



# St Michael's Parish, Nowra

Incorporating the Catholic Communities of St Michael's, Nowra – St. Patrick's, Berry – Sacred Heart, Bomaderry - Help of Christians, Culburra – St Joseph's, Kangaroo Valley – Holy Spirit, Vincentia.

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**Bookings for Weekend Masses, please see notice inside bulletin**

**Fourth Sunday in Ordinary time B**

**31<sup>st</sup> January 2021**

## **GOD CANNOT TELL A LIE**

**FR RON ROLHEISER OMI**

Lying is the most pernicious of evils, the most dangerous of sins, the worst of blasphemes, and the one sin that can be unforgivable. Perhaps we need to be reminded of that today, given our present culture where we are in danger of losing the very idea of reality and truth. Nothing is more dangerous. There's a line buried deep in scripture that is too seldom quoted. The *Letter to the Hebrews* states simply: *It is impossible for God to lie.* (Hebrews 6, 18) It could not be otherwise. God is Truth, so how could God lie? For God to lie would be a denial of God's very nature. Consequently, for us to lie is to go directly against God. Lying is the definition of irreverence and blasphemy. It is an affront to the nature of God.

If we are aware of that, we haven't taken it seriously lately. Everywhere, from countless social media tweets, texts, and blogs to the highest offices of government, business, and even the church, we are seeing an ever-deteriorating relationship with reality and truth. Lying and creating one's own truth have become socially acceptable (to a frightening degree). What's changed? Haven't we always lied? Who among us can say that he or she has never told a lie or falsified information in one way or another? What's different today?

What's different today is that, until our generation, you could be caught in a lie, shamed for telling it, forced to accept your own dishonesty. No longer. Today our relationship with truth is fracturing to a degree that we no longer distinguish, morally or practically, between a lie and the truth. A lie, now, is simply another modality of truth.

What's the net effect of this? We are living it. Its effects are everywhere. First, it has broken down a shared sense of reality where, as a community, we no longer have a common epistemology and a shared sense of right and wrong. People no longer relate to reality in the same way. One person's truth is the other person's lie. It is becoming impossible to define what constitutes a lie.

This doesn't just destroy trust among us; worse, it plays with our sanity and with some of the deeper moral and religious chromosomes inside us. As I wrote in this column several months ago, we believe that there are four transcendental properties to God. We teach that God is *One, True, Good, and Beautiful*. Because God is *One*, whole and consistent, there can never be any internal contradictions within God. This might sound abstract and academic, *but this is what anchors our sanity*. We are sane and remain sane only because we can always trust that two plus two equals four, ever and always. God's *Oneness* is what anchors that. If that should ever change, then the peg that moors our sanity would be removed. Once two plus two can equal something other than four, then nothing can be securely known or trusted ever again. That's the ultimate danger in what's happening today. We are unmooring our psyche.

The next danger in lying is what it does to those of us who lie. Fyodor Dostoevsky *sums it up succinctly*: "People who lie to themselves and listen to their own lie come to such a pass that they cannot distinguish the truth within them, or around them, and so lose all respect for themselves and for others. And having no respect, they cease to love." Jordan Peterson would add this: If we lie long enough "after that comes the arrogance and sense of superiority that inevitably accompanies the production of successful lies (hypothetically successful lies – and that is one of the greatest dangers: apparently everyone is fooled, so everyone is stupid, except me. Everyone is stupid, and fooled, by me – so I can get away with whatever I want). Finally, there is the proposition: '*Being itself is susceptible to my manipulation*'. Thus, it deserves no respect."

Jesus' warning in John's Gospel is the strongest of all. He tells us that if we lie long enough we will eventually believe our own lies and confuse falsehood for the truth and truth for falsehood, and that becomes an unforgivable sin (a "blaspheme against the Holy Spirit) because the person who's lying no longer wants to be forgiven.

Finally, lying breaks down trust among us. Trust is predicated on the belief that we all accept that two plus two equals four, that we all accept there is such a thing as reality, that we all accept that reality

can be falsified by a lie, and that we all accept that a lie is falsehood and not just another modality of truth. Lying destroys that trust.

Living in a world that plays fast and easy with reality and truth also plays on our loneliness. George Eliot once asked: "What loneliness is more lonely than distrust?" So true. *The loneliest loneliness of all is the loneliness of distrust.* Welcome to our not-so-brave new world.

## Comfort—Lenten Program 2021 on sale now!



In order to assist us on our Lenten journey and to provide an opportunity for fellowship, the diocese publishes a Lenten Program book each year that includes daily reflections from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday for personal reflection in addition to longer-form Sunday Scripture reflections, readings, responsorial psalms, prayers and reflection questions that are traditionally part of group Lenten programs. The book also includes beautiful artwork from the Masters with accompanying artwork reflections.

The Lenten Program book is accompanied by a Triple CD resource that includes responsorial psalms songs recorded especially for the program as well as audio narrations of the Sunday Scripture readings and reflections.

The diocese's Lenten Program continue to grow in popularity each year with 20,000 copies sold throughout Australia and increasingly around the world. The books and CD's are also given for free to thousands of inmates in prisons throughout Australia as an outreach program.

More information and samples can be found on the Wollongong Diocese Web page or contact the Parish office.



### **The LMC Soup Kitchen** - resumes on Friday 5th February.

If you are lonely, isolated, sick, elderly, homeless or vulnerable in any way you are very welcomed and encouraged to join the cheerful group for a lovely three course meal in a friendly welcoming environment.

Doors open at 10.30am every Friday for a cuppa and chat before lunch is served

around midday.

**Extra volunteers required** – Just a couple of hours, once a month on Fridays

We have two shifts - 9am or 11am and can guarantee a fun, easy-going, rewarding environment to work in. Please call Shannon 0414521404 for more information or to sign up. Thanks and God bless!

## *Welcome Back to our schools*



St Michael's Primary and St John the Evangelist Secondary have started year in earnest. With staff meetings and formation days to plan for the coming year out of the way, both schools celebrated the beginning of the year with a gathering for prayer and attending Mass.

St Michael's teachers and staff attend the 8:00am parish mass on Wednesday and St John's teachers and staff celebrated Mass in the afternoon with a commissioning of the new teachers and staff.

We will keep these ministries in our prayers throughout the coming year. And pray that the Lord will guide the Teachers and Staff as well as guard and protect all the children and their parents in these uncertain times.

**ROSARY:** You can join in praying the Rosary with one of several groups in the Parish:

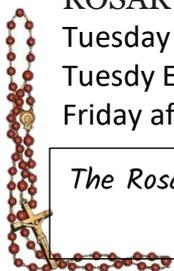
Tuesday Morning after 8:00am Mass

Tuesday Evening after the Mass at Berry at 5:30pm

Friday afternoon before the Mass at Bomaderry at 5:30pm

*The Rosary is a prayer both so humble and simple, and theologically rich in Biblical Content.*

*St John Paul II*



## **Registering for weekend Masses:**

For Nowra, Culburra, Berry and Bomaderry - call **0477 427 396** (Mon to Fri between 10am & 3pm)

For Mass at Kangaroo Valley, please email [ronankangaroo1@gmail.com](mailto:ronankangaroo1@gmail.com)

For Mass at Vincentia - call **0435 862 156** or email [holyspiritvincentia@gmail.com](mailto:holyspiritvincentia@gmail.com)

### **Seeking Accommodation.**

A practising Catholic man in his early 50s who comes with references.

He has recently moved into the parish and is soon to start a new job.

He is currently living in the Vincentia area but would be happy to find a place somewhere within the parish, including Nowra and Bomaderry and surrounding area.

If you can help, please contact:

**Rory Bowler: 0409 040 639**

### **BECOME A CATECHIST**

*Can you give 1-hour of your time each week during the school year? We provide training, guidance and materials to get you started. Catechists are ordinary people doing extraordinary things.*

## **Get Involved**

There are many ways to get involved in the work of Catholic SRE in the Diocese of Wollongong:



You may have noticed in some churches this device.

It's a Donation Point Tap device and will enable us to quickly accept cashless donations. The device is aimed at enabling people to donate to our parish by using a debit or credit card.

This will enable parishioners and visitors to donate to the parish easily without cash – as many people nowadays don't always carry cash.

The Donation Point Tap device processes a set donation of \$10.00 and donors simply tap their Visa card or MasterCard to make a donation. It is fully secure and the screen will show if the card donation has been successful.

Your card must be held on the device to make a donation – it cannot read card details from your wallet or bag as you walk past and the device makes a loud beep sound when you hold your card on it.

The Diocese is providing a Donation Point Tap to every parish in the diocese

## *Mass Times*

### *Saturday Vigils*

Nowra	5:00pm
Culburra	5:00pm
Vincentia	6:00pm

### *Sunday Mass Times*

Nowra	8:00 am	9:30am	5:00 pm
Berry	8:00 am		
Bomaderry	9:30 am		
Vincentia	9:30am		
Kangaroo Valley	11:00 am		

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Nowra	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am	8:00 am
Berry		5:30 pm	5:30 pm		11:30 am
Culburra				5:30 pm	
Bomaderry					5:30 pm
Vincentia	8:00 am	5:30 pm	5:30 pm	8:00am	8:00 am
Kangaroo Valley		9:00 am	9:00 am	9:00 am	

### **Reconciliation / Confession times:**

**Nowra:** Saturday: 9.30 – 10.30am; **Berry:** Tuesday following 5.30pm Mass;

**Culburra:** Saturday before 5.00pm Vigil Mass; **Bomaderry:** Friday following 5.30pm Mass;

**Vincentia:** Saturday 4pm



We prayerfully remember the recently deceased **Ellen Rae, Susan Proust, Jim McAndrew**; and those whose anniversaries occur at this time: **Roland Tudor, Bob Aulsebrook** We pray also for all who have died from Covid-19 in Australia and worldwide.

### **Entrance Antiphon**

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.

### **A reading from the book of Deuteronomy [Dt 18:15-20](#)**

Moses said to the people: 'Your God will raise up for you a prophet like myself, from among yourselves, from your own brothers; to him you must listen. This is what you yourselves asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the Assembly. "Do not let me hear again" you said "the voice of the Lord my God, nor look any longer on this great fire, or I shall die"; and the Lord said to me, "All they have spoken is well said. I will raise up a prophet like yourself for them from their own brothers; I will put my words into his mouth and he shall tell them all I command him. The man who does not listen to my words that he speaks in my name, shall be held answerable to me for it. But the prophet who presumes to say in my name a thing I have not commanded him to say, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.'"

### **Responsorial Psalm [Ps 94:1-2. 6-9. R. v.9](#)**

(R.) If today, you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

1. Come, ring out our joy to the Lord;  
hail the rock who saves us.

Let us come before him, giving thanks,  
with songs let us hail the Lord. (R.)

2. Come in, let us kneel and bend low;  
let us kneel before the God who made us  
for he is our God and we

the people who belong to his pasture,  
the flock that is led by his hand. (R.)

3. O that today you would listen to his voice!

'Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,  
as on that day at Massah in the desert  
when your fathers put me to the test;  
when they tried me, though they saw my work.' (R.)

### **A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians [1 Cor 7:32-35](#)**

The unmarried woman dedicates herself to the things of the Lord, that she might be holy.

I would like to see you free from all worry. An unmarried man can devote himself to the Lord's affairs, all he need worry about is pleasing the Lord; but a married man has to bother about the world's affairs and devote himself to pleasing his wife: he is torn two ways. In the same way an unmarried woman, like a young girl, can devote herself to the Lord's affairs; all she need worry about is being holy in body and spirit. The married woman, on the other hand, has to worry about the world's affairs and devote herself to pleasing her husband. I say this only to help you, not to put a halter round your necks, but simply to make sure that everything is as it should be, and that you give your undivided attention to the Lord.

### **Gospel Acclamation**

Alleluia, alleluia! A people in darkness have seen a great light: a radiant dawn shines on those lost in death.  
Alleluia!

### **A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark [Mk 1:21-28](#)**

This is a new kind of teaching that speaks with authority.

Jesus and his followers went as far as Capernaum, and as soon as the Sabbath came Jesus went to the synagogue and began to teach. And his teaching made a deep impression on them because, unlike the scribes, he taught them with authority.

In their synagogue just then there was a man possessed by an unclean spirit, and it shouted, 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are: the Holy One of God.' But Jesus said sharply, 'Be quiet! Come out of him!' And the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions and with a loud cry went out of him. The people were so astonished that they started asking each other what it all meant. 'Here is a teaching that is new' they said 'and with authority behind it: he gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him.' And his reputation rapidly spread everywhere, through all the surrounding Galilean countryside.

### **Communion Antiphon**

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.