

First Reading

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

A reading from the second book of Chronicles.

All the heads of the priesthood, and the people too, added infidelity to infidelity, copying all the shameful practices of the nations and defiling the Temple that the Lord had consecrated for himself in Jerusalem. The Lord, the God of their ancestors, tirelessly sent them messenger after messenger, since he wished to spare his people and his house. But they ridiculed the messengers of God, they despised his words, they laughed at his prophets, until at last the wrath of the Lord rose so high against his people that there was no further remedy.

Their enemies burned down the Temple of God, demolished the walls of Jerusalem, set fire to all its palaces, and destroyed everything of value in it. The survivors were deported by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon; they were to serve him and his sons until the kingdom of Persia came to power. This is how the word of the Lord was fulfilled that he spoke through Jeremiah, 'Until this land has enjoyed its sabbath rest, until seventy years have gone by, it will keep sabbath throughout the days of its desolation.'

And in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, to fulfil the word of the Lord that was spoken through Jeremiah, the Lord roused the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia to issue a proclamation and to have it publicly displayed throughout his kingdom: 'Thus speaks Cyrus king of Persia, "The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth; he has ordered me to build him a Temple in Jerusalem, in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God be with him! Let him go up."'

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm Ps 136. R. v.6

(R.) Let my tongue be silenced, if ever I forget you!

By the rivers of Babylon
there we sat and wept,
remembering Zion;
on the poplars that grew there
we hung our harps. **(R.)**

For it was there that they asked us,
our captors, for songs,
our oppressors, for joy.
'Sing to us,' they said,
'one of Zion's songs.' **(R.)**

O how could we sing
the song of the Lord
on alien soil?
If I forget you, Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither! **(R.)**

O let my tongue
cleave to my mouth
if I remember you not,
if I prize not Jerusalem
above all my joys! **(R.)**

Second Reading Ephesians 2:4-10

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy: when we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life with Christ – it is through grace that you have been saved – and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus.

This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how infinitely rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it.

The Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation John 3:16

**Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!
God loved the world so much, he gave us
his only Son,
that all who believe in him might have
eternal life.
Glory and praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!**

Gospel John 3:14-21

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John.

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

'The Son of Man must be lifted up
as Moses lifted up the serpent in the
desert, so that everyone who believes may
have eternal life in him.

Yes, God loved the world so much that he
gave his only Son, so that everyone who
believes in him may not be lost but may
have eternal life.

For God sent his Son into the world not to
condemn the world, but so that through
him the world might be saved.

No one who believes in him will be
condemned; but whoever refuses to
believe is condemned already, because he
has refused to believe
in the name of God's only Son.

On these grounds is sentence pronounced:
that though the light has come into the
world men have shown they prefer
darkness to the light because their deeds
were evil.

And indeed, everybody who does wrong
hates the light and avoids it, for fear his

actions should be exposed; but the man
who lives by the truth comes out into the
light, so that it may be plainly seen that
what he does is done in God.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.



**REFLECTION
BY FR MICHAEL TATE**

God's Works of Art

How does God picture us? St Paul reveals one of God's favourite ways of regarding us. 'We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus, to live the good life as from the beginning He had intended us to live it.'

Just as an artist respects the medium he or she is working in, whether it be oils or crayon, so too God respects us as human beings with free will. Which is why His works of art don't always look the way He intended!

Now, if one has a work of art in the house, a picture or print that means a lot to you, or perhaps the first sketch by a child, do you put it in the darkest corner of the room? Or do you allow just enough light to fall on it so as to reveal how terrific it is, why it gives you pleasure? Of course, the latter.

Now, if you and I are God's work of art, God wants exactly the same. He wants us to be revealed in the light. What sort of light? Christ our Light.

Of course, it might be necessary for the Light to dispel some darkness, some shadow dimension of our lives. In this regard Christ is a healing Light, but this is so that he might illuminate us in a way which more clearly reveals the love which the Divine Artist has for His creation.

We might take a moment to pray for the courage to expose ourselves to Christ's healing light this Lent to be more beautifully illuminated at Easter.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON: Rejoice, Jerusalem, and all who love her. Be joyful, all who were in mourning; exult and be satisfied at her consoling breast.
COMMUNION ANTIPHON: Jerusalem is built as a city bonded as one together. It is there that the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to praise the name of the Lord.
NEXT WEEK'S SCRIPTURES Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year B 1st Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34 2nd Reading: Hebrews 5:7-9 Gospel: John 12:20-33
MYSTERY OF FAITH Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and Resurrection you have set us free.

Prayer Requests

Sick: Mary Bailey, Lorraine Cooper, Phuong Ho, Ron Hebbe, Austin Hoffman, Noel House, Warren Markham, Bob MacDonnell, Indira Nanda, Jen Phillips, Olga Roberts, Selene Maree Stanholm-Atkins and Sharon Wood. **Bring healing, comfort, and peace to their bodies. Send strength to their carers.**

Anniversaries: Paul Dunn, Barry Goodwin, Connie Ryan, Jane Stocks, Harold Thrift, Ben Wyer. **Having returned to the Father, may they rest in peace.**

Marriage: Sebastian Meredith and Alexandra Chovanikova (Wednesday 13 March 2024, 2pm). **What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.**

Due to Privacy Laws, names of the sick and deceased can only be put in the bulletin with the permission of the immediate family.

PARISH CONTACTS

Parish Priest	Rev Thomas Chirackal	Presbytery: 6578 9651	Email: Thomas.chirackal@mn.catholic.org.au
Parish Secretary	Mrs Erica Janssen	Parish Office: 02 5507 4048 (Tues-Fri, 9am-3pm) Unit 5, 16 Cambridge St, Singleton	Email: singleton.branxton@mn.catholic.org.au Web: www.singletoncatholicparish.org.au
Facebook	Catholic Parishes of Singleton and Branxton	Promoters of Safeguarding Contact via the Parish Office	Singleton Parish: Niamh Marzol Branxton Parish: Lydia Gorczyca
St Patrick's Parish PLEASE PHONE THE PARISH OFFICE FOR BOOKINGS OF PARISH CHURCHES (5507 4048)			
Singleton	<i>St Patrick's Church</i>	Queen Street Singleton 2330	
Broke	<i>Immaculate Conception Catholic Church</i>	Wollombi Street, Broke	
Glendon Brook	<i>St. Paul's Catholic Church</i>	874 Glendonbrook Road, Glendon Brook	
St Brigid's Parish PLEASE PHONE THE PARISH OFFICE FOR BOOKINGS OF PARISH CHURCHES (5507 4048)			
Branxton	St Brigid's Catholic Church	Station St, Branxton 2335	
Greta	St Catherine's Catholic Church	Branxton Street, Greta 2334	

Schools in our Parishes

St. Catherine's Catholic College	Acting Principal: Ms Lauren Carlson	K-12 Office: 02 6578 9600	Email: admin@singleton.catholic.edu.au
Rosary Park Catholic School	Principal: Miss Sallyanne Stanbridge	K-6 Office: 02 4938 1541	Email: admin@branxton.mn.catholic.edu.au
St Nicholas Early Education Singleton	Director: Ms Madison Keevill	Office: 02 4015 2860	Email: singleton@stnicholasmn.org.au
St Nicholas Early Education Branxton	Director: Ms Alex Stafford	Office: 02 4931 1220	Email: branxton@stnicholasmn.org.au

MASS ROSTER – SUNDAY 17 MARCH 2024

	Branxton Saturday 6pm	Greta Sunday 8am	Singleton Sunday 7am	Singleton Sunday 10am	Singleton Sunday 6pm	Counters 9.30am Tuesday
Welcomer	E Bendeich	D & J Clarke	VOLUNTEER NEEDED	J Dries	J Dries	J Brackenrig
Commentator		L Gorczyca				
Readers	M Thomas C Harvey	A Humphreys	C Spiteri D Thompson	T Cochrane VOLUNTEER NEEDED	St Catherine's College	
Prayers		L Gorczyca	P Boyd	VOLUNTEER NEEDED	St Catherine's	
Offertory	J Stafa S Stafa	J Nightingale N Ernst	VOLUNTEER NEEDED	VOLUNTEER NEEDED	VOLUNTEER NEEDED	
Rosary Leader		D Clarke				

Faithful and compassionate God, your Spirit guides the Church and makes it holy; hear the prayers we offer, that in the ministry to which you have called us, may we serve you faithfully, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

WEEKLY MASS DIARY

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
11 March	12 March	13 March	14 March	15 March	16 March	17 March FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT, YEAR B
OFFICE CLOSED	OFFICE OPEN	OFFICE OPEN	OFFICE OPEN	OFFICE OPEN		
<u>8.00am</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton	<u>6.00pm</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton	<u>9.20am</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton	<u>6.00pm</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton	<u>9.20am</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton <u>11.00am</u> Mass Mercy Home	<u>9.00am</u> Novena <u>9.20am</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton	ST PATRICK'S DAY <u>7.00am</u> Mass <u>10.00m</u> Mass <u>6.00pm</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton
	<u>9.20am</u> Mass St Catherine's Greta	<u>5.30pm</u> RECONCILIATION St Brigid's Branxton	<u>9.20am</u> Mass St Brigid's Branxton		<u>6.00pm</u> Mass St Brigid's Branxton	<u>7.35am</u> Rosary <u>8.15am</u> Mass St Catherine's Greta

St Brigid, St Catherine, St Patrick, and St Paul – pray for us

Weekly Notices

WELCOME TO OUR PARISH

We welcome visitors from all faith communities to our Parish Mass. If you are new members of our Parish, we ask that you take a Welcome Pack from the back of the church, complete and return the Member forms and one of our welcoming team will contact you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians, the Wonnarua people, 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.

SAFEGUARDING OUR CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has an abiding commitment to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults. Information brochures are available in the entrance to the church. If you have any concerns for a child or vulnerable adult, contact the Office of Safeguarding 02 49791390 or childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au or visit www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au for more information and resources.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Branxton Parishioners are invited to join the children of the sacramental program to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation during a liturgy this Wednesday 13 March at 5.30pm in St Brigid's Church, Branxton.

Singleton Parishioners are invited to join the liturgy at St Patrick's Church, Singleton on Friday 22 March at 6.00pm to receive the sacrament of Reconciliation.

Confession is the sacrament of the tenderness of God, his way of embracing us. Pope Francis

Lenten Reflection – Transformation through Revelation

A reflection group will be gathering on Wednesdays after Mass in Singleton. The Lenten Reflection books 'Transformation through Revelation' found at the back of the church will be used. If you need a copy, please contact the Parish Office.

Way of the Cross

You are invited to stay after Mass to pray the Stations of the Cross in Greta Tuesday mornings, Branxton Thursday mornings, and Singleton on Friday mornings.

Senior Singles Group Lunch

The Senior Singles will meet for their monthly lunch on Tuesday 12 March at 12pm in the Albion Hotel restaurant. New members always welcome to come along.

St Patrick's Women's Guild Meeting

St Patrick's Women's Guild meeting will be held on Wednesday 13 March at the home of Elaine Thomas, 21 Henry Drive, Singleton Heights commencing at 1.30pm. New members' welcome.

St Brigid's Caritas Monthly Luncheon

Everyone is invited to join the St Brigid's Caritas group for their monthly luncheon at Miller Park Hotel on Friday 15 March. Lunch will be from 12pm and if you would like to attend, please confirm with Mercia.

Review of Confirmation Guidance and Procedures

All parishioners, parents and sponsors, ministers and anyone else involved in the preparation and celebration of Confirmation over recent years, is invited to participate in our review process. Please read the article by clicking this link where everything is explained and the Review Document is available <https://mnnews.today/liturgy-matters/2024/57885-liturgy-matters-it-s-time-christian-initiation-and-confirmation-review/> Closing date for the review is 17 March 2024.

Way of the Cross

Our Diocese is blessed with rich diversity. This year's Ecumenical Way of the Cross, held on the 5th Sunday of Lent, invites us into a multicultural journey of remembrance. As we relive the story of Jesus' Passion, we recall the stories that have brought us together. This event is a celebrated gathering of our wider community and one not to be missed and will be held on Sunday 17 March, 3pm (you are invited to gather from 2pm) at St Joseph's Toronto Church, 140 Wangi Road, Toronto.

Legion of Mary - Acies

The Legion of Mary invite you to join them for Acies on Sunday 24 March 2024 at 2pm in St Joseph's Church, East Maitland. The service will be followed by afternoon tea in the Therry Centre. Acies is the renewal of the Legion's act of consecration. Acies is Latin for "a standing army," and the Legion professes their allegiance to Mary and Jesus.

Chrism Mass

Each year during Holy Week all the faithful of the Church of Maitland-Newcastle are invited to gather with Bishop Michael Kennedy for the Chrism Mass. Here we bless and consecrate the Sacred Oils that will be used for ministry during the year. Join the Diocesan community on Tuesday 26 March from 7pm at Sacred Heart Cathedral. All are welcome, read more about it: <https://mnnews.today/liturgy-matters/2024/57932-liturgy-matters-come-on-down-to-the-chrism-mass/>

Project Compassion – Fourth Sunday of Lent

As the eldest child in a low-income farming family in rural Malawi, Memory faced many barriers to her education. But, with the support of Caritas Australia, she enrolled in a technical school and became the first female carpenter in her village. Please donate to Project Compassion.

Together, we can help vulnerable communities face their challenges today and build a better tomorrow for all future generations.

You can donate through Project Compassion donation boxes and envelopes available from your parish, by visiting caritas.org.au/project-compassion or by calling 1800 024 413.



DO YOU WANT TO FAST THIS LENT?

In the words of Pope Francis...

- Fast from hurting words **and say kind words.**
- Fast from sadness **and be filled with gratitude.**
- Fast from anger **and be filled with patience.**
- Fast from pessimism **and be filled with hope.**
- Fast from worries **and have trust in God.**
- Fast from complaints; **contemplate simplicity.**
- Fast from pressures **and be prayerful.**
- Fast from bitterness; **fill you hearts with joy.**
- Fast from selfishness **and be compassionate.**
- Fast from grudges **and be reconciled.**
- Fast from words; **be silent and listen.**

Lent 2024:

Through the Desert God Leads us to Freedom



Dear brothers and sisters!

Let us welcome Lent as the great season in which he reminds us: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Ex 20:2). Lent is a season of conversion, a time of freedom. Jesus himself, as we recall each year on the first Sunday of Lent, was driven into the desert by the Spirit in order to be tempted in freedom. For forty days, he will stand before us and with us: the incarnate Son. Unlike Pharaoh, God does not want subjects, but sons and daughters. The desert is the place where our freedom can mature in a personal decision not to fall back into slavery. In Lent, we find new criteria of justice and a community with which we can press forward on a road not yet taken.

This, however, entails a struggle, as the book of Exodus and the temptations of Jesus in the desert make clear to us. The voice of God, who says, "You are my Son, the Beloved" (Mk 1:11), and "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20:3) is opposed by the enemy and his lies. Even more to be feared than Pharaoh are the idols that we set up for ourselves; we can consider them as his voice speaking within us. To be all-powerful, to be looked up to by all, to domineer over others: every human being is aware of how deeply seductive that lie can be. It is a road well-

travelled. We can become attached to money, to certain projects, ideas or goals, to our position, to a tradition, even to certain individuals. Instead of making us move forward, they paralyze us.

Instead of encounter, they create conflict. Yet there is also a new humanity, a people of the little ones and of the humble who have not yielded to the allure of the lie. Whereas those who serve idols become like them, mute, blind, deaf and immobile (cf. Ps 114:4), the poor of spirit are open and ready: a silent force of good that heals and sustains the world.

It is time to act, and in Lent, to act also means to pause. To pause in prayer, in order to receive the word of God, to pause like the Samaritan in the presence of a wounded brother or sister. Love of God and love of neighbour are one love. Not to have other gods is to pause in the presence of God beside the flesh of our neighbour. For this reason, prayer, almsgiving and fasting are not three unrelated acts, but a single movement of openness and self-emptying, in which we cast out the idols that weigh us down, the attachments that imprison us. Then the atrophied and isolated heart will revive. Slow down, then, and pause! The contemplative dimension of life that Lent helps us to rediscover will release new energies. In the presence of God, we become brothers and sisters, more sensitive to one another: in place of threats and enemies, we discover companions and fellow travellers. This is God's dream, the promised land to which we journey once we have left our slavery behind.

To the extent that this Lent becomes a time of conversion, an anxious humanity will notice a burst of creativity, a flash of new hope. Allow me to repeat what I told the young people whom I met in Lisbon last summer: "Keep seeking and be ready to take risks. At this moment in time, we face enormous risks; we hear the painful plea of so many people. Indeed, we are experiencing a third world war fought piecemeal. Yet let us find the courage to see our world, not as being in its death throes but in a process of giving birth, not at the end but at the beginning of a great new chapter of history. We need courage to think like this". Such is the courage of conversion, born of coming up from slavery. For faith and charity take hope, this small child, by the hand. They teach her to walk, and at the same time, she leads them forward.

I bless all of you and your Lenten journey.

Rome, Saint John Lateran, 3 December 2023, First Sunday of Advent.

FRANCIS

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER TRIDUUM 2024

Mass of the Lord's Supper	Friday of the Passion of the Lord	Holy Saturday Easter Vigil	Easter Sunday
28 March	29 March	30 March	31 March
Singleton 6.30pm Branxton 6.30pm	Stations of the Cross Branxton 10.00am Singleton 11.00am Passion of the Lord Singleton 3.00pm Greta 3.00pm	Singleton 7.45pm Branxton 7.45pm	Greta 8.00am Singleton 10.00am