

**SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER Year A**

**19.4.20**

**this week:** Acts 2:42-47; 1 Pt 1:3-9; Jn 20:19-31

**next week:** Acts 2:14, 22-33; 1 Pt 1:17-21; Lk 24:13-35



The gospel story about doubting Thomas has to be one of the most misunderstood episodes in the New Testament.

If you're like me, for years we have been consoled by Thomas doubting that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Thomas' doubts were in Jesus, we have been led to believe. But let's read the story very carefully. It's not Jesus Thomas doubts, it's the disciples. In fact when Jesus appears to them seven days later, Thomas has the opportunity to share in the experience of the Risen Lord and like the others he immediately confesses Easter faith.

There are three elements in this story that should give us great comfort. The first is that Thomas doubts the early Church, and not just in regard to a minor issue of discipline or procedure. He doubts the central Christian message: that God raised Jesus from the dead. Some of us, too, at various times in our lives, can have doubts about all sorts of things in our faith. There are very few Catholics who get through life without asking some serious questions of God, about Jesus, the Spirit and the Church. These questions are good in themselves. They are necessary for a mature, adult faith. What we need to ensure is that we sincerely want answers to the questions we ask and not just use them to justify our wandering away from our faith. Thomas is the patron saint of all of us who sometimes struggle to believe what everyone else in the church seems to accept. And he is also the patron saint of those of us who seek the courage and patience to wait for the answers.

The second consoling fact to this story concerns the earliest Church. Even though they were filled with the presence of the Risen Lord and though Thomas refuses to believe their witness, they remain faithful to him in his doubts. We know this because he is still with them a week later. They didn't expel him from the group or excommunicate him, they held on to him in the hope that he would experience the Lord for himself.

Sadly for us, today, there are some who argue that Catholics who struggle with their faith should 'shape up or ship out'. While every group has its boundaries and there are limits to what people can dissent from, we could take the earliest Church as our model and stay faithful to our doubters and help them come to see the transforming truth that has changed our lives.

The final element in this extraordinary story which can help us in our Easter faith concerns the significance of the time between the first and second appearances of Jesus. We're told it was seven days and the parallel to the story of creation would not have been lost on the first hearers of John's Gospel. And even though the earliest disciples experience the Risen Lord on Easter Sunday, they are still locked in their fears one week later. The creation of the early Church, the movement of its earliest leaders from timidity to boldness took time and having a doubter in their midst ends up a great blessing for them all, for Christ is present at every step of the Church's creation and re-creation as well.

This story was written for people like us who do not have access to the historical Jesus. The birth of the Church is an ongoing act of God's creation in every generation. It takes time, and people will be at different stages at different moments. Our fidelity to one another on the long journey of faith is only surpassed by our Crucified God who does not give up on us, no matter how many questions we ask or how much we doubt.

May this Eucharist give us confidence enough to hold on to each other in good times and bad so that we can all continue to experience his presence and have life in his name.

© Richard Leonard SJ

# Sacred Heart Parish

**Sacred Heart Church ~ Blackheath  
Saint Paul's Church ~ Mount Victoria  
Saint Joseph's Church ~ Megalong Valley**

**As a community bonded together through faith,  
we are called to share our experience of God with those we meet each day,  
in particular, those in our local community.**

*We acknowledge the Darug and Gundungurra people, the traditional custodians of this land  
and pay our respects to the elders past and present.*

**There are no masses being celebrated here at this time. Live streaming of  
Masses, prayer resources etc can be found on [parracatholic.org](http://parracatholic.org). They can also  
be found on our Parish website**

**Parish Mobile:** 04278 878 810

**Parish Office:** 02 4787 8540

**E-mail:** [blackheath@parracatholic.org](mailto:blackheath@parracatholic.org)

**Office hours** Wed 12.00pm - 3.00pm

**Fr Bob:** 0417 355 479 emergencies only

**Thu** 9.00am - 12.00pm

**Fri** 11.30am - 2.30pm

**Sacred Heart Church:** 167 Wentworth Street, Blackheath.  
**St Paul's Church:** 65 Great Western Highway, Mount Victoria.  
**St Joseph's Church:** 1270 Megalong Road, Megalong Valley.

For **sick calls**, please contact the Katoomba Parish 4782 2804

**Parish Pastoral Council** meets the 4th Sunday of each month.

If you would like an issue discussed, please submit it in writing to either Fr Bob;  
Brian Bright (Chair) or David Buckley (Deputy Chair)

**Sacred Heart Care Group** (*helping parishioners in times of need*) Monica Bright 0420 937 690

**BULLETIN ITEMS:** Please contact the Parish Office on Wednesday or Thursday  
during office hours on 4787 8540 or email [blackheath@parracatholic.org](mailto:blackheath@parracatholic.org)

**Website:** <https://sacredheartblackheath.org.au/>

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**SAINTS DAYS OF THE WEEK** (6 Apr - 11 Apr)

20 Apr St. Agnes of Montepulciano nun, foundress

21 Apr St Anselm bishop, doctor

22 Apr Bl. Maria Gabriella Sagheddu Trappist nun

23 Apr St. Giles of Assisi Franciscan hermit

24 Apr St. Fidelis of Sigmaringen priest, martyr

25 Apr ANZAC DAY

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL UPDATE 19 April 2020

**FR JOLLY** This week marks yet another milestone in the history of our Sacred Heart Parish Community – which of course includes the Communities at St Paul’s, Mount Victoria and St Joseph’s Megalong Valley.

On behalf of the Parish Pastoral Council and indeed all parishioners, we extend a very warm ‘Upper Mountains Welcome’ to Fr Jolly Chacko, who will be our Priest Moderator as we continue to journey, together with Bishop Vincent, through the discernment and implementation of our new Leadership Team that will take us forward into the future – guided at all times by the Holy Spirit.

+Attached to this Parish Bulletin is a letter from Fr Jolly – introducing himself as Priest Moderator, explaining his role and advising of some changes that arise.

+Also attached is a 2016 article from the Catholic Outlook – giving a comprehensive introduction to Fr Jolly and telling us a little about him.

**FR BOB** And of course, Easter Sunday marked Fr Bob’s last day as our Pastor – after 10½ years! Sadly, the celebrations planned, especially his last Mass as our Pastor, could not eventuate. But such a Mass and his Farewell Party will happen – once we move back into ‘life as normal!’

Fr Bob complained bitterly about the imposition the covid-19 pandemic had inflicted on him as he entered his first week of ‘retirement’. He was all ready to ‘head north’ to visit his 100+ year old aunt – but his plans were thwarted when border closures and travel restrictions came into force ☐. But alas, there was a bonus – Fr Wim. Wim Hoekstra, Episcopal Vicar for Clergy, recommended to Fr Bob that he should commence his retirement in Blackheath – rather than moving to his new home in Harris Park during this period of restricted movement. So in fact, Fr Bob is commencing his retirement in his old home – but whilst in isolation, he is in familiar surroundings!

Although ‘retired’, Fr Bob has kindly offered to leave his Mobile telephone number on the front of the Bulletin – for emergency use only – severe illness or bereavement. Of course, if anyone simply wants to ‘have a chat’ during this period of prolonged isolation, Fr Bob would welcome your call.

**PARISH COUNCIL VACANCIES** As Fr Bob mentioned in last week’s Bulletin, we currently have several vacancies on the Parish Council – in fact, **there are four (4) vacancies!** And the current gender balance is way out of kilter – 6 boys to 1 girl (poor Cate!!) We earnestly ask that everyone please consider applying to serve on our Council – particularly from our ladies. In accord with the PPC Constitution, the Council may fill any casual vacancy by invitation.

With the changes happening in our Parish the workload and level of responsibility will certainly increase – but the challenges are exciting! It is imperative that we get the Council back to full membership so please think about this and pray about it.

**Closing Date: Wednesday 29 April – please contact Brian (0401 768 688) or David (4787 5105 or 0400 208 707).**

**UPDATING OUR DATABASE & KEEPING IN TOUCH** A big Thank You to Pat Wicks and our Parish Pastoral Council for all the work done in bringing our Parish database more up to date. We have grown from an initial list of 39 who received the Parish Bulletin by email to almost 80. As we have said previously, it is so important during this extended ‘lockdown’ that we address the issue of social isolation – particularly across our far spread Faith Community. With all the changes happening in our parish, we want to keep everyone informed.

**Although physically closed, our Church is still wide open!**

A big **Thank You** also to the **Care Group** and **many others** who have been keeping in touch with our parishioners by telephone – particularly those living on their own. We are looking at ways we may be able to streamline this a little more – along the lines of a **Telephone Tree** – more about this next week.

**If you know anyone near you who may not be receiving the Parish Bulletin, please print off an extra copy for them and pop it in their letterbox.**

Keep Safe and keep well.

Brian, David and Adrian (Parish Pastoral Council Executive)

**OPTIONS FOR ONGOING & SPECIAL EASTER PARISH FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

With the closure of the church and no Sunday Masses for the foreseeable future, you may wish to consider options for ongoing contributions to the Parish.

Please email or phone Finance Committee Chairman John Tweedie at john.tweedie@gmail.com or 0407 288 957 to discuss any of the following:

If you already use electronic banking to pay your bills, the electronic bank transfer option is a simple way that you can make ongoing contributions to the Parish on a weekly or monthly basis. You can also use this to make special Easter or other special contributions. John can provide you with the parish bank account details and can arrange for the necessary reference details to set up your transfer.

If you don’t currently use electronic banking to pay your bills, the electronic bank transfer option may still be available to you with the assistance of your bank branch. Again, John can provide details.

If you normally contribute by envelope, and do not wish to use the electronic option, contact John to make arrangements for collection of your weekly and Special Easter collection envelopes.

If you don’t contribute by envelope or electronic banking and would like to explore how you can still contribute to the Parish during this time, please contact John to discuss.

**PARISH TRANSITION WORKING PARTY UPDATE**

We are both delighted and grateful for the response thus far to our discernment process with the community. Fr Bob, Fr Paul, Monica, the pastoral council and finance committee, and other groups and individuals have offered their wisdom. We are now finalising an interim report to send to Bishop Vincent Long. We take this opportunity to thank Fr Bob for his time of service, to welcome Fr Jolly, and to wish you a safe and holy Easter. God bless,

Richard McMahon on behalf of our transition working party

 **NEXT PARISH WORKING BEE – SATURDAY 2 MAY COMMENCING 8AM.**  
Help needed!

PLEASE PRAY for the sick and their carers: John & Marion Crowley, Shielagh Kirkham, Maria Slater, Marie Johnson, Pat Frazer, Tatiana Schultz, Trennah Portelli, Ray Wood and Elizabeth Farrar’s daughter Emma

**PROJECT COMPASSION**  
If you haven’t yet contributed to Project Compassion and would like to know how you might do this, please contact John Tweedie on john.tweedie@gmail.com or 0407 288 957 and he will be able to offer you some options.

**In Memory !**  
19th Mary Edna Forster (d 2016 -aged 94) 

**Happy Birthday !**  
19th Noeleen Cliff 