

CATHOLIC PARISH OF ST MARY'S MACLEAN



ST JOHN'S CHURCH



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ST JAMES CHURCH

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FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A: 1 FEBRUARY 2026

[The Gospel this Sunday is] one of the greatest sermons ever given. It is universally known as The Sermon on the Mount. What makes it great is not just the beauty of its language or the hope of its theology. It is truly great because Jesus was preaching to the reality in front of him. The Jews listening that day were poor, in grief, meek and hungry for justice. Some were trying to be merciful to their enemies, struggling to find God in the midst of persecution and attempting to make peace while their family and friends were being falsely accused and condemned.

As true as this was for the Jews of Jesus' day, it was even more so for the earliest Christian community for whom this Gospel was written.

Sometimes when we hear a sermon our reaction can be, 'What would he know?' 'If only he knew the complexities of my life, he would soon change his tune!' It's true that some of us have not been sensitive to the human frailties of the congregation in front of us and we have not been able to communicate our own frailties in the words we deliver.

The Sermon on the Mount is a model for all of us in every way. When Jesus says 'Blessed are you' he is not being patronising, glossing over all sorts of tough human realities with, 'Well done, keep it up, be happy and we'll fix it all up in heaven.'

In the Hebrew Scriptures, a blessing is the discovery that God is present and active in one's experience,

right here and right now. So the Beatitudes are saying that you do not need to go past your own daily struggles to find the presence of God. Jesus tells us that if we are poor, compassionate, mournful, campaigning for a just society and suffering because of it, gentle, innocent, a peacemaker or a martyr, we are encountering, in a special way, the presence of God.



The God of the Beatitudes is a companion with us in every experience we go through. God is our best friend, walking beside us as we get out of bed and meet the days we would rather not face.

Sadly, God-as-friend is a rich image not used as much as it should be. We choose our friends, we like to spend time with them, we tell our intimate friends things we tell few others. Sometimes, when we are on top of the world or in a crisis we call our best friends ahead of

our family. And we know our friends like us because they seek us out and want to share our life.

Jesus is the best friend we could ever have, interested in every daily event and he's there for us at every moment in life. Yet he doesn't barge in. He waits patiently for an invitation to enter our lives at whatever level we want.

Jesus-as-friend doesn't give us old-fashioned sermons, but rather meets us where we are, embraces us and holds us close when the going gets tough and helps us find the way forward. Jesus-as-friend is the greatest Beatitude of all. *Fr Richard Leonard SJ*

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (*Iluka*)

Save us, O Lord our God! And gather us from the nations, to give thanks to your holy name, and make it our glory to praise you.

COLLECT

Grant us, Lord our God, that we may honour you with all our mind, and love everyone in truth of heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING *Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13*

A reading from the prophet Zephaniah.

Seek the Lord
all you, the humble of the earth,
who obey his commands.
Seek integrity,
seek humility:
you may perhaps find shelter
on the day of the anger of the Lord.
In your midst I will leave
a humble and lowly people,
and those who are left in Israel will seek refuge in the
name of the Lord.
They will do no wrong,
will tell no lies;
and the perjured tongue will no longer
be found in their mouths.
But they will be able to graze and rest
with no one to disturb them.
The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM *Ps 145:7-10. R. Mt 5:3*

**R. Happy the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven
in theirs.**

1. It is the Lord who keeps faith forever,
who is just to those who are oppressed.
It is he who gives bread to the hungry,
the Lord, who sets prisoners free. (R.)
2. It is the Lord who gives sight to the blind,
who raises up those who are bowed down,
the Lord, who protects the stranger
and upholds the widow and orphan. (R.)
3. It is the Lord who loves the just
but thwarts the path of the wicked.
The Lord will reign for ever,
Zion's God, from age to age. (R.)

SECOND READING *1 Corinthians 1:26-31*

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians.

Take yourselves, brothers, at the time when you were called: how many of you were wise in the ordinary sense of the word, how many were influential people, or came from noble families? No, it was to shame the wise that God chose what is foolish by human reckoning, and to shame what is strong that he chose what is weak by human reckoning; those whom the world thinks common and contemptible are the ones that God has chosen – those who are nothing at all to show up those who are everything. The human race has nothing to boast about to God, but you, God has made members of Christ Jesus and by God's doing he has become our wisdom, and our virtue, and our holiness, and our freedom. As scripture says: if anyone wants to boast, let him boast about the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
Rejoice and be glad; Your reward will be great in heaven.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL *Matthew 5:1-12*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

‘How happy are the poor in spirit:
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Happy the gentle:
they shall have the earth for their heritage.
Happy those who mourn:
they shall be comforted.
Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right:
they shall be satisfied.
Happy the merciful:
they shall have mercy shown them.
Happy the pure in heart:
they shall see God.
Happy the peacemakers:
they shall be called sons of God.
Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right:
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven.’

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O Lord, we bring to your altar these offerings of our service: be pleased to receive them, we pray, and transform them into the Sacrament of our redemption. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE; EUCHARISTIC PRAYER III

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (*Iluka*)

Let your face shine on your servant. Save me in your merciful love. O Lord, let me never be put to shame, for I call on you.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Nourished by these redeeming gifts, we pray, O Lord, that through this help to eternal salvation true faith may ever increase. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

The Gospel for today (Matt 5:1-12) introduces the great Sermon (Sermon on the Mount, 5:1-7:29) which is the real beginning of Jesus' public ministry in the Gospel according to Matthew. As we have noted from the start, of all four evangelists, Matthew is the one most concerned to relate the Christian community to its Jewish heritage. Central to that heritage is Israel's possession of the Law or Torah of Moses. For Matthew, Jesus does not sweep away the Torah but 'brings it to fulfilment' (5:17). With an authority far in excess of that of Moses, he does this by giving it an authoritative interpretation valid for the time of the Kingdom of Heaven that he proclaims. As the Jewish community has in the Law of Moses, the Torah, that shapes its life, so the Christian community should find in the Sermon the Torah that is to shape and characterise its life.

For this reason it is important to note the context in which Jesus gives the Sermon.

If we look back to the concluding verses of the previous chapter, we shall see that Jesus addresses his disciples in the presence of 'all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics and paralytics, ... great crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan' (4:24-25). 'Seeing the crowds' (5:1a), Jesus ascends the mountain, sits down and his disciples come to him – as to a Teacher – for instruction. He is going to tell them who they must be and how they should live, not just for themselves, but for the sake of that burdened mass of humanity that is down there on the plain waiting for his – and ultimately their – ministry.

This is the essential context for the Beatitudes with which the Sermon begins (vv 2-12). The Beatitudes are not commandments bluntly instructing the disciples about how they should live. They are rather

invitations to adopt certain attitudes and live out certain values in the light of a particular vision of God. Those who choose to live in this way may seem to place themselves at a disadvantage here and now in terms of values prized by the world. But, in the light of God's faithfulness, they are really placing themselves in the most advantageous and fruitful position of all. The biblical sense of 'blessed those who ...' lying behind the Beatitudes is basically that of 'Congratulations!' – the sort of thing we say to someone who has won the lottery. We are not commending them for being virtuous. We are acknowledging their good fortune and sharing their joy; we're saying, 'You're in a good place!'

Other things being equal, the attitudes and situations that Jesus here commends are not in themselves a recipe for getting on in the world. All cohere around the core idea of living in a non-competitive, non-grasping way. To be poor in spirit (as well as being actually poor); to be gentle and unselfish, rather than on the make; to be prepared to weep alongside the unfortunate rather than avoid them; to work for justice and peace; to exercise mercy and be single-minded in pursuit of the good ('pure in heart'); to be ready to endure persecution and calumny for the sake of the gospel: all these things make one vulnerable here and now, entailing much loss. But then we have to note the second clause in each beatitude, stating the reason for the 'blessedness' in each case. All those passives: 'shall be comforted', 'shall be satisfied', 'shall have mercy shown to them', and so forth, indicate, in biblical parlance, the action of God. To live in this way, according to these values, makes supreme sense if God truly is as Jesus reveals God to be. It is only in the context of faith in such a God that living according to the Beatitudes makes sense and is, in fact, the supreme wisdom. Now it may involve vulnerability and loss; in the

perspective of faith and the hope for the Kingdom of Heaven that faith holds out, it is simply hard-headed commonsense. That is why those who, following Jesus, adopt this way of life, as to be 'congratulated', why they are 'Blessed'.

The First Reading, a rare appearance of the prophet Zephaniah (2:3; 3:12-13) provides an appropriate background for the Beatitudes in that it commends similar attitudes and, again, does so in the light of a similar vision of God.

The Second Reading, 1 Cor 1:26-31, also fits the theme. Paul reminds a community inclined to adopt worldly standards of how it was precisely their lowliness and ordinariness in the sight of the world that led to their choice and spiritual enrichment by God. *Fr Brendan Byrne SJ*



ONLINE GIVING

Internet donations to assist our parish are always welcome. Details for donating online via Electronic Funds Transfer BSB: 032582 Account Number: 810033 [Surname, parish envelope no]

PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayers for the Sick: Tim Scherger, Jan Taylor, Miriam Scherger, Toni Murphy, Kathy Leseberg, Ava Blay, Mark Thurbon, Alma Bailey, Mary Wiseman, Sue Gravalin, Ron Weekes, Margaret Donges, Pam Lewis, Matthew & Paul Gallagher, Chris Naismith, Trevor Nicolai, Graham Courte, Peter Burns, Matthew Tierney, Matt Mohorovic, Sharon Grayson, Dennis Catheral, Allan Dick. **Recently Deceased:** Ray O'Donnell, Patricia Sloan. **Anniversary:** Debra Lockhart, Stephen Ricketts. **Pray for:** All the suffering souls in Purgatory especially the dec'd members of F.O.S.S.

MASS TIMES:

Sunday Masses: Yamba: 5:30pm (SAT); Maclean: 8:30am (SUN); Iluka: 10:30am (SUN).

Weekday Masses: Wednesday, 9:30am: Yamba; Thursday, 10:00am: Iluka; Friday, 12:00nn, Maclean; First Saturday: 11:30am, Maclean.

RECONCILIATION TIMES

Saturday, 11:00am, Maclean; 5:00pm, Yamba
Sunday, 8:00am, Maclean
Wednesday, 10:00am, Yamba
Thursday, 10:30am, Iluka

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION:

First Wednesday: 10:00am, Yamba
First Saturday: 12:00pm, Maclean

MINISTRY ROSTER: 7/8 FEBRUARY 2026

Readers: Yamba: St James School; Maclean: C Newton/ A Smith; Iluka: C Leseberg. **Commentators:** Yamba: St James School, Maclean: R Wiseman, Iluka: T Sullivan. **E Communion:** Maclean: J Moloney. **Count team:** Smith/Robertson.

READINGS: 7/8 FEBRUARY 2026

First: Isaiah 58:7-10; **Second:** 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; **Gospel:** Matthew 5:13-16.

NEWS & EVENTS

Emergency contact: In case of emergency outside of parish office hours, contact Fr Roland 0401 508 812.

Parish bulletin online: Our bulletin is now uploaded weekly to our website <http://stmarysparish.org.au>

Baptism: Welcome to the Family of God, Lilly, who will be baptised in our parish this weekend.

First Saturday Devotion: Next Saturday, 7 February, the first Saturday devotion at St Mary's Maclean will begin at 11:00am with the praying of the Rosary, followed by Mass and Eucharistic Adoration and Benediction.

Yamba Catholic Ladies: Next meeting to be held Wednesday 11th February after Mass in Ted Howe Room. All are welcome!

Compassio – Lenten Program 2026: Last Chance for orders!

Yamba: Contact Fran for further details. 0401 303 522 or fishinstead@gmail.com.

Maclean: Contact John for further details 0427 476 383.

For those not wanting to participate in the group reflections the booklet is available for you to use at home. **Cost is \$10 per booklet – MUST be pre-ordered and PAID by 1 February please!**

POSTPONED Renovation work to St James Church:

Further updates will be provided as more details become available.

Parish Secretary position: Our parish is seeking a new Parish Secretary. This is a permanent part-time role, hours negotiable, and is based at the Maclean Parish Office. For more information, speak to Fr Roland or Lucia E: office@stmarysparish.org.au P: 02 6645 1188

St James Church Restoration Fund: We have decided to continue with collecting cans/bottles to provide funds for ongoing restoration works in Yamba and throughout the parish. Please remember the cans/bottles must have the 10c symbol on them and no crushing! For queries, please call Fran 0401 303 522.

Bishop Greg's 2026 Lenten Talk Series:

Bishop Greg's Lenten Talk Series – *The Spiritual Life* Mondays at 6pm, St Mary's Chapel, Lismore

- 23 Feb: Prayer

- 2 Mar: Detachment

- 9 Mar: Union with God

Talks will also be available from 6pm on 25 Feb, 4 Mar, and 11 Mar on the diocesan YouTube channel: youtube.com/LismoreDioceseAU. All are most welcome!

Did You Know? – 1st & 2nd Collections: The First Collection supports our priests and the clergy of the Diocese. The Second Collection contributes to the upkeep and running of our parish, including expenses such as electricity, insurance, building maintenance, and church equipment. A sincere thank you to all who continue to support our parish through planned giving and weekly collections. Your generosity sustains the mission and pastoral life of our parish community.

Safeguarding: If you or a person close to you has been abused by someone working or ministering within the Diocese of Lismore, we ask you to contact us. We will listen to you respectfully: offer support and discuss options you have available to you. Contact the Safeguarding Office – Phone: (02) 66219444 or Email: safeguarding@lismore.catholic.org.au