

CATHOLIC PARISH OF ST MARY'S MACLEAN



ST JOHN'S CHURCH



ST MARY'S CHURCH



ST JAMES CHURCH

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TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, YEAR A: 23 AUGUST 2026

Dear brothers and sisters, the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, came to gather not only the lost sheep of the house of Israel but all men and women, making them one family, one body: his Church. As we reflected last Sunday, it is through living faith that a person becomes part of this family. In today's Gospel, Jesus says to Simon: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church." The Church, the community of Jesus' disciples, continues his saving presence and work in the world. Christ himself gave his Church a structure, beginning with his choice of the Twelve Apostles, with Simon Peter as their head. Together with the other disciples, they share in Christ's mission.

The first reading, Isaiah 22:19–23, helps us understand today's Gospel. It shows how an official in the kingdom shares in the king's authority and work. During King Hezekiah's reign, Shebna, the master of the palace or prime minister, used his position for personal gain and ignored the prophet Isaiah. Because of this, he was removed from office, and the king appointed Eliakim in his place—a good and capable servant.

The reading explains how Eliakim was appointed prime minister. In the ceremony, the king removed the mantle and belt from the unworthy official and placed these signs of office on Eliakim. He was then given the keys of the palace, a sign of full authority to manage the king's household and decide who could enter or be excluded. This helps us understand Jesus' promise to give Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven: Peter is entrusted with authority in the Church to lead, teach, and sanctify in the person of Christ. Like the prime minister, Peter also shares in Christ's fatherly care for his people: "he shall be a father to the inhabitants." The authority Jesus gives Peter is therefore not domination, but loving service—the readiness of a father to give his life for his children.

The Gospel, Matthew 16:13–20, presents Peter's confession of faith in Jesus and his appointment to a special role of authority in Jesus' kingdom. After the disciples have spent time with him—hearing his teaching and witnessing his works—Jesus asks them who they believe he is. Simon Peter replies: "You are

the Christ." The title Christ comes from the Hebrew term meaning "Anointed One." Jesus is the Messiah, the One sent by God and long awaited by Israel. Peter goes further, confessing Jesus as "the Son of the living God." This is the faith the Church professes in the Creed: Jesus is "the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man."

Jesus receives Peter's confession—that he is the Christ and the Son of God—and declares Peter blessed, because this knowledge did not come from human reasoning but from the Father's revelation. He then says to Simon: "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church." Peter's faith in Jesus, received as a divine gift and accepted with the full submission of mind and heart to God, becomes the solid foundation of the Church. This faith makes the Church steadfast and able to withstand every force that rises against it. Nothing can prevent the Church, firmly rooted in Christ, from fulfilling its saving mission.

Peter is also entrusted with the keys and the power to bind and loose. These images express his authority to hand on Christ's teaching and to discern what is faithful to the Gospel and what is opposed to it. Jesus gave Peter, and his successors after him, the special mission of serving the whole Church. The Pope, as Peter's successor, is responsible for preserving the unity of the faith Peter professed in Christ. As the Church teaches: "The Pope, Bishop of Rome and the Successor of Saint Peter, is the perpetual, visible source and foundation of the unity of the Church. He is the vicar of Christ, the head of the College of bishops and pastor of the universal Church over which he has by divine institution full, supreme, immediate, and universal power."

Let us pray for the whole Church and especially for Pope Leo XIV.

Fr Roland

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (*Iluka*)

Turn your ear, O Lord, and answer me; save the servant who trusts in you, my God. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I cry to you all the day long.

COLLECT

O God, who cause the minds of the faithful to unite in a single purpose, grant your people to love what you command and to desire what you promise, that, amid the uncertainties of this world, our hearts may be fixed on that place where true gladness is found. 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*Isaiah 22:19-23*

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Thus says the Lord of hosts to Shebna, the master of the palace:

I dismiss you from your office,
I remove you from your post,
and the same day I call on my servant Eliakim son of Hilkiah.

I invest him with your robe,
gird him with your sash,
entrust him with your authority;
and he shall be a father
to the inhabitants of Jerusalem
and to the House of Judah.

I place the key of the House of David
on his shoulder;

should he open, no one shall close,
should he close, no one shall open.

I drive him like a peg
into a firm place;
he will become a throne of glory
for his father's house.

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM *Ps 137:1-3. 6. 8. R. v.8*

(R.) *Lord, your love is eternal;
do not forsake the work of your hands.*

1. I thank you, Lord, with all my heart,
you have heard the words of my mouth.
Before the angels I will bless you.
I will adore before your holy temple. (R.)
2. I thank you for your faithfulness and love
which excel all we ever knew of you.
On the day I called, you answered;
you increased the strength of my soul. (R.)
3. The Lord is high yet he looks on the lowly
and the haughty he knows from afar.

Your love, O Lord, is eternal,
discard not the work of your hands. (R.)

SECOND READING*Romans 11:33-36*

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

How rich are the depths of God – how deep his wisdom and knowledge – and how impossible to penetrate his motives or understand his methods! Who could ever know the mind of the Lord? Who could ever be his counsellor? Who could ever give him anything or lend him anything? All that exists comes from him; all is by him and for him. To him be glory for ever! Amen.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION*Matthew 16:18*

Alleluia, alleluia!

You are Peter, the rock on which I will build my Church; the gates of hell will not hold out against it. Alleluia!

GOSPEL*Matthew 16:13-20*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say he is John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he said 'who do you say I am?' Then Simon Peter spoke up, 'You are the Christ,' he said, 'the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Simon son of Jonah, you are a happy man! Because it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. So I now say to you: You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church. And the gates of the underworld can never hold out against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.' Then he gave the disciples strict orders not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

O Lord, who gained for yourself a people by adoption through the one sacrifice offered once for all, bestow graciously on us, we pray, the gifts of unity and peace in your Church. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

PREFACE II: SUNDAYS IN ORDINARY TIME**EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER III**

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (*Iluka*)

The earth is replete with the fruits of your work, O Lord; you bring forth bread from the earth and wine to cheer the heart.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Complete within us, O Lord, we pray, the healing work of your mercy and graciously perfect and sustain us, so that in all things we may please you. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

Today the focus of the readings is very much upon the Church. In fact, the text chosen for the Gospel, Matthew 16:13-20, is one of only two places in all the four Gospels where the word ‘church’ occurs (the other being Matt 18:15-17). The community of disciples is being equipped with authority and structures that will enable it to function during the time when Jesus will no longer be with them in the human form they have known.

The First Reading, from Isaiah 22:19-23, telling of the replacement of Shebna as master of the royal palace by a new official, Eliakim, appropriately foreshadows the appointment of Peter in the Gospel. It seems to have contributed to some of the language in which that appointment is made: notably, the handover of keys – and also perhaps the sense that what the new appointee determines (‘opening’ and ‘closing’) will have a definitive higher sanction, not lightly overthrown. Linking the two readings also is the sense of being responsible for a community seen as a ‘building’: while in charge of the palace, Eliakim is to be a ‘father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem’ just as Peter will be the ‘rock’ upon which Jesus will ‘build’ the community of his church.

In regard to the Gospel itself, what is important to notice is how what is said about the Church (the ecclesiology) flows from what is said (by Peter) about Christ (the christology). The Church is only what it is because of its perception of who Jesus is. Everything the Church has to say begins and ends with its God-given knowledge of Jesus, the inexhaustible treasure which it holds in trust for the world.

When Jesus questions his disciples about popular perceptions of his identity, their report shows that people can only place him in categories that are familiar and well-worn. The reality requires a much greater leap in imagination and faith.

In the person of Simon Peter the disciples do rise to such heights. Simon’s response, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God’, conveys awareness that, beyond being Israel’s Messiah as conventionally understood (a virtuous and effective ruler of David’s

line who would restore the fortunes of Israel), Jesus is related to God in a unique way. In his company the disciples are being drawn into a fellowship with the divine never before imagined or foreseen.

Peter has conferred a title upon Jesus. Now Jesus confers, first a blessing, then three roles upon him. Simon is ‘blessed’ not because he is virtuous or otherwise deserving but because God has graciously revealed to him a knowledge that no amount of human understanding (‘flesh and blood’) could achieve. Upon this christological insight the entire faith of the Church will rest.

The first role Simon receives is indicated by a new name: ‘Rock’. The identity between ‘Peter’ and ‘Rock’ – masked in English, more evident in Greek (petros, petra) – is perfect in Aramaic, the language Jesus actually spoke: ‘You are Kepha (“Rock”) and on this kepha (rocky ground) I will build my church.’ Peter is not ‘rock’ because of personal qualities of steadfastness or reliability. The Passion will further expose (26:69-75) his already demonstrated tendency to falter (14:31). He is ‘rock’ because of the insight of faith which God has communicated to him. Built on this ‘rock’, the Church will be a community of life. ‘Gates of the underworld’ is a biblical expression for the realm of the dead as the inevitable destination of all human beings. Its ‘gates’ will not prevail against the Church either in the sense that, built upon a ‘rock,’ it will survive all attempts to destroy it or, more likely, in the sense that its members, even though they die physically, will not be held confined within the realm of the dead but will burst through its ‘gates’ in resurrection (see 27:52-53).

The gift of keys does not, as commonly thought, make Peter the gatekeeper of heaven, letting in whoever he deems worthy. It, along with the subsequent reference to ‘binding’ and ‘loosing’, has to do with authoritative teaching: the power to declare in particular circumstances whether a commandment of the Torah is or is not applicable. Jesus, the Interpreter of the Torah par excellence (Matthew 5-7) leaves his community with a structure of interpretation and assures it of ‘heavenly’, that is, divine ratification. In this way, the Church, as both expression and foretaste of God’s reign (the ‘Kingdom of Heaven’) on earth, is equipped to discern and live God’s will in the changing circumstances that will, in the course of history, confront it. © **Brendan Byrne SJ**

EUCHARIST28 (eucharist28.org)

Eternal Life in the Eucharist. The International Eucharistic Congress (‘Eucharist28’) is coming to Sydney in 2028! At every Mass, the celebration of the Eucharist is a moment of communion, where we are united in Christ, who’s body and blood we share. ***To help you experience this moment of Eucharistic renewal on the journey to Eucharist28, head to eucharist28.org for more.***

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: Ann Burns, Clive McLachlan, Ben & Nadine Shaw, Patrick Wheeler, Denise & Bob, Tim Scherger, Jan Taylor, Miriam Scherger, Kathy Leseberg, Ava Blay, Mark Thurbon, Alma Bailey, Mary Wiseman, Sue Gravalin, Ron Weekes, Pam Lewis, Matthew & Paul Gallagher, Chris Naismith, Trevor Nicolai, Peter Burns, Matthew Tierney, Sharon Grayson, Dennis Catheral, Allan Dick. **Recently Deceased:** Colleen Betteridge, Janice Taylor, Kevin Molloy. **Anniversary:** Joan Barnett, Margie Fitzsimmons, Pam Conley, Mick Short, Jean Snelling, Phyl Pyrke, Pat Moran, Kirsty Cox, Patricia Ann Newman (Trish). **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: Tuesday, 9:00am: Iluka; Wednesday, 9:30am: Yamba; Friday, 12:00pm, Maclean; First Saturday: 11:30am, Maclean.

RECONCILIATION TIMES

Saturday, 11:00am, Maclean; 5:00pm, Yamba
Sunday, 8:00am, Maclean
Tuesday, 9:30am, Iluka
Wednesday, 10:00am, Yamba

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION:

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

MINISTRY ROSTER: 29/30 AUGUST 2026

Readers: Yamba: A Schofield/B Cullen; Maclean: St Joseph's Primary School; Iluka: H Naug.

Commentators: Yamba: M Dee; Maclean: St Joseph's Primary School, Iluka: I Durham. **E Communion:** Maclean: J de Roos. **Count team:** Neander.

READINGS: 29/30 AUGUST 2026

First: Jeremiah 20:7-9; **Second:** Romans 12:1-2; **Gospel:** Matthew 16:21-27.

NEWS & EVENTS

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

Office days/times: Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 9:00am-2:30pm. Office phone is not working.

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

Thinking of Becoming a Catholic? Contact Fr Roland 0401 508 812

First Holy Communion in our Parish will take place

in Yamba on 29 August and Maclean on 30 August. Please pray for our children preparing for their first Holy Communion: Yamba—Billy, Jackson, Aria, Amelia, Elsie, Maggie, Nellie, Grace, James and Nick. Maclean—Maeve, Rose, Albie, Phoebe, Talia, Marco, Claire and Kaia.

Training of old and new liturgy ministers: in September those involved in liturgical ministries will have their training.

Platinum (70) and Golden Jubilee (50) Priestly Ordination anniversary of Father John Dacey and Father Colin Reinhard: 29 August 2026, 11am Mass. Please see the poster on the noticeboard for RSVP instructions.

Is God calling you? Are you ready, to say, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening," and to begin listening to know if God may be calling you to be a priest, deacon or religious? To begin that journey of discernment contact the Director of Vocations Lismore | Evocations@lismore.catholic.org.au | M +61 0494 656 854 | P 02 6621 9444. Please take a prayer card from the entrance of the church.

Catholic Youth Lismore Launch: please see the noticeboard for the poster titled 'The Gathering' with a QR code.

Diocesan Investment Fund Interest rate 4.15% effective 1/8/26: For further information and our current interest rate, please visit our website www.dif.org.au or contact us on 1800 802 516.

Diocesan Art Prize: please see the noticeboard for a poster with a QR code to submit entries.

This year National Child Protection Week (6 - 12 September 2026) will continue under the theme Every Conversation Matters: Shifting Conversation to Action. Please see the noticeboard for the poster.

Janice Taylor's Funeral Mass: St Mary's Church, Wednesday 26 August at 11.30am followed by a gathering at the Bowling Club from 1.30pm. All friends and parishioners are invited to attend to support Doug.

Kevin Molloy's Funeral Prayers: St James Church, Thursday 27 August at 12 noon.

Catholic Life winter issue copies are available at the entrance to the Church or online: lismorediocese.org/catholic-life-magazine

Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools is pleased to present the newest edition of its newsletter: <https://bit.ly/4gwOpX0> paper copies available at the entrance to the Church.