

An opium addict who is a martyr and a saint. (M. Hunter-Kilmer)

St. Mark Ji Tianxiang had not always been an opium addict. For years, Ji was a respectable Christian, raised in a Christian family in 19th-century China. He was a leader in the Christian community, a well-off doctor who served the poor for free. But he became ill with a violent stomach ailment and treated himself with opium. It was a perfectly reasonable thing to do, but Ji soon became addicted to the drug, an addiction that was considered shameful and gravely scandalous.

As his circumstances deteriorated, Ji continued to fight his addiction. He went frequently to confession, refusing to embrace this affliction that had taken control of him. Unfortunately, the priest to whom he confessed didn't understand addiction as a disease. Since Ji kept confessing the same sin, the priest thought, that was evidence that he had no firm purpose of amendment, no desire to do better.

Without resolve to repent and sin no more, confession is invalid. After a few years, Ji's confessor told him to stop coming back until he could fulfil the requirements for confession.

For some, this might have been an invitation to leave the Church in anger or shame, but for all his fallenness, Ji knew himself to be loved by the Father and by the Church. He knew that the Lord wanted his heart, even if he couldn't manage to give over his life. He couldn't stay sober, but he could keep showing up. And show up he did, for 30 years. For 30 years, he was unable to receive the sacraments. And for 30 years he prayed that he would die a martyr. It seemed to Ji that the only way he could be saved was through a martyr's crown.



In 1900, when the Boxer Rebels began to turn against foreigners and Christians, Ji got his chance. He was rounded up with dozens of other Christians, including his son, six grandchildren, and two daughters-in-law. Many of those imprisoned with him were likely disgusted by his presence there among them, this man who couldn't go a day without a hit. Surely he would be the first to deny the Lord. But while Ji was never able to beat his addiction, he was, in the end, flooded with the grace of final perseverance. No threat could shake him, no torture make him waver. He was determined to follow the Lord who had never abandoned him.

As Ji and his family were dragged to prison to await their execution, his grandson looked fearfully at him. "Grandpa, where are we going?" he asked. "We're going home," came the answer.

Ji begged his captors to kill him last so that none of his family would have to die alone. He stood beside all nine of them as they were beheaded. In the end, he went to his death singing the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And though he had been away from the sacraments for decades, he is a canonized saint.

St. Mark Ji Tianxiang is a beautiful witness to the grace of God constantly at work in the most hidden ways, to God's ability to make great saints of the most unlikely among us, and to the grace poured out on those who remain faithful when it seems even the Church herself is driving them away.



Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Thurgoona

Parish Priest: Fr John Fowles



Show me your faith apart from your works and I by my works will show you my faith. James 2:18

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Parish Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday from 9:30am to 12:30pm

Mass Times

Saturday: - (Vigil) 6pm

Sunday: - 9:30am & 5:30pm

Monday: - 8am Mass

Tuesday: - 10am, Mass of Mercy, *2nd
Tues of month Anointing of the sick*

Wednesday: - 8am

Thursday: - 7pm, Mass & Family Novena

Friday: - 8am

Saturday: - 8am, Blessed Virgin Mary Mass

Sacraments and Devotions

Adoration: - Fri 8:30am to 10:30am

Precious Blood - 10am

Rosaries: - Thurs 6:30pm and Sun 9am

Reconciliation: - Thursday after Novena

Sat after 8am Mass & 5:30 to 5:50pm

Sun 9 to 9.20am & 5.00 to 5:20pm

Baptism and Marriage: - By appointment

Legion of Mary Praesidia:

Mon: 9:30am - Mystical Rose

Thur: 5.30pm - Mother of Divine Grace

Wed: 8:30am - Mary Immaculate

~ Parish Notices ~

A Parish 'Get Together': in the Marian Centre after the 9.30 am Mass. Please join us, all Welcome

Saint Mary MacKillop Ball: 12th August 2017 commencing at 6.30pm at the Commercial Club Albury. Bookings: \$60 pp, \$45 students (+16) or \$50 pp for table of 10. Please come along and enjoy a three course dinner, dancing, auctions, prizes and drinks at bar prices. Booking Online www.trybooking.com/296197 or call Fiona on 0260 263 733



Hav-A-Chat: - Well girls here we go again, the months are flying and yet we still manage to meet each month at the Thurgoona Golf at 12 noon and this Monday is no exception. See you there, bring a friend.

The Hammer & Nails Team: - Our 'come as you are' gathering of men will be held at the Presbytery on 25th August at 6.00pm. We have a Guest Speaker that I know you will find very interesting. A light meal will be provided and I ask that you bring your own refreshments. Feel free to bring a mate and enjoy a few froffies.



Tues 10am Mass: - St Mary of The Cross (Mackillop) Solemnity and anointing of sick

The Transfiguration of the Lord, Sunday 6th August 2017

Collect: O God, who in the glorious Transfiguration of your Only Begotten Son confirmed the mysteries of faith by the witness of the Fathers and wonderfully prefigured our full adoption to sonship, grant, we pray, to your servants, that, listening to the voice of your beloved Son, we may merit to become co-heirs with him. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God,.....

First reading Daniel 7:9-10,13-14

As I watched: Thrones were set in place and one of great age took his seat. His robe was white as snow, the hair of his head as pure as wool. His throne was a blaze of flames, its wheels were a burning fire. A stream of fire poured out, issuing from his presence. A thousand thousand waited on him, ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. A court was held and the books were opened. I gazed into the visions of the night. And I saw, coming on the clouds of heaven, one like a son of man. He came to the one of great age and was led into his presence. On him was conferred sovereignty, glory and kingship, and men of all peoples, nations and languages became his servants. His sovereignty is an eternal sovereignty which shall never pass away, nor will his empire ever be destroyed.

Responsorial Psalm: The Lord is king, the Most High over all the earth.

Second reading 2 Peter 1:16-19

It was not any cleverly invented myths that we were repeating when we brought you the knowledge of the power and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; we had seen his majesty for ourselves. He was honoured and glorified by God the Father, when the Sublime Glory itself spoke to him and said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour.' We heard this ourselves, spoken from heaven, when we were with him on the holy mountain. So we have confirmation of what was said in prophecies; and you will be right to depend on prophecy and take it as a lamp for lighting a way through the dark until the dawn comes and the morning star rises in your minds.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! This is my Son, my beloved, in whom is all my delight: listen to him. **Alleluia!**

Gospel Matthew 17:1-9

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone. There in their presence he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Lord,' he said 'it is wonderful for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.' When they heard this the disciples fell on their faces overcome with fear. But Jesus came up and touched them. 'Stand up,' he said 'do not be afraid.' And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but only Jesus. As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order, 'Tell no one about the vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.'



Communion Antiphon Cf. 1 Jn 3: 2

When Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

Feasts of the week: **Tues**-St Mary of The Cross (Mackillop), Virgin,
Thur-St Laurence, Deacon, Martyr, **Frid**-St Clare, Virgin

Lord hear our prayers for the:

Sick: Elizabeth Forbes, Ian Cummings, Bob Mannering, Noel Glasgow, Matthew Cameron, Kieran Clifford, Theresa McCooke,

Departed: Brendan Jacobs, John McDonald, Kevin Golding,

Anniversaries: Tess Coleman and Fr Patrick O'Connell

Readers: this week: Sat 6pm - Damien Tocher Sun 9.30am -Mark Mannering

Readers & Cleaners Roster - 12/13 August 2017

Readers: Sat: 6.00 pm - Lucy Findlay Sun: 9.30 am - Kieran Williams

Cleaning: Group 4 Grace Jadko

Financial Report: Please make cheques payable to "Thurgoona Catholic Parish" or Direct Debit: BSB 012-708: Ac No. 3546 39223. Please include name on transfer. First Collection: \$403.75, Envelope: \$500.00+ Direct Debit: \$220.00, Loose: \$184.10

Majestic Voice: Scott Hahn

High on the holy mountain in today's Gospel, the true identity of Jesus is fully revealed in His transfiguration.

Standing between Moses and the prophet Elijah, Jesus is the bridge that joins the Law of Moses to the prophets and psalms. As Moses did, Jesus climbs a mountain with three named friends and beholds God's glory in a cloud. As Elijah did, He hears God's voice on the mountain.

Elijah was prophesied to return as the herald of the messiah and the Lord's new covenant. Jesus is revealed today as that messiah. By His death and resurrection, which He intimates today to the apostles, He makes a new covenant with all creation.

The majestic voice declares Jesus to be God's own beloved Son, in whom the Father is well pleased. God here gives us a glimpse of His inner life. In the cloud of the Holy Spirit, the Father reveals His love for the Son, and invites us to share in that love, as His beloved sons and daughters.

Shadowed by the clouds of heaven, His clothes dazzling white, Jesus is the Son of Man whom Daniel foresees being enthroned in today's First Reading.

He is the king, the Lord of all the earth, as we sing in today's Psalm. But is He truly the Lord of our hearts and minds?

The last word God speaks from heaven today is a command -- "Listen to Him". The word of the Lord should be like a lamp shining in the darkness of our days, as Peter tells us in today's First Reading.

How well are we listening? Do we attend to His word each day?

Let us today rededicate ourselves to listening. Let us hear Him as the word of life, the bright morning star of divine life waiting to arise in our hearts.

