



Australia Day (National Day of Prayer)

January 26

Lectionary Vol. II

Isaiah 32:15-18

Psalms 84:9-14

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Luke 12:22-32

God will provide

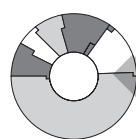
Focus: To be grateful for all that God has given us.

Leader's Context

Everyday worries can take all our attention – will there be enough food to eat? Will we have clothes to wear and a place to live? While not dismissing these concerns, Jesus teaches us that having faith in God means letting go of worries and trusting that God will always take care of us because we are so precious to God. When things are out of our control, Jesus asks us to remember that because God looks after even the smallest things in the world he will also provide for all our needs. Ideally, gratitude for what we have received leads to generosity on our part.

Focus on Church Teaching

God is the creator of all that is, and we who are lucky enough to live in a rich, plentiful country like Australia, are called to be grateful for all that God has provided for us. (RYN, 2008) Recognising God's providence (another word for care and guidance) means that Australians who live in a free and beautiful country can choose to be as generous to others as God is to us. (CCC, 306–7) Pope Benedict XVI said: "According to the teaching of the Gospel, we are not owners but rather administrators of the goods we possess: these, then, are not to be considered as our exclusive possession, but means through which the Lord calls each one of us to act as a steward of His providence for our neighbour." (LENT 2008, n.2)



Liturgical Calendar Connection

Ask the students to find today's date on the liturgical calendar. Today we celebrate with gratitude the gift of our nation, Australia. Jesus reminds us that God who created and looks after the birds and flowers and all the beauty in the universe makes sure that we will be looked after too. For all who live in a land of such beauty and plenty, it is good to nurture an attitude of gratitude to God who wants us to look after our land as he looks after us.

Sign of the Cross

All stand and make the Sign of the Cross.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Gospel Acclamation

Matthew 11:25

Alleluia, alleluia.

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth; you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom.

Alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 12:22-32

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

Jesus said to his disciples, 'That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it. For life means more than food, and the body more than clothing. Think of the ravens. They do not sow or reap; they have no storehouses and no barns; yet God feeds them. And how much more are you worth than the birds! Can any of you, for all his worrying, add a single cubit to your span of life? If the smallest things, therefore, are outside your control, why worry about the rest? Think of the flowers; they never have to spin or weave; yet, I assure you, not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these. Now if that is how God clothes the grass in the field which is there today and thrown into the furnace tomorrow, how much more will he look after you, you men of little faith! But you, you must not set your hearts on things to eat and things to drink; nor must you worry. It is the pagans of this world who set their hearts on these things. Your Father well knows you need them. No; set your hearts on his kingdom, and these other things will be given you as well.'

'There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reflection

Leave the worrying to God

In this Gospel from Luke, Jesus teaches us that we can rely on God to take care of us and to provide what we really need. Jesus points to some beautiful parts of creation – birds and flowers – and observes that they don't do any work or build buildings like people do, and yet God takes care of them.

☉ How does God take care of the birds and flowers? [by providing worms and bugs and seeds for the birds to eat; by sending sunshine and rain for the flowers to grow.]

Jesus says that if God takes care of even birds and flowers, that God will take care of us too, because we are worth so much to God.

☉ Why do you think that we are worth so much to God? [because we are human, like Jesus (who is also fully divine) and because we are created in God's image.]

Jesus teaches us that we don't need to worry so much about what is going to happen or where the things we need in life are going to come from. He says that we should trust in God to look after us.

☉ Do you think that trusting in God to look after us means that we should just lie about doing nothing and expect that God will provide everything for us?

God still expects us to do our part – and Jesus reassures us that if we put effort into what we have to do, and have faith in God and co-operate with God, then things to eat and things to drink will be provided for us. Letting God take on our worries means that we can put our 'worry energy' into the things that really matter – like building God's kingdom on earth.

On Australia Day, we can be grateful for the beautiful country we are lucky enough to live in and we can thank God for being free to go to school and play sport and have clean water to drink and fresh food to eat.

☉ What other things about living in Australia are you grateful to God for today?

☉ What sorts of things do you think we can do to build God's kingdom in Australia?

Building God's kingdom in Australia means making sure those among us who don't have enough to eat or who don't have clothes to wear, are taken care of by us as we co-operate in doing God's work. If we set our hearts on the Kingdom, God will provide us with what we need.

Christian-Australian values

You will need a white board or butcher paper, scissors, colouring materials, sticky tape and a template of different-sized stars to lead this activity.

Draw a large outline of the Australian flag on the white board or butcher paper, including the Union Jack in the top left corner, and ask students to colour in the red of the stripes and the dark blue background of the flag, leaving the white stripes blank. Using the star templates, ask some students to cut out the six stars to go on the flag (1 large 7-pointed star, 4 medium 7-pointed stars, 1 small 5-pointed star). Ask the students to think of six values that are both Christian and Australian (e.g., honesty, kindness, respect, etc). Talk about ways in which the students can live out each value at home or at school. Ask the students to decide the order of the values from most important downward and to write the Christian-Australian values down in the centre of the six stars (the most important should go in the biggest star, and the others in the medium stars and small star). Take a photo of the whiteboard to send to the students or put the butcher-paper flag somewhere prominent in your learning space.

Message stick

For this activity you will need a piece of A4 paper for each student, sticky tape and colouring materials.

Invite the students to make a message stick, which is a way that Indigenous Australians traditionally communicate with others. A message stick has greetings and messages written on it and is passed on with a verbal message to the one who is to receive it. Ask the students to take their piece of paper and write on it (lengthwise in the middle section of the paper) a special message to an Indigenous Australian, telling them how much they respect God's beautiful land of Australia and why they are grateful to be living here. If your student is an Indigenous Australian, their message might be to another Australian, telling them what they need to know about the land of Australia and how much it needs to be respected and cared for. Encourage your students to decorate their message sticks. When the students have finished writing their messages and decorating their message sticks, have them roll the paper into a tube and stick it together so that their message can be seen. Invite the students to share their messages with each other and to speak their message to the person who receives it when they hand over the message stick.

Living the Liturgy at Home

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Scripture Readings

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Psalms 84:9-14

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Luke 12:22-32

Prayer

Lord, God of all creation,
we give you praise and thanks
for the gift of our land Australia.
Bless this land and all the people who
live here,
those who have been here for a long
time
and those who are newcomers.
Make us grateful for
the beauty and bounty of our great
south land
where your Holy Spirit dwells,
and help us always to be aware of our
duty
to take care of this land which you
created.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

?? Did you know?

... that after landing on the island of Vanuatu on the feast of Pentecost in 1606, Catholic Portuguese explorer Pedro Fernandez de Quiros declared that all land from Vanuatu to the south pole was to be known as *Australia del Espiritu Santo* (southern land of the Holy Spirit)? De Quiros never actually set foot on Australian soil, but his description of it as the “great south land of the Holy Spirit” has had a lasting impact on how Australia is seen by people of faith. Given the long

presence of aboriginal people in Australia and their deep spiritual understanding of the sacredness of the land, de Quiros’ description of Australia as a land of the Spirit was unknowingly quite accurate.

Conversation Questions

- ☉ What is it about living in Australia that makes you feel grateful?
- ☉ How do you see God’s providence (care and guidance) at work in your family and your way of life?

Faith in Action

Can you think of some ways that your family can share your good fortune with those who are not faring as well? Perhaps you can think about following the challenging advice of Saint Basil of Caesarea (d.379) who wrote that: “The bread which you do not use is the bread of the hungry; the garment hanging in the wardrobe is the garment of the one who is naked; the shoes you do not wear are the shoes of the one who is barefoot; the money you keep locked away is the money of the poor...” (Homily 8, PG 31: 321 c – e.) Saint Basil is encouraging us to see that a Christian view of gratitude for our circumstances can lead us to consider how we might help those who are less fortunate.