On June 17, 2015, nine members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina were shot to death while participating in a Bible study in the basement of their church. The shooter, a 21 year-old self-proclaimed white supremacist, had wandered into the room that evening. Can you picture it? Nine black church-goers in the midst of prayer and study, look up to see a young white man in jeans and a sweatshirt. Did they politely ask him to leave? Did they threaten to call the police if he did not leave? No. They invited him to join them. For a time, he did just that, he participated in their Bible study. And just as they were ending their session, heads bowed in prayer, he pulled a gun out of his fanny pack and one by one he shot them. Can you imagine the anguish the families of those nine people experienced? I cannot. I cannot even begin to imagine what it must be like to lose a loved one so suddenly and so violently. And that is what makes the next part of this story so stunning. Only three days later, when invited to share a statement at the shooter’s bond hearing, several of the family members turned to the shooter and said “I forgive you”.

In today’s first reading, God instructs Moses to tell the Israelites to be holy as the Lord their God is holy, to bear no hatred in their hearts, to take no revenge, to cherish no grudge and to love their neighbour as themselves. And who is their neighbour? Jesus responds to this question in chapter 10 of Luke’s Gospel with the parable of the good Samaritan: your neighbour is the one who is not like you. In today’s Gospel as Jesus brings his Sermon on the Mount to a close, he seems to save the most challenging part for last: Love not only those who are like you or even those who are not like you. Go one step further. Love your enemy. In this way, you will be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Few of us will be called to love in such horrific circumstances as those who lost loved ones in Charleston that night. But all of us have people around us who are difficult to love. It might be that co-worker who loudly snaps her gum in the next cubicle, or perhaps the committee chair who never listens to our ideas. It might be the protesters blocking traffic, or a family member with whom we haven’t spoken in many months. The wisdom of the world might call us to be righteous in our particular situation, but as Paul tells us in the second reading, the wisdom of this world is foolishness in the eyes of God. God calls us to holiness.

The man who shot those nine people was certainly not a friend. He was indeed their enemy. Yet, even in the midst of unimaginable pain, their family members knew that this man was still their neighbour. From somewhere deep inside themselves they knew that they were called to love that neighbour, to love their enemy. Did their forgiveness mean they no longer hurt? No. I am quite sure the family members of those victims continued to ache deeply. Yet their decision to love and forgive not only stopped a potential cycle of violence and vengeance, it made it possible for good to follow. Only twenty-three days after the shooting, the Confederate flag — long believed to be a racist symbol — was removed from South Carolina’s statehouse.

These family members reflect the spirit of today’s readings. They show us how to be holy and perfect as the Lord our God is holy and perfect. It cannot have been easy for them. But they show us that with God’s grace, it can indeed be done.
LENTEN REFLECTION GROUPS
As with previous years there will be two reflection groups for the Lenten Program again this year. Yvonne Isaak will be hosting a morning session at 9.00am on Mondays, and Mary Collins will be hosting an evening session on Wednesdays at 7.00pm. Thank you both for opening your homes for these groups. Please let either Mary (4671 2288) or Yvonne (4671 1095) know if you are interested in attending. The groups will begin on Monday, 27th February, and Wednesday, 1st March. Please consider this as a wonderful way to live and discover the true message of the Lenten journey. God Bless.

ATTENTION ALL OP SHOP VOLUNTEERS
(or anyone interested in joining to assist)
There will be a meeting regarding the FUTURE of the Op Shop at the New Dynasty Chinese Restaurant on 22nd February at 12.00 Noon – Lunch is included!

Parish Finance Committee
Monday, 6th March at 5.30pm in the Parish Centre.

St Vincent De Paul Meeting
Monday, 13th March at 5.00pm at the Vinnies Store.

Parish Council
Thursday, 16th March at 3.30pm in the Parish House.

During the month of January we celebrated the Baptism of the Ogle & Urquart Family.
Father Andrew Janet &children.
Zane William John Xavier Anthony Thomas, Izayah Matthew Robert & Pippa Maureen Donna, were all welcomed into the St Mary's Parish family.
May they always know God's blessings.

Fancy a game of Indoor Bowls or Cards?
Come along to the Parish Centre at 9.30am on 27th February. New faces very welcome to this social morning.

The next St. Mary's Luncheon will be held on the 6th March, commencing at 11.30am in the Parish Centre. Come and enjoy some time with friends.
All Welcome.
Weekday and Weekend Masses
Tuesday...Kaloma...11.00am
Wednesday......5.30pm   Thursday ...... Adoration 5-6pm

18th/19th February, 2017
SUNDAY MORNING: 9.00am Goondiwindi

25th/26th February, 2017
SATURDAY EVENING: 6.00pm Goondiwindi
SUNDAY MORNING: 8.00am Goondiwindi
9.30am Children’s Mass Goondiwindi

ASH WEDNESDAY – 1st March, 2017
11.15am - with Grades 4 – 6.
5.30pm Mass, with distribution of Ashes.

4th/5th March, 2017  ****CHANGE OF DAY FOR MASS*******
SUNDAY EVENING: 6.00pm Goondiwindi

11th/12th March, 2017
SUNDAY EVENING: 6.00pm Goondiwindi

WE PRAY FOR Those who have entered your kingdom: including
Grant Carrigan, Isabel Coleman, Rosemary Lawson, Phillipa Day, Mary
Wyatt (Roma), Monica Nicholas, Barbara Bishop, Marie Gore, Pat Parson
(Margaret Oliver’s daughter), Sr Joan MacGinley, RSM, Alicia Devine,
Desley Hawker, Greg Oliver, Sr. Colleen Carney, Sr Bess Turvey, Mary
Loveday, Timothy Lawless-Pyne, Fr. Mick Skehan, Audrie Albeck, Peter
Ints, David Hiles, Shirley Byrne, Mona O’Brien, Norm Hilderson, Chris
Finlayson, Maria Magoffin, Mel McGuire, Alma Betts, Darren Benecke,
Robert Picking, Len Collins, Vince Mullins, Mary Terry;
For all whose anniversary is at this time: including Peter Spittles,
Bronwynne Faddy, Paul FitzGerald, Betty “Topsy” Hunt, George Hartin,
Michael Gibbs, Kevin Cook, Claire Park, Mia Beck, Jenny Marsh, Robert
Ford, Dannielle Brennan, Barry Cook, Barbara Bendall, Arthur Gordon, Bill
Bishop, Ronald Keehn, Patrick Morrissey, Brett Linton,
Joan Price, Molly McDonald, Joan Turvey, James ‘Ally’ Brennan, Joyce
Turvey, Georgia Bourke, Carolyn Sewell, Paul Zacka, Albert Knight, Tom
Simpson, Pat & Teresa Mullins
For those who are ill: including Phillip Marshall, Tom Turvey, Bill Dyer,
Trish Dyer, Brian Freeney, Deanna Dawson, Anne Hunt, Kevin Lawless,
Ray Mackie, Peter Keehn, Joan Fleming, Frank Brosnan, Gloria Bale,
David Croft, Tim Bourke, Joe Cowmeadow, Shirley Schluter, Stasie
Lawless, Paul Lloyd, Mavis Gordon, Jean Ramada, Stella McGovern, Jean
Sizer, Francis Lloyd, Madonna Nicoletti, Kathy McDonald, Steph
Adamson, Bailey Brennan, Pauline Robinson, Win Skinner, Sonya
Horrigan, Helen Paige, John Toohey, Marie Cook, Phillip Carney, Shirley
Riley, Therese Sullivan and Joseph Hord; also those ill at home, in
hospital and for those in Kaloma.

Let us pray for all those clergy whose anniversaries occur this month:
Rev Msgr Michael Potter (01/02/44)  Ven A/Deacon Robert O’Shea (02/02/40)
Rev Fr Raymond White (08/02/00)  Most Rev James Byrne DD (11/02/38)
Rev Msgr John Bergin (18/02/00)  Rev Fr Michael Hayes (19/02/60)
Rev Fr Michael Cronin (20/02/92)  Rev Fr Henry MacFarlane (20/02/46)
Rev Fr Michael Sheehan (25/02/47)

Lord, be merciful to your servants, the Bishops and Priests of this Diocese,
welcome them into the company of your Saints, in the Kingdom of light and
peace. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.
Introduction
Today’s readings make even more difficult demands on us regarding our behavior as Christians. We live in a culture where there is so much rhetoric about protecting oneself and one’s property. How do we reconcile this with Jesus’ call to turn the other cheek and love one’s enemy? What does it take to embrace these teachings, which many of us — quite honestly — find foolish?

First Reading
Leviticus 19:1-2. 17-18
Be holy as God is holy.

Responsorial Psalm
The Lord is kind and merciful.

Second Reading
1 Corinthians 3:16-23
You are the temple of God.

ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!
Whoever keeps the word of Christ, grows perfect in the love of God
ALLELUIA!

Gospel
Matthew 5:5:38-48
Turn the other cheek; love your enemy.

Prayers of the Faithful
For all Christians who struggle with the challenge of loving one’s enemy...we pray,

For peacemakers, negotiators and all who work to promote peace and reconciliation between warring nations...we pray,

For those who promote retribution, revenge or hatred toward others who are different...we pray,

For refugees who are forced to flee their homes and for all whose enemies inflict violence...we pray,

For parents, teachers, counselors and all who cultivate children into becoming peacemakers...we pray,

For the sick, the dying and the grieving among us; and for those who have died... we pray,

Let us pray together:
God of mercy, Jesus has challenged us to live in ways that stretch us beyond where we are. Give us the courage to follow the example of peacemakers who loved their enemies. Remind us that all are our brothers and sisters, no matter how they treat us. We seek to be like Jesus, in whose name we pray, Amen.

Parish Information
Parish Priest: Fr. Michael O’Brien
Phone: 0422 308 955 or 4671 1091

St Mary’s School:
Mr Brett Pollard Ph: 4671 1730
Care for the Aged Co-ordinator:
Mrs Jane Blomley Ph: 4675 4132
Parish Office Phone: 4671 5087

Father Michael’s house Phone: 4671 1091
stmarysgdi@bigpond.com
69 Callandoon Street or
PO Box 45, Goondiwindi 4390

Parish Secretary: Mrs Kath Gore
Thursday: 9.00am – 3.00pm