

Risen



Christ

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

24 & 25 January 2026 - Year A

The Catholic Communities of Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham & St Francis Xavier, Montmorency



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation who are the traditional custodians of this land and pay our respect to the elders past, present and emerging.

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-23

Hearing that John had been arrested Jesus went back to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled:

Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali!
Way of the sea on the far side of Jordan,
Galilee of the nations!
The people that lived in darkness has seen a
great light;
on those who dwell in the land and shadow
of death a light has dawned.

From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand'.

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee he saw two brother, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were making a cast in the lake with their net, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' And they left their nets at once and followed him.

Going on from there he saw another pair of brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they were in their boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. At once, leaving the boat and their father, they followed him.

He went round the whole of Galilee teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness among the people.

Reflection - Break Open the Word 2026:

Matthew is always keen to show that Jesus is the fulfillment of ancient prophecies and hopes. Hence this long quotation from Isaiah to mark the beginning of his account of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus proclaims that God's glorious kingdom is at hand, an idea that recurs in the summary of Jesus' mission at the end of the reading.

It would be a great pity not to use the longer version of today's gospel which includes the call of his first four disciples. The two pairs of brothers were humble fisherman, working hard. Yet they are instantly ready to heed the call, follow Christ and share his ministry. This is an important witness for all of us today who count ourselves disciples of Christ.



Catholic and Orthodox Disunity The Open Wound can be Healed

As he celebrated the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea at the very spot where it happened, it must have occurred to Pope Leo that there was urgent work to be done to heal the ancient divisions between Christians of the Eastern and Western traditions. The formulation of the Nicene Creed, as amended by the Council of Constantinople into the form familiar today, was an act of unity. What happened subsequently was the opposite, leading to hatred and division. It is an open wound in the Body of Christ, still hurting after more than 1,000 years. And the Pope must also have wondered whether there really were fundamental doctrinal differences between himself and the Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, standing beside him as they commemorated Nicaea together.

The shorthand version of the conflict between the two sides is contained in the word *filioque*, "and the Son". It refers to the Holy Spirit, "the Lord, the giver of life", confirmed by the Council of Nicaea as part of the Trinitarian godhead. But *filioque* was added long after Nicaea by a unilateral act of the Western Church, regardless of Eastern objections. Leo is an Augustinian, the order of friars named after St Augustine of Hippo, who played a prominent part in establishing the *filioque* as faithful and true Catholic doctrine despite Orthodox criticism. This gives him special authority and responsibility in this matter. In essence the disagreement is about how God works in the hearts of believers to bring them closer to himself and each other. That he does is common ground. How he does so is not - or not yet.

The Orthodox tradition calls the process *theosis*, divinisation, and is explicable only if the Holy Spirit proceeds directly from God the Father, and not also "from the Son". *Filioque*, the Orthodox tradition says, undermines this. But closer examination of Augustine's thinking reveals that he held views very close to *theosis*, alongside his defence of *filioque*. In his mind they were reconcilable. And a possible formula that has emerged since Augustine would be to amend the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed to insert the words "through the Son" instead of "and the Son". That would, it is suggested, restore the three persons of the Blessed Trinity to equal status, while, in Orthodox eyes, *filioque* could imply something else. All language trying to describe God's inner being is bound to be inadequate. *Filioque* is inadequate; *theosis* is inadequate. And what the discussion needs is a humble recognition that a certain degree of theological pluralism is not only allowable but necessary.

Official talks between Orthodox and Catholic representatives have thrashed around in this turbulent sea for decades if not centuries, each side trying to prove the other wrong. Better would be the spirit of "receptive ecumenism", where each side beings by assuming the other has a truth to share. *Odium theologicum* does nobody any good. A healthy dose of *theosis* could be a benefit for the Catholic faithful. That could come about from revisiting the teachings of Augustine with an open mind: Leo could be the one to initiate it.

*This parish has a commitment to ensuring the safety of children and vulnerable people in our community.
We support the recommendations of the Royal Commission into institutional abuse and pray for all the survivors.*



Salt on the Tongue

The flag on the Hills Hoist snapped once in the morning wind, then settled, as if deciding it had all day. Nan said Australia Day was like that — loud at first, then thoughtful if you let it be. She set the sausages in a neat row on the tray and handed me the tongs like they were a baton.

"Your turn, Matty," she said. "You're on sizzle duty."

The backyard smelt of eucalyptus and hot metal. Down the street, someone tested fireworks early; the sound bounced off fibro walls and made the magpies pause mid-argument. Our house had been in the family since before the war, Nan said — before the fig tree leaned like an old man, before the fence learned the shape of kids kicking footies against it.

I turned the sausages. One split, fat hissing into flame.

"Careful," Nan said. "They'll betray you if you rush."

That was Nan. Everything was a lesson if you listened.

People drifted in with bowls and eskies. Uncle Rob brought lamingtons dusted so thick with coconut they left tracks like snail trails. Auntie Leila arrived with her guitar, the case plastered with stickers from places she'd never stayed long enough to unpack. Mum set down a salad that looked like it had never seen a lettuce. Dad hovered near the radio, trying to coax the cricket through the static.

"Any good?" someone asked.

"Always," Dad said, even when it wasn't.

When the sun climbed higher, Nan clinked her glass with a spoon. It wasn't a speech so much as a pause. She pointed with her chin to the fig tree.

"Your great-grandfather planted that when he got home," she said. "Carried the cutting from a neighbour's place. Said he wanted something that would outlast his temper."

We laughed because Nan's laugh invited it. Then she went quiet.

"He didn't talk much about where he'd been," she said. "But he liked figs. Took that as a sign."

I licked my fingers. Salt and grease. The taste stuck.

After lunch, I wandered to the fence where Mrs Patel was watching us with a smile. She'd moved in last year and brought us mango pickle that could wake the dead. She caught me staring and waved.

"Happy Australia Day," she called.

"Happy Australia Day," I said back, then hesitated. "Do you — do you like it?"

She considered. "I like days that make people cook too much," she said. "And days that ask questions."

Later, when the guitar came out, Auntie Leila played a song everyone half-knew. People sang the loud bits and hummed the rest. I watched Nan tap her foot, her eyes on the fig tree. I wondered what she was seeing — leaves, or a boy with dirt on his knees, or a man deciding to put something living into the ground and hope.

As afternoon slid into gold, Dad finally got the cricket clear. A cheer rose, then a groan. The flag flapped again, restless.

"Nan," I said, "what's Australia Day to you?"

She wiped her hands on her apron. "It's remembering," she said. "And listening. It's being proud of what you can fix, and honest about what you can't. It's making room."

"Making room?"

She nodded toward the gate where Mrs Patel stood talking to Mum, their heads bent together like conspirators. Toward the fig tree's shadow, where kids chased a ball and tripped over roots that refused to be ignored.

"Room," Nan said, "for stories that don't sound like yours."

That night, we dragged chairs onto the nature strip. Fireworks stitched colour into the dark. Someone popped a cork; someone else shushed them. I lay back and felt the grass itch my neck.

A blue burst bloomed and vanished. Red followed. White fell like sparks into the river I imagined beyond the houses, carrying light downstream.

When the noise faded, Nan squeezed my hand. "You'll tell this day your way," she said. "Just don't forget the salt."

"The salt?"

"The taste that stays," she said. "It reminds you you were here."

I closed my eyes and breathed it all in — the smoke, the figs, the faraway cheer of a crowd that sounded like the sea. Tomorrow the flag would come down, the leftovers would be claimed, the fig would drop a fruit and split on the ground. But the taste would linger, and the room would still be there, waiting to be filled.

