

St Therese of Lisieux Catholic Parish



Moonah-Lutana

St Therese of Lisieux Church

In the care of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart (MSC)

Sunday, 12th January, 2020

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD - YEAR A

*ST THERESE OF LISIEUX CATHOLIC PARISH MOONAH LUTANA
IS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING A SAFE AND NURTURING CULTURE
FOR ALL PEOPLE IN OUR PARISH.*

STRUGGLING FOR OUR FATHER'S BLESSING

When I was in elementary school, we were made to memorise a number of poems by William Blake. We didn't understand them, but they had a wonderful jingle to them, were easy to commit to memory, and remain branded inside me to this day.

One of those was a piece entitled, Infant Sorrow:

My mother groaned! My father wept.
Into this dangerous world I leapt:
Helpless, naked, piping loud:
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

Struggling in my father's hands,
Striving against my swaddling bands,
Bound and weary I thought best
To sulk upon my mother's breast.

Whole books on anthropology, psychology, and spirituality could be written on this poem: our struggle for our father's blessing, our ambivalence in separating from our mothers, the constriction this creates in our hearts, our inevitable slide into depression as adults, and the impact this has on our spiritual lives. Blake captures a lot in very few words, hidden inside some simple rhymes; but, as already confessed; I didn't have a clue about any of this when I memorised this poem as a child.

The poem came back to me several years ago, after preaching a homily in a church. The Gospel for that Sunday was the story of Jesus' baptism. The text runs like this: Jesus goes to the Jordan River to be baptised by John. John immerses him in the water, as Jesus re-emerges, his head breaks the water (an image of birth), the heavens open, and the Father's voice is heard to say: "This is my beloved, in whom I am well-pleased!"

The point I made in my homily was pretty straightforward: I simply told the congregation that, when we were baptised, the Father spoke the same words over each of us: "This is my beloved, in whom I am well-pleased!" Those should have been safe words; they weren't. Immediately after the service a young man affronted me, agitated and upset about my homily. He shared that he was out of prison on bail, awaiting sentencing. He had come to Mass that Sunday to try to ready himself to face what awaited him, but the service had the opposite effect. It had increased his anger and agitation, particularly so my homily. Here's how he expressed his frustration: "I hated your homily because it wasn't true! Nobody has ever been pleased by what I have done – least of all my own father!"

It's no accident that this young man was going to prison; he had not been blessed by his own father. Like the narrator in the Blake poem, he was "struggling" in his father's hands. His own father, unlike God, the Father, had never blessed him, that is, either his father had never been present enough to him and truly interested in him or he had been unable to take delight in his son's person and energy so as to give him the assurance that he was neither a threat nor a disappointment to his father. In essence, this son had never been a major source of joy to his father, and that is a real absence that wounds.

Hunger for our father's blessing is perhaps the deepest hunger in our world today. That's an adage inside certain spirituality and anthropological circles today and the evidence for its truth is found in the body language in a room whenever the phrase is spoken aloud to a group, especially to a group of men.

And what happens when we aren't sufficiently blessed by our own fathers? Mostly the effects are under the surface and not attributed to our fathers, unless we reach a certain level of conscious realisation of how we are wounded. The absence of the father's blessing is mostly felt inchoately, a thirst, a constriction of the heart, an absence of delight, and a sense of never quite measuring-up. This often finds expression in anger, distrust of authority, and in a low-grade depression that often drives persons into various combinations of acedia, obsession for achievement, and sex as a panacea. It can also have a very negative impact on people religiously. There's an axiom in Freudian thought that suggests that most anger directed at institutionalised religion is anger directed at your own father or the father-figures in your life. That helps explain why so many people who have had little or no meaningful relationship to organised religion are angry at religion and the churches.

What's the solution? How do we get this constriction off our hearts, if we haven't been sufficiently blessed by our own fathers?

Christian spirituality teaches us that we receive by giving. We attain things by giving them away, as the famous Prayer of St. Francis puts it. We cannot make ourselves happy, but we can help make others happy. Thus, we cannot force anyone to bless us – but we can bless others. Wholeness and happiness lie there. Simply put, when we act like God, we get to feel like God ... and God never suffers from anger and low-grade depression.

Fr Ron Rolheiser OMI ©

In the Heart of Jesus, Fr Mark Hanns MSC

ADIOS!

I arrived almost four years ago, expecting to be here for six years, or even nine or twelve. Aah, but life is a meandering journey, and other factors come in to play, leaping up to surprise us. Such is my life now, having turned to a new direction. That new direction will have its own surprises and unexpected blessings too,... I hope.

It has been a blessing to be here among you, the good people of St Therese's. It's been a blessing to live in beautiful Hobart in scenic Tasmania. Now that I'm leaving, I'm aware of so much that I have not seen or done, as often happens when one lives in a place. So, I'll just have to return as a tourist and explore all those as-yet-unexplored places. When that day arrives, it will be great to say "G'day" to you again. Until then, may God hold you in the palm of His hand. Thanks for everything. Goodbye and God Bless.

Mark MSC

NOTICES

PARISH MEMORIAL BOOK

Our Parish Memorial Book is being updated. If you wish for your loved ones or family members to be included please give these to Deacon Michael, before the 20th January.

VOLUNTEER ROSTERS JANUARY MASSES

Volunteers for all Masses are needed for the Masses throughout January. Sheets are available in Church foyer, if you could add your name to assist it would be appreciated.

FAREWELL FOR FR MARK AND WELCOME FR KRISH

A farewell for Fr Mark and welcome to Fr Krish morning tea will be held after the 9:00am Mass on Sunday, 26th January 2020. If attending please bring a plate of food to share

PLENARY COUNCIL DELEGATES

The Archdiocese of Hobart has been asked to send two delegates to the Plenary Council General Assembly in October 2020 and June 2021. Delegates can be both from Clergy and Laity. If you wish to be considered as a delegate, please contact the Archbishop's office by email: archbishop.assistant@aohtas.org.au by no later 25 January 2020.

PARISH NAME TAGS

With the impending arrival of Fr Krish, we are looking to use some name tags, to assist Fr Krish, to get to know us and our names. A sheet is located in the foyer and if you could print your name, the name tag will be produced.

WEEKLY COLLECTION

Envelopes:	\$ 1,393.50
Loose:	\$ 823.65
TOTAL:	\$ 2,217.15

Week's Pledged Collections:
\$ 2,538.00

Difference - \$ 320.85

Thank You!

LET US PRAY FOR

The Sick

Thanh Huynh, Shirley Lehner, Olga Woods, Susan Wilson, Lise Levaque, Mary Hughes, Drina Paradzik, Jay Jennings, Tony Dalton, Elsa Bazan, Bev Murray, Kayden Edwards, Lorna Brazendale, Leo Manning, Jan Grubb, Alicia Stroud, Aileen Jones, Paddi McDonald, Peter van Loggerenberg, Joe Higgins, Gracie Manson.

Anniversaries

Nancy Mackey, Aleksander Cisak, Pauline Sikora, Violet Monaghan, Mary Hinds, Jadwiga Wyrwa, Fr John Northey MSC, Gladys Haney, Alicja Krawczyk, James Francis Coad, Janet Jones, Janina Sadkowski, Ante Franov, Claude James Coad, Kathleen Mary Wood, Carol Trojan, Stanko Franov, Joshua Flack, Otto Fritz, Jadwiga Dmuchowski, Marianna Gladysz, Jadran Kolega, Paul Taylor, Elizabeth Ann Rakowski, Teresita Gabriel Despacio, Fr Vincent Dwyer MSC, Fr Patrick Moloney MSC, Hedley Hodgetts, Richard Daniel Coad, Camden Cashion, Wilhelm Waiser, Charles Burnett, David Curtin, Josef Kremzer, Emilia Cisak, John Dwyer, Sydney Grubb, Amy Kennedy, Mary Brown.

Recently Deceased

STEWARDSHIP

And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17)

Two thoughts come to mind when reading this. First, God, Our Father, is so generous, that he gave his only son, whom he really loves, to us so that we can have eternal life with him in heaven. God, Our Creator, really loves us, too! Second, Jesus was obedient to his Father's will, even to the point of death. This is a reminder that our own lives are pure gifts from God and meant to serve God and others.

