

**Catholic Church Communities of
St. Anne & Blessed Dominic and St. Vincent de Paul**



Newsletter

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Parish Office Hours: Monday and Friday: 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

This Sunday

SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

18th January 2026

Sunday Cycle: Year A

Weekday Cycle: Year 2

THIS WEEK

Saturday 17th January	5:00 pm	M	St A&B	Agnes & Joe Luton, Patricia Mara
Sunday 18th January	9:30am	M	St V	People of the Parish (Margaret McLoughlin)
FAMILY MASS	11:00am	M	St A&B	Audrey Bailey 90th Birthday, Peter & Agnes Corrigan
Wednesday 21st January	12noon	M	St A&B	Nelly McInerney, Brian Crompton, Ken Halsall
Thursday 22nd January	11:00am	M	St A&B	Funeral for Brian Crompton
Saturday 24th January	5:00 pm	M	St A&B	Patricia Mara, Agnes Jolliffe (Tilly)
Sunday 25th January	9:30am	M	St V	Mia Woodward (1st Anniversary), Agnes Roberts (B'day Remembrance), Margaret & Richard Gregson
	11:00am	M	St A&B	People of the Parish

Please remember in your Prayers:

Lately died: Patricia Mara, Agnes Jolliffe, Brian Crompton, Nelly McInerney, Ken Halsall.

Anniversaries: Margaret McLoughlin, Peter & Agnes Corrigan.

Lord, Your Friend Whom You love is sick:

Barbara Wright, Mandy Bennett, Annie Lee, Kathleen Valentine, Helen Smith, Cerys McKenna, Christine Terry, Moyra Lyon, Brian Fortune, Geraldine Roberts, Laura Mahon, Isobelle McDonald, Anne Whitehouse, Alan McMillan, Sam Glover, Alex Downey, Joan Mary Cyril, Raymond Litherland, Angela Brooks, Steve Lowery.

Gift Aid. The parish letter to thank all those who gift aid their offerings is ready for collection in the porch. God bless you.

The witness of John the Baptist: the Baptist sect and being a witness.

One of the curious facts of modern life is the growing number of cults and sects which compete for our attention alongside the major religions. Perhaps that is not so curious when we appreciate the genuine longing of many people for something to believe in that is greater than the wage packet. When people speak of cults, they usually refer to unorthodox religion or to the excessive admiration of an individual person. Most cults are movements which have broken away from mainstream religion; they often arise from the supposed failure of those religions to address the personal needs of their followers. Because of this, cults usually stand as a critical challenge to institutional religion.

It is worth noting that when the Christian movement began, it was regarded in most places as a cult focusing on Jesus of Nazareth. One of the problems the early Church had to face was another cult, the Baptist sect, who believed that John the Baptist, not Jesus, was the Messiah. The Baptist sect argued that their master was superior to Jesus for two main reasons: firstly, John the Baptist was prior to Jesus and that priority gave him superiority; secondly, Jesus submitted to John's baptism of repentance making him inferior to John. Faced with these arguments, the early Church had to respond and clarify its own position in regard to John the Baptist.

In today's Gospel, we see how the evangelist John faces these charges. John takes the point that priority does indeed mean superiority and shows that Jesus is superior to the Baptist because he pre-existed him. So, John the Baptist declares: "A man is coming after me who ranks before me *because he existed before me.*" Jesus is the Word who existed from the beginning; all that came to be had life in him. As for Jesus submitting to the baptism of John, the fourth Gospel drops the account of Jesus' baptism; instead, John the Baptist is seen to interpret the meaning of the baptism by affirming that the Spirit of God rests on Jesus.

In John's Gospel, the Baptist is treated in a different fashion from the other Gospels. There is no mention of his austere dress and diet; he does not confront the religious leaders with his fiery criticism; he does not send his disciples to ask Jesus if he is the Messiah. In John's Gospel, the Baptist speaks only about Jesus and reveals to others the mystery of his person: "I am the witness that he is the Chosen One of God." John is a man sent by God. He says of Jesus: "I did not know him myself". No one can know Jesus by himself. The Baptist knows him because the truth about Jesus has been revealed to him.

When the religious leaders send messengers to John to find out who he really is, he protests that he is not the Christ, not Elijah, and not the Prophet. John keeps declaring who he is not in order to say who Jesus is. All that he is not, Jesus is. The Baptist is wholly subordinate to Jesus, a truth that is declared in the prologue to the Gospel: "He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light."

If the Baptist appears to speak negatively about himself, it is for the purpose of directing attention to Jesus. He is not the centre of his ministry: when Jesus comes, the Baptist points his own disciples in the direction of Jesus, releasing them from their attachment to him. In the Gospel of John, the Baptist plays a unique role: he is the first Christian witness, the first person who leads others to Jesus whom he identifies as the Messiah.

We can see how the evangelist John defends the truth of the Christian faith against the Baptist sect, those who believe that the Baptist was the Messiah. John the Baptist is a witness to Jesus and that charge is given to each of us. We have all been baptised in the Spirit; we have all been called to witness to Jesus. We are asked to lead others to the person of Jesus. The best way to do that is through our own genuine attachment to the Lord. Many people need help to come to Jesus.