

'THE DARK NIGHTS LEAD US INTO THE FULLNESS OF GOD'S LOVE' – 19 AUGUST 2018  
20<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time

### THREE NEW FULLY INITIATED MEMBERS

Today we celebrate three adults, who after months of preparation, will receive the Sacrament of **Baptism**, the Sacrament of **Confirmation** and receive Jesus in the **Eucharist** for the first time. A joyous occasion for them and for us.

Each of them are deeply aware of God's love moving them in their own lives. Each journey is unique, and yet all three are participating in the three Sacraments of Initiation together.

### PRAYER FOR KERALA & MANILA & QUEENSLAND

In our own parish, we are conscious of parish members who have family affected by the monsoon floods in Kerala, India and the floods in Manila and surrounds in The Philippines, and the drought in Queensland. They are in our prayer.

### BOTH LIVES MATTER

In the Archdiocese this weekend we focus on the value and dignity of human life, as it relates to Queensland and a deep moral issue we face. We witness that Both Lives Matter. We witness to the importance and dignity of both a mother and an unborn child.

There is a form available at the church table to sign. That Both Lives Matter.

Both created in God's love.  
Both Lives Matter for God.  
Both Lives Matter for us.

### GOSPEL OF JOHN

In John's Gospel this weekend, we continue for a fourth consecutive week reading Chapter 6. We have already reflected on

- The multiplication of loaves and fishes
- The seven '***I am***' statements of Jesus and how we turn each of them into prayer
- How we feel sadness when we think of those who don't accept the wonderful invitation of Jesus to receive

the fullness of God's love and life.  
And how we take that sadness into our prayer before God.

### ST JOHN OF THE CROSS ON PRAYER

This week we look to **St John of the Cross**  
for insights on our faith journey.

On Sunday 22 July our homily was titled

['Solitude and the Deep Caverns of Feeling Within'](#).

Do we remember verses 3 and 4 from the beautiful poem,  
['The Living Flame of Love'](#) by Saint John of the Cross?

It read:

*"O lamps of fire!  
in whose splendors  
The deep caverns of feeling,  
Once obscure and blind,  
Now give forth, so rarely, so exquisitely,  
Both warmth and light to their Beloved.*

*How gently and lovingly  
You wake in my heart,  
Where in secret you dwell alone;  
And in your sweet breathing,  
Filled with good and glory,  
How tenderly You swell my heart with love."*

Well before we reach the spirituality expressed in these verses,  
we have two nights to pass through.

### THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SENSES

And **THE DARK NIGHT OF THE SPIRIT**.

And we remember on this prayer journey,  
that **humility before God** is so important.

Someone who brags about a personal prayer journey  
misses the key to a humble presence before God.

### DARK NIGHT OF THE SENSES

Today we reflect on the *Dark Night of the Senses*.

That period of our lives when we move from the senses that God gave us  
to a time of letting go of our need to be reliant on our senses.

An invitation to deeper love.

Or as in the Gospel of John, chapter 6.  
the crowd follows Jesus as he heals people.  
It is good to be healed.

They are hungry.

Jesus feeds them with the multiplication of loaves and fishes.

It is good to eat when we are hungry.

But they want Jesus to conform to their image.  
Wanting to take away the freedom of Jesus,  
so that they can be satisfied.

We remember their response in verses 14-15

*'When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say,  
'This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world.'  
When Jesus realized that they were about to come  
and take him by force to make him king,  
he withdrew again to the mountain by himself.'*

They continue to seek out Jesus.

Jesus invites them into a deeper understanding of God

As he explains ***'I am the Bread of Life'***.

To do this they need to let go of the idea

of having someone at their beck and call to provide free physical food.

In life, Jesus calls us to move beyond our sensory needs to an interior life with him.

Letting go can be difficult. Putting Jesus at the centre.

We still need the basics to live by.

But our relationship with Jesus calls us to **let go of our dependencies.**

The crowd are invited into an **interior life where Jesus sustains them.**

**With Jesus as the Bread of Life.**

This letting go of defining ourselves by our sensory dependencies

is called the *Dark Night of the Senses*.

John explains this letting go with the following image.

We use Kieran Kavanaugh's and Otilio Rodriguez's translation into English

in ['The Collected Works of Saint John of the Cross' - ICS Publications Washington DC 1991.](#)

**The Dark Night Book 1, chapter 1.2.**

*'God nurtures and caresses the soul,  
after it has been resolutely converted to his service,  
like a loving mother who warms her child with the heat of her bosom,  
nurses it with good milk and tender food,  
and carries and caresses it in her arms.  
But as the child grows older,  
the mother withholds her caresses and hides her tender love;  
she rubs bitter aloes on her sweet breast  
and sets the child down from her arms,  
letting it walk on its own feet  
so that it may put aside the habits of childhood  
and grow accustomed to greater and more important things.  
The grace of God acts just as a loving mother*

*by re-engendering in the soul new enthusiasm  
and fervor in the service of God.  
... God is handling the breast of his tender love to the soul,  
just as if it were a delicate child (1 Peter 2:2-3).*

As we are weaned off sensory delights,  
as we let go and enjoy our spiritual life with Jesus,  
we grow in prayer.

#### **DARK NIGHT OF THE SPIRIT**

But there are still parts of us to let go,  
in order to be still with Jesus in love.

#### **To be refined by the Holy Spirit in love.**

For example, a person who thinks that he or she is better  
than another because of more time in prayer, is not humble.  
For example, a person who thinks that she or he is better  
than another person because of receiving more visions, is not humble.  
For example, a person who thinks that he or she is better  
than another because of the gift of speaking in tongues, is not humble.

Hence there is another Dark Night, a *Dark of the Night of the Spirit*.  
We read of a log and fire image offered by St John of the Cross.

#### **The Dark Night Book 2, chapter 10, 1.**

*“The soul is purged and prepared for union with the divine light  
just as the wood is prepared for transformation into the fire.  
Fire, when applied to wood, first dehumidifies it, dispelling all moisture  
and making it give off any water it contains.  
Then it gradually turns the wood black, makes it dark and ugly,  
and even causes it to emit a bad odour.*

*By drying out the wood,  
the fire brings to light and expels all those ugly and dark accidents  
that are contrary to fire.*

*Finally, by heating and enkindling it from without,  
the fire transforms the wood into itself  
and makes it as beautiful as it is itself.”*

Back in today's Gospel, the crowd finds it hard to let go  
and accept the invitation and teaching of Jesus to let go of the sensory.  
Later in John's Gospel, the disciples will touch upon the Dark Night of the Spirit.

#### **ALL LIVES MATTER**

All lives matter.

Both lives matter in pregnancy, the mother and the child in the womb.

The lives of the people of Kerala, and Manila  
and drought areas of Queensland matter.  
May we respond from the experience  
of touching upon the fullness of God's love and light.

We conclude with the 4<sup>th</sup> verse  
of ['The Living Flame of Love'](#) by Saint John of the Cross.

*"How gently and lovingly  
You wake in my heart,  
Where in secret you dwell alone;  
And in your sweet breathing,  
Filled with good and glory,  
How tenderly You swell my heart with love."*

May our hearts swell in love.  
We now call Akua, Nicole and Billie to speak on their spiritual journey  
and their call to be Baptized and Confirmed  
and Receive Jesus as the Bread of Life in the Eucharist today.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/081918.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook19082018>]

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"I am the living bread that  
came down from heaven;  
whoever eats this bread  
will live forever;  
and the bread that I will  
give is my flesh for the life  
of the world."

"May we respond from the experience  
of touching upon the fullness of God's  
love and light."

Fr. Gerry

