

'MESSAGES - FRANCIS, ARCHBISHOP MARK & MATTHEW'S GOSPEL'
1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT - HOMILY – 27 NOVEMBER 2016

We follow on now from Archbishop Mark Coleridge's Advent Pastoral Letter that we have just heard. It is available on Parish Facebook <http://tinyurl.com/AdventPastoral2016> as well as in the Catholic Leader and as a handout after Mass.

Today we begin the Cycle A of Matthew's Gospel for most Sundays in the next 12 months. We hear today in Matthew 24:37-44 "keep awake" or in another translation "stay awake".

"Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming".

Matthew 24:42

"Therefore you also must be ready..." Matthew 24:44

For the Gospel today, to stay / keep awake, to be ready, has so many dimensions. Let us explore **THREE** dimensions.

HOW CAN WE BE 'AWAKE' AND 'READY', AS AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICS, IF WE DO NOT APPRECIATE EVERY WEEK THE INCREDIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS OF CATHOLIC ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES?

1. MESSAGE OF POPE FRANCIS

Late November is the 30th anniversary of Saint Pope John Paul II's Address - in Alice Springs in 1986 - to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Having travelled with a group of Catholic Aboriginal People, from southeast Queensland and northern NSW, to Alice Springs, I remember the inspiring ceremony and Papal Address. The Australian Catholic Bishops have sent out 30th anniversary liturgy resources for all parishes today.

During this past week, Pope Francis sent a Message and Apostolic Blessing for this important occasion.

Uncle David Miller, an Aboriginal Elder and member of our parish, read Pope Francis Letter to us at all parish weekend Masses.

The Papal Message is addressed to Mr John Lochowiak, Chairperson of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council. It says:

"I send cordial greetings and best wishes to you and the entire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the visit of Saint John Paul II to Alice Springs.

I assure you of my spiritual closeness as you reflect on the many ways in which Almighty God has blessed your community through that historic visit.

This anniversary affords me the happy opportunity to express my deep esteem for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and for your ancient cultural heritage.

Uniting my voice to that of Saint John Paul II, I encourage you in his words:

"Your culture, which shows the lasting genius and dignity of your race, must not be allowed to disappear. Do not think that your gifts are worth so little that you should no longer bother to maintain them. Share them with each other and teach them to your children. Your songs, your stories, your paintings, your dances, your languages, must never be lost."

For when you share the noble traditions of your community, you also witness to the power of the Gospel to perfect and purify every society, and in this way God's holy will is accomplished.

I pray that this occasion will provide an opportunity to deepen your love for Christ and for one another, offering a convincing and tangible sign that we are "no longer strangers and sojourners, but...fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God"(Eph 2:19).

Commending you and all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the intercession of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop, I willingly impart my Apostolic Blessing as a pledge of joy and peace in the Lord.

From the Vatican, 29 November 2016

Francis"

2. ALLOW THE GRACE OF BAPTISM TO GROW

After today's Gospel passage, the next verse in Matthew speaks of the faithful and wise slave. Keeping awake and ready, involves being faithful and wise. It entails a loving devotion to God every moment.

Pope Francis in October this year dialogued with the Jesuits at the 36th General Congregation.

In one of his responses, he said:

"... Clericalism does not allow growth; it does not allow the power of baptism to grow. The grace and evangelizing power of the missionary expression comes from the grace of baptism. And clericalism controls this grace badly and gives rise to dependencies, which sometimes have whole peoples in a state of very great immaturity..."

Page 13, paragraph 1 refers

[Pope Francis Dialogue with Jesuits 36th General Council 24 October 2016](#)

Being **AWAKE** and **READY**, let us enable this **GRACE OF BAPTISM** to grow this Advent in our parish community.

3. JOY

Keeping awake and ready also involves sharing the Good News of Jesus every day.

AS WE PONDER THE WORD OF GOD DAILY AND ACT UPON IT AND LIVE IT, IS THERE A SUGGESTED FRAMEWORK THAT CAN HELP US LIVE GOD'S WORD JOYFULLY IN 2016-2017?

Speaking on the same occasion to the Jesuits this year,

Pope Francis recommended his 2013 Apostolic Exhortation "Evangelii Gaudium" (The Joy of the Gospel).

"I recommend Evangelii gaudium to you as a framework.

It is not original, in this I want to be very clear.

It puts together Evangelii nuntiandi and the Aparecida document...

Evangelii Gaudium is the apostolic framework of the Church today."

Let us celebrate that alertness and readiness in living out the joy of the Gospel this Advent in our parish community.

As Matthew's Gospel says twice in one parable in the next chapter -

"Enter into the joy of your Master" Matthew 25:21, 23

Let us enter into the joy of God.

Fr Gerry Hefferan – 'Messages – Francis, Archbishop Mark & Matthew's Gospel'
– 27 November 2016

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/112716.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://tinyurl.com/parishFacebook27112016>]

References:

[Evangelii nuntiandi \(*Evangelization in the Modern World*\) – Pope Paul VI \(1975\)](#)

[Aparecida Concluding Document – Bishops of Latin America & the Caribbean \(2007\)](#)

[Evangelii Gaudium – \(*Joy of the Gospel*\) Pope Francis \(2013\)](#)

[Pope Francis Dialogue with Jesuits 36th General Council 24 October 2016](#)