moral defects. This isn't being scrupulous. Rather it is freedom from falsehood, and entrance into the real world. This week, I invite you to join me in this practice. Get your phone or piece of paper. Answer the question: what are your true moral defects? Write them down. Remember, the Lord knows them already and loves you. We have a sacrament where this truth-telling is celebrated: Confession. Perhaps it is finally time to go beyond our childish lies.



(Practising) Catholic

A Good Time for Fulfilment

Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

There are some things that always come at the worst time. I've never gotten a telemarketing call and thought, "This is a really convenient moment for me to listen to a sales pitch." I've never seen the compulsory software update notice flash on my computer screen when I didn't have a deadline I was struggling to meet. My kids never

come down with the flu unless it's the weekend and the line at Urgent Care is stretching out the door.

And I never, ever feel the calm, persistent shoulder-tap of the Holy Spirit without thinking, "Now? Now is not a good time. Can you try again when I'm..."

But then I stop and think: when I am what? When I am stronger? When I am happier? When I am smarter? When I

am a different person?

When God calls us, He calls the person He sees in front of Him. "Come on," He says, and He doesn't mean "When you're finished" or "When it's convenient" or "Think about it." He means now. This moment.

This is what Paul is saying when he writes that "the world in its present form is passing away." He is saying that your plans mean nothing, the kingdom of God is at

hand. Abandon your nets, let your catch escape into the sea. You're not who you thought you were, and you don't need what you thought you needed.

Your sins do not define you. Your fears are not fate. Your inclinations do not govern you. Your life can be changed. We live in the time of fulfilment, and fulfilment is coming for you — ready or not.

"Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: 'This is the time of fulfilment.'" — Mark 1:14

Live the Liturgy

The disciples were fishing when Christ found them, hard at work to support their families, casting their nets into the sea. Sometimes when God calls us, we are in the middle of something else. Don't be afraid to change your plans to follow Him.



First reading: Jonah 3:1-5,10

The word of the Lord was addressed to Jonah: 'Up!' he said 'Go to Nineveh, the great city,

and preach to them as I told you to.' Jonah set out and went to Nineveh in obedience to the word of the Lord.

Now Nineveh was a city great beyond compare: it took three days to cross it. Jonah went on into the city, making a day's journey. He preached in these words, 'Only forty days more and Nineveh is going to be destroyed.' And the people of Nineveh believed in God; they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least.

God saw their efforts to renounce their evil behaviour,

and God relented: he did not inflict on them the disaster which he had threatened.

Responsorial Psalm 24(25):4-6, 7b-9

Lord, make me know your ways.

1. Lord, make me know your ways. Lord, teach me your paths. Make me walk in your truth, and teach me: for you are God my saviour.

2. Remember your mercy, Lord, and the love you have shown from of old. In your love remember me, because of your goodness, O Lord.

3. The Lord is good and upright. He shows the path to those who stray, He guides the humble in the right path, He teaches his way to the poor.

Second reading 1 Corinthians 7: 29-31

Brothers: our time is growing short. Those who have wives should live as though they had none, and those who mourn should live as though they had nothing to mourn for; those who are enjoying life should live as though there were nothing to laugh about; those whose life is buying things should live as though they had nothing of

their own; and those who have to deal with the world should not become engrossed in it. I say this because the world as we know it is passing away.

Gospel Acclamation Mt 2:2

Alleluia, alleluia! The kingdom of God is close at hand: repent, and believe the Good News. Alleluia!

This Week

20	Saturday	6.00	VIGIL MASS	St Cecilia's	Joseph Jacob (RIP)
21	THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B)	8.00	Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
		9.00	MASS	Convent	Ints of Srs of Mercy of the Union G.B.
		10.30	MASS	St Mary's	Lorraine Elizabeth Purdy (RIP)
		5.00	MASS	St Mary's	People of the Parish
22	Monday	8.00	Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
	Saint Vincent, Deacon, Martyr	9.30	MASS	Convent	Ints of the Oaklea Sisters
		10.00	Student Morning Prayer	Upper Room	
		12.05	MASS	St Mary's	Holy Souls
		12.45	Chaplet of Divine Mercy	St Mary's	
23	Tuesday	8.00	Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
	Week 3 of Ordinary Time B(II)	9.30	MASS	Convent	Sr Calasancius (RIP)
		12.05	MASS	St Mary's	Private Intention
		5.00	Chaplaincy Tuesdays	Upper Room	
24	Wednesday	8.00	Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
	Saint Francis de Sales, Bishop, Doctor	9.30	NO MASS	Convent	
		12:05	NO MASS	St Mary's	
		6.30	RCIA	Upper Room	
25	The Conversion of Saint Paul, Apostle	8.00	Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
		9.00	Church Cleaning	St Mary's	
		9.30	MASS	Convent	Deceased Sisters of Oaklea
		10.00	Confessions	St Cecilia's	
		10.30	Open House	St Mary's Catholic Centre	
		10.30	MASS	St Cecilia's	Dec's of Mullen & McConville Families
		11.15	Christian Mindfulness	St Cecilia's Church Hall	
		12.05	MASS	St Mary's	John & Jean Lane (RIP)
		5.00	Student Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
26	Friday	8.00	Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
	Saints Timothy and Titus, Bishops	9.30	MASS	Convent	Ints of Sisters of Mercy, Guernsey
		12:05	MASS	St Mary's	Ints of Sr Raphael and Family
		12.45	Holy Rosary	St Mary's	
27	Saturday	8.00	Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
	Saint Angela Merici, Virgin	10.30	Confessions	Mercy Chapel	
	or Saturday memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary	11.00	MASS	St Mary's	Holy Souls
		11.45	Confessions	Mercy Chapel	
		6.00	VIGIL MASS	St Cecilia's	Mary Baker (RIP)
28	FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (B)	8.00	Morning Prayer	Mercy Chapel	
		9.00	MASS	Convent	Pat Brennan (RIP)
		10.30	MASS	St Mary's	Special Intention (GMC)
		5.00	MASS	St Mary's	People of the Parish



Announcements

No Masses 24 January
Please note that all the the clergy are away for a training day on 24 January and there will be no Mass in the Convent or at 1205 in St Mary's. There will however, be a communion service at St Mary's.

Morning Prayer
Every morning we pray Morning Prayer in the Mercy Chapel at 8 a.m. It's a great way to start the day. If you live or work in the city centre why not make it part of your routine to come and pray with us?

Christian Mindfulness
New Year, new you? Our popular course of Christian mindfulness with Andy Carton is returning in the New Year. It is

suitable both for people who did the course in the summer and for new people.
It takes places on Thursdays at 11.15 until 12.30 and starts on 11 January for 4 weeks. Contact: andrewcarton7@gmail.com

Holocaust Commemoration 2024: 'Fragility of Freedom'
The Sunderland Interfaith Forum Holocaust Commemoration will be held on Thursday 25 January at 6.30 p.m. in Sunderland Minster. The guest speaker is Lesley Urbach.

Prayer of Discernment
Dear Lord,
Here I am! Help me to know the path You would have me walk, to speak the words You would have me speak, to love and serve those You put in my path. Amen.

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Questions for the Week

First Reading: The people of Nineveh (the capital city of the Assyrian Empire and historic enemy of Israel) repented of their sins when they heard Jonah's warning of God's impending destruction

of their city. What motivates you to repent?
Second Reading: Paul encouraged the believers in Corinth to live with a sense of urgency and in a radically different way than before coming to

faith in Jesus. In what way are you living counter-culturally as a person of faith?
Gospel: This Sunday we hear the first words of Jesus in Mark's account of the call of the first disciples: "This is the time of fulfilment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Re-

pent, and believe in the gospel." Jesus taught that the time had come for God to come and reclaim His world. What excites you about this message?

Why do we do that?



Question: Can a person (the mother, father, or provider) ever be forgiven for an abortion?

Answer: For people of faith, any conversation of human sinfulness should always lead us to reflect on God's loving mercy. Because God's mercy is greater than any sin, the Church is clear that even those involved in the sin of abortion can be reconciled with God and the Church. To help make this grace more available through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Pope Francis extended the permis-

sion to absolve someone of the sin of abortion to all priests in 2016.
Even with the grace and blessings of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the tragedy of abortion and the aftermath of abortion takes a toll on everyone involved. Ministries of outreach and support, such as Project Rachel, offer pastoral counselling, support groups, retreats, and other forms of care. As Christians,

we are also called to help promote this healing and reconciliation in all its forms. To learn more, visit www.hopeafterabortion.com.

Saint of the Week



deaths of their parents, the sisters were entrusted to the care of the Augustinian nuns at Mont-Cornillon. Growing up among the religious, Juliana's spiritual journey flourished. At age 13, she entered the order.
Juliana's profound love for Christ in the Eucharist was ignited during her time at the convent. She regularly participated in Mass and spent hours in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. In her prayers, she often experienced mystical visions, rein-

forcing her belief in the real presence of Jesus in the consecrated bread and wine.
Driven by her desire to see a dedicated feast to honor Christ in the Eucharist, St. Juliana took it upon herself to promote the idea fervently. She eventually became the Prioress of the canonry and frequently confided in her mentor, Canon John of Lausanne, telling him about her visions and her hope for the feast. He shared her experiences with his contemporaries, including Pope Urban IV.
Though Juliana died in 1258, her cause won over Pope Urban IV. In 1264 he is-

sued the papal bill "*Transitus de hoc mundo*" which instituted the Feast of Corpus Christi on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday. The feast aimed to celebrate and affirm the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, emphasising the significance of the Blessed Sacrament in the life of the Church.
Juliana was canonised by Pope Pius IX in 1869 and is remembered not only for the pivotal role she played in establishing the Feast of Corpus Christi, but for her musical talents, teachings, and writings. St. Juliana of Cornillon, pray for us!

Flock Notes

I don't think anyone likes to be rushed. We'd all rather do things in our own time and at our own pace. Sometimes, though, that's not possible. In the gospel today, Jesus speaks with some urgency about the nearness of the Kingdom of God and the need for us to respond.

On the day he was ordained a bishop, Angelo Roncalli, later Pope John XXIII, wrote in his diary, "God does not promise me 25 years of episcopal life, or 5 years for that matter; however, he does promise me, if I want to be holy, he gives me the time I need and the necessary

graces."
Time is one of the most precious gifts God has given us. Like all other gifts, we can put it to good use, or we can waste it.
Sometimes it seems like we have too much of it, other times, it might seem like we don't have enough. I suppose that all depends on what our priorities are.
God has given all of us all the time and all the help we

need to be holy, to orientate our lives according to God's plan.
This coming week we will have 168 hours to squeeze in everything we have to do. How many of those will you dedicate to growing in holiness? In the midst of all the demands on us and all our works and responsibilities, there is still enough time to be holy.



...continued
Gospel Mark 1:14-20

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. 'The time has come' he said 'and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.'
As he was walking along by the Sea of Galilee he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net in the lake – for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you into fishers of men.' And at once they left their nets and followed him.
Going on a little further, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they too were in their boat, mending

their nets. He called them at once and, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went after him.

