

Anniversary's in January

Terrance Loughan, Trevor Hulena

Brett Gray, Clarice Barclay

Constance Fraiser, Timothy Carpenter

William Martin, Fay Orgar

This Sunday night (21st January), John Cowan's guest will be cyclist Ella Harris. Ella Harris is a 25-year-old New Zealand professional racing cyclist, currently riding for UCI Women's Continental Team Lifeplus Wahoo. She won the Zwift global stationary trainer competition in 2018, which earned her a contract with Women's World Tour's Canyon SRAM team. At home, she won the national under-23 time trial in 2020 and has earned a number of heralded performances internationally. Ella started cycling at 10 years old with her parents on the weekends and began cycle racing at 13 when she joined the cycling club at St Margaret's College in Christchurch. She gained her Bachelor of Agricommerce majoring in Food Marketing and Retailing from Massey University. During the cycling season, Ella resides in Girona, Spain.

Prayer time early in the new year seems to be reflective and about goal-setting. It is a fresh start, a new beginning, a blank page. Even though we are still carrying over all the projects, stresses, trials and plans from the year before, it usually feels like a do-over. Perhaps it is a new start to how we approach all the pressures from the year before. After reading and reflecting on this verse from Philippians, I saw more clearly how to go about doing my new year re-start. We are a few weeks into the new year now, and I have re-started yoga, re-started my parenting skills program, re-started my budget, re-started my "eat healthier" diet, and re-started my prayer time. I pretty much follow this same list every year. Generally, I stay on track for a while until something comes along to disrupt the routine, such as an illness or big event that needs planning. This year, however, I am open to something different. The words I heard in prayer were, "Love Well, Live Well." I heard that and breathed it in. Saint Paul's prayer was for us to increase our love,

and not just in one area, but in every thought we perceive and action we take. He goes on to say: to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:10-11) This is a restart in LOVE, and an ability to discern what God is actually calling us to start in our lives. All of our goals and reflections are important, but what will help to continue them throughout the year (beyond a few weeks) is that increase in love, allowing it to permeate all our knowledge and perceptions. We will be filled with the "fruit of our labors," but not just the work we put in, it will be how right we are with God while working hard on our goals. This fresh start, new beginning, and blank page can be filled with only goals and reflections, and this pattern can repeat every new year. This year, however, I am choosing to "Love Well, Live Well," so that I can discern what value my goals and reflections have, especially through Jesus' love. Loving well will bring us closer to living well, even as the years go by.

Prayer:

Jesus, I want to breathe with You, learn with You, stretch with You, grow strong with you, and be still with You. Help me to Love Well and Live Well this year. *Copyright 2024 Erika Dix*



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The Holy Trinity Parish Rātini Kupu



21st Kohitātea, 2024
3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

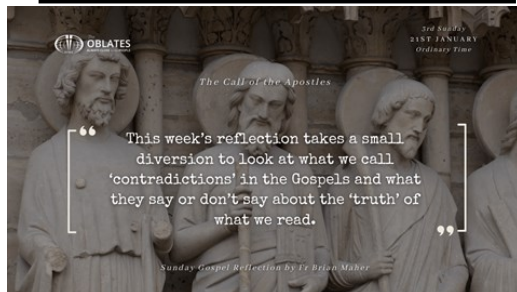
Depending on God—"Living with their heads in the clouds" is no compliment to anyone living in this world of ours. How realistic is Paul's advice, to live as though the ordinary events and concerns of life did not matter? As if business, planning, bereavements, possessions and the rest were of no fundamental importance? Well, first of all he does not mean that people should withdraw from all these things, or neglect the practical life.. What he does mean is that we should get our priorities right, and get a proper balanced view of things, so that what is of lasting importance can play its part too — namely, the question of our eternal destiny, and how we stand in the sight of God. Under the influence of a brush with death — a near escape, or a recent bereavement — we come to realize how trivial are the usual concerns that engross us, when compared to the abiding mystery of life and death. Does it have a purpose? Is our life going anywhere, or is it simply an absurd farce, poised between comedy and tragedy? There are three common reactions to this mystery of life and death: First: You can't take it with you — so spend it while you can. When you're dead you're dead and that's it! So make the most of these short years, enjoy them to the utmost, and then submit to the universal annihilation that awaits us all. Second: A hope that there may be life beyond the grave, but one which seems so shadowy and insubstantial that there's little point in thinking about it. Still, it's a worry. Perhaps there will be a punishing judgement for wrongs done in this life, which we managed to get away with. Third: The conviction that God holds each human life securely in his hand, so that death is just a passing-over into his direct presence. In the biblical view, we should not worry about death, nor about anything. in life so much as to turn to God, and obey his word. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his glory" says Jesus. If we can make the right primary decision, if our first desire is to fit in with God's plan for us, then everything else will fall into place; life and work, marriage, successes and failures, sickness and even death itself. All of us, no matter how long we have been living in the faith, need to reawaken this attitude of trust. We need conversion, no, less than the people of Nineveh, or the people of Galilee. Repent, and believe, says Jesus today, to each one here. Believe that God is my father and your father; believe that he is near at hand, and that he is merciful; realize that God's will for you is that you be saved — and that includes the need to live by his Gospel. "Repent" — yes, the challenge is as fresh today as when our Lord first spoke it. As though we were hearing of the kingdom of God for the first time, and making our first act of total trust and total submission to God's love. Taking Jesus at his word, being converted to genuine faith in God the Father, does not mean living with our head in the clouds. Genuine Christian devotion certainly fixes our ambition away above the passing things of life, but also keeps us aware of everyday duties towards other people. Hearing the Gospel, welcoming and following it, keeps a person with feet well grounded in reality, more keenly involved than ever in carrying out the tasks that have to be done here and now, because now is the day of salvation; now is the time, given us by God to pay him our thanksgiving through service. *Associationofcatholicpriests.ie*

The Gospel this Sunday is, in fact, the same story as last Sunday's – the call of the first Apostles. Why, I wonder, are we given the same story to read on two consecutive Sundays? And why give us two stories that seem to contradict each other in every possible way? Why draw attention to contradictions within the Gospels? Is this not inviting cynics to disbelieve and ridicule us? For some, these are not particularly important questions. For others they cause a certain amount of unease and doubt. They certainly give ammunition to those who want to laugh at our faith. This week's reflection takes a small diversion to look at what we call 'contradictions' in the Gospels and what they say or don't say about the 'truth' of what we read. Some may find this type of diversion unimportant or unnecessary. If you do, please feel free to ignore it. If you find yourself disagreeing with what I say and want to share your concerns, please do so and I promise I will include your anxieties in later reflections.

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Today we begin a continuous reading of Mark's Gospel that will carry us through this segment of the liturgical season of Ordinary Time. Remember that in Cycle B of the Lectionary, most of the Gospel readings are taken from the Gospel according to Mark. The Gospel of Mark does not begin with a narrative about Jesus' birth. Instead Mark begins by reporting on the preaching of John the Baptist. John is described as the voice in the wilderness sent to prepare the way of the Lord. Immediately after describing the work of John the Baptist, Mark reports on Jesus' baptism and his temptation in the desert. Jesus' public ministry begins after the arrest of John the Baptist. Mark wants his readers to understand the important connection between the end of the ministry of John the Baptist and the beginning of Jesus' own ministry. As we learn at the beginning of today's Gospel reading, Jesus preaches the Kingdom of God in continuity with the preaching of John the Baptist. Like John the Baptist, Jesus' pronouncement of the kingdom is a call to repentance. Yet Jesus' preaching is greater than

No week day Masses during the month of January. Sunday Masses will remain the same



John's. Jesus begins the time of fulfillment; the Kingdom of God is already here. This will be demonstrated again and again, both in Jesus' words and in the actions that follow. Jesus' healings and forgiveness of sins are signs of the Kingdom of God that he announces in his teaching. In contrast to last week's Gospel, in Mark's Gospel Jesus takes the initiative in calling his first disciples. As mentioned last week, it was more typical of first-century rabbinical schools for students to seek out rabbis, asking to be their disciples. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus breaks with this tradition and invites his disciples to learn from him. Jesus is said to have first called four fishermen—Simon, Andrew, James, and John. Simon and Andrew are brothers. Jesus promises that he will make them "fishers of men." James and John are also brothers. Mark does not report Jesus' words of invitation to them, but he does report that they left their fishing immediately; their father, Zebedee, was left behind in the boat. Mark's Gospel is told with a great sense of urgency and immediacy. Jesus is a person of action, and events occur in rapid succession. We see this in today's Gospel. Time is of the essence; the fishermen immediately put aside their livelihood to become Jesus' disciples. The Kingdom of God is here and now. The time of fulfillment is at hand. How might our lives be different if we more fully shared this sense of the immediacy of God's kingdom?

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Lent is coming soon. I've already seen several advertisements for programs, book clubs, virtual retreats, and more. They all seem to say it's not too early to start planning how to spend your time this Lent. But ... is it? Are we really supposed to spend these precious days of Ordinary Time focusing on the season ahead? Or is this just a spillover malady from the marketing cycle, where everything has to be sold one quarter earlier? Is all this strategizing robbing us of today? One of childhood's greatest gifts is the freedom from having to worry about the future. When children are properly cared for, they know their needs will be met. Adulthood brings responsibilities that require us to spend some time looking ahead. But with that comes the temptation to over-plan, to try to control every detail, to be constantly looking ahead. We end up spending so much time thinking (and worrying) about tomorrow that we miss living today. But this is utter foolishness. We are not guaranteed tomorrow. What if today ends up being our last day? How are we called to live this ordinary day? The call is the same one it will be during Lent. We are to live this day in prayer. And by prayer, I mean in relationship with the one true living God. This is a place of abiding, of resting, of being loved. It is the place from where all our activity should flow ... even our planning for the future. When our plans are guided by the gentle voice of God, we are living with Him in the present moment. We are looking at Him, trusting that He already knows what is ahead. We return to that blessed state of childhood, where we are cared for, where we know our needs will be met. Our task, then, is to do everything in our power to enter into His Presence and there strive to remain. This will look different for each one of us. Our state in life, our season in life, our unique character traits, all of these will

affect what our prayer life looks like, but there is one thing they will all require, and that is silence. Exterior silence is beneficial, but it is merely a means to the true silence within. Once we learn to still our hearts, we can abide in holy silence even amid the noise and the chatter. It is in that silence where we can listen ... where we can begin to pray. Perhaps God is calling you to sign up for a Lenten program ... or to buy a new book ... or prepare ahead. But maybe He is not calling you to do any of that. Perhaps He is inviting you to rest and gather your strength instead. The only way you will know is to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit, to attune your heart to the silent sound of God's Word.



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Wellington Event: A Conversation with Msgr Tomáš Halík: What does it mean to have faith? Msgr Tomáš Halík is a highly acclaimed author, lecturer, psychotherapist, under-ground priest, psychologist of religion, and pastoral theologian at Charles University Prague. A winner of the prestigious Templeton prize, he will be in New Zealand in February to give a couple of talks. Msgr Tomáš will give a presentation on 'What does it mean to have faith? Belief in today's world' (in-person) on **Thursday, 08 February 5:30pm at Victoria University of Wellington Pipitea Campus.**

To register – email Rev Dr Merv Duffy SM
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