

## 'LOVING GOD AS We PLACE GOD FIRST IN OUR LIVES' - 4 SEPTEMBER 2016

It seems such a harsh Gospel passage, especially on Fathers' Day weekend.  
Put another way,  
The Gospel calls us to put God first in everything, including our relationships.  
And to involve God in everything we do.

We begin by God creating and loving us.  
Hopefully we want to respond to God, to love God and to love all God has created.

With a loving relationship with God,  
We naturally want to say thanks,  
To express our gratitude, to seek God's blessing,  
To ask God for help for others and for ourselves,  
To care for God's creation,  
To enter into mystery.

Let us look back on the past [THREE DAYS](#) in the parish, with openness to God.  
With a grateful heart, we ponder what we have experienced.  
[Have we put God FIRST?](#)

On Friday morning four classes of YEAR ONE gathered in our church for the celebration of Mass. Earlier many, many school Dads had an early Father's Day breakfast.  
Then at 9am the Year 1 children prayed.  
In the Gospel, two children dressed for their roles, came forward to act out the roles of Mary and the angel Gabriel, as the Gospel was read.  
In the preparation of the gifts, a mother and child, who are moving from Brisbane, carried up the bread and wine, and received a blessing for their journey.  
Children shared joyfully in the singing of hymns and the sung parts of the Children's Eucharistic Prayer.  
Each child came up for an individual blessing.  
The children themselves shared their joy in God.

Afterwards YEAR ONE enjoyed a party. Then back to school work.  
God is present in our special moments and in our ordinary moments of each day.  
Whether we are Year Ones or youth or adults.

[POPE FRANCIS](#) recently reminded us about our relationship with creation.

As we love our Creator, we are called to love creation.

Our Year Ones remembered in their prayer [Ember Day](#), the first Friday of Spring.

The day before, Pope Francis spoke of practical ways of caring and loving creation.

He said,

*["Examining our consciences, repentance and confession to our Father who is rich in mercy lead to a firm purpose of amendment.](#)*

*[This in turn must translate into concrete ways of thinking and acting that are more respectful of creation.](#)*

*For example: “avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices” (Laudato Si’, 211).*

*We must not think that these efforts are too small to improve our world.*

*They “call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread” and encourage “a prophetic and contemplative lifestyle, one capable of deep enjoyment free of the obsession with consumption” (ibid., 212, 222).*

*In the same way, the resolve to live differently should affect our various contributions to shaping the culture and society in which we live.*

*Indeed, “care for nature is part of a lifestyle which includes the capacity for living together and communion” (Laudato Si’, 228)... “*

On Friday night another party.

This time **IRAQI AND SYRIAN FAMILIES** invited other members of the parish family to a celebration of their culture. Dancing, singing, Middle Eastern food. Lively.

Thanksgiving for a safe welcome after their terrible ordeals over the past two years.

For the evening, Assyrian culture was the vibrant centre of the parish.

Thank you to all who organised and all who shared.

Back to normal in our lives on Saturday with all the things each of us had to do.

Then beginning Saturday night, three weekend Masses to praise God and thank God for so, so much in our lives.

Blessing of the Dads, Grand-Dads, and those who have a fatherly role in our lives, this.

Saturday night was different.

At Mass, a parish family Member, Philip came forward to share his family’s connection and stories of **MOTHER TERESA**, on the weekend of her canonisation.

Touching her spirituality through one who knew her.

Sharing how Mother Teresa inspired his family.

Today our Sunday morning Masses continued our praise of God and awareness of God’s love in our world.

The earlier Sunday Mass was more adult orientated, and the participation in the second morning Mass is more inclusive of children.

Yet as we listen to stories of Mother Teresa, or catch glimpses of the lives of our Iraqi and Syrian sisters and brothers, we go back to today’s Gospel again as Jesus says:

***“Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple”.***

We ponder how Mother Teresa **CARRIED** her **CROSS**, and how she **FOLLOWED** Jesus as a **DISCIPLE**.

Our more recent parish families share how they have carried their cross.

The Gospel challenges us to be **COMMITTED**.  
We don't settle for drifting in and out of people's lives.  
We build upon the foundation of Jesus,  
And Jesus accompanies us in the act of building, of being committed.

We are called to recognise and respect the sacred in each other's lives.  
Just as **SAINT PAUL** in today's letter to Philemon gets involved in advocacy and shared wisdom,  
We too carry each other's cross... as friends.  
Whether in Bracken Ridge, or Blackall and Tambo, or Aurukun, or Nauru, or South Sudan.  
Or with our sisters and brothers here from Iraq or Syria,  
Or from the many nationalities that make up our wider parish family.  
Whether through our local St Vincent de Paul Conference,  
Or through the people we meet in our daily lives.

Called to place God first. Lovingly.  
Called to be committed to Jesus Christ, to carry our cross and follow Him.  
Called to listen to our Year Ones, to Mother Teresa,  
To our newest families from Iraq and Syria.  
Called to love creation. Called to love our neighbour.  
Called to pray over our Dads and Grand-Dads and those with a fatherly role in our lives this weekend.  
Called to love God and to express our love.  
Called in love to express thanksgiving and gratitude to God in our Masses and in all we do.  
Called to be loved and to love.  
Called to a loving relationship with God.  
Called to wherever the Holy Spirit leads us.  
Called to thank God for so, so much in our lives.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – 'Loving God as We Place God First in Our Lives' - 4 September 2016]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/090416.cfm>]

[Ember Day <http://liturgybrisbane.net.au/liturgylines/spring-ember-day/>]

[Parish Facebook post: <http://tinyurl.com/FB-04092016>]