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Founding Editor - Russell Hardiman
Editor - Angela McCarthy
A new liturgical year opens and for some that means that they can once again joyously attend liturgy face to face; to come together as community to celebrate word and sacrament. COVID-19 has woven an intricate web around us all and given us ways to rethink aspects of community and how we need to behave. The anticipation of being together as family at Christmas still might be marred by locked borders and the Delta variant, so there is an anxiety prevalent in our communities. Therefore, the way in which we celebrate Advent and Christmastide must take these feelings into account.

This second fully online edition of Pastoral Liturgy is late going live because the Plenary Council had its first assembly during our publishing timeline. Since I am a member of the Plenary Council your patience is appreciated. Over 300 people gathered in the virtual world of Microsoft Teams for eight days. It is an understatement to say that it was exhausting but at the same time it was exhilarating. The conversations, the prompting of the Spirit, the gatherings for those who were not in lockdown; all proved that we belong to a wonderful Church. The voices of many from diverse views and spiritual backgrounds, men and women, clergy, and laity, all gathering for the good of our Church. With the power of the Holy Spirit evident in the discussions it is clear that we are moving in the right direction. What was presented during the first assembly is now in the hands of the Steering Committee and the Writing Committee. Material will be presented in February for the members of the Council to work on and appropriately respond. We look forward to sharing the gifts of the Spirit as we work together.

This issue of Pastoral Liturgy has a rich variety of material, and the editorial board is very grateful to those who give their time and expertise in articles, reviews and liturgical resources. We welcome Patricia Gemmell onto the team writing the reflections and thank her for her contribution to the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Some of our regular contributors of worthy articles have been very generous again too. Glenn Morrison has contributed a challenging prayerful poem ‘Lost in Cyberspace’. Through the first assembly with more than seven hours a day in the digital world Morrison’s thoughts deeply resonated.

Chris Kan, a member of our editorial board, has written about a very unusual topic that should not be unusual – depression and Christmas. These words are not often together in the same sentence, but Kan has placed some very thought-provoking ideas about how Christmas liturgies and other celebrations should encounter Christ in those suffering loss, pain and isolation. We know that domestic violence also increases at Christmas time and some in our community find it difficult to celebrate so integrating pain into our liturgies and wider celebrations needs careful consideration.

Professor Tom O’Loughlin from the University of Nottingham UK offers a piece of interesting and thought-provoking material around the concepts involved in choosing a new lectionary.
The Australian bishops, as well as many other national bishop conferences, have been considering a way forward. O’Loughlin has also recently published a more detailed analysis in the *Australian Journal of Liturgy*, “New Books, Old Assumptions: identifying the larger dimensions of the debate about ‘which translation of the lectionary should we use?’” (Volume 17, 4, 2021). His wide expertise has enabled him to distil the needs of a liturgical community in whatever shape or form they exist, alongside the needs of our Tradition as well. Both articles are very well worth reading.

Every Advent we need to reconsider our liturgical intentions as it is too easy at times to just do what we did last year as we are very busy at this time of the year. Gerard Moore has provided a short chapter about Advent from his wonderful little book *Earth Unites with Heaven: an introduction to the liturgical year* (Morning Star Publishing, 2014). Reconnecting with origins and liturgical development really helps energise the liturgical energy.

Fr Tom Ryan has been a contributor to Pastoral Liturgy in many different ways over a very long time and he has been writing delightful reflections. In this one, he centres his reflection around Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the United Nations. I first read his book, *Markings*, many decades ago and it occupied my mind and my spiritual reflections for along time. I still dip into it for material every now and then because his unique perspective offers a freshness as well as a constancy that is wonderful in its balance. Ryan’s reflections give us a very good taste of it.

Fr Tom Scirghi is also a long-time contributor to this journal. He has worked at Notre Dame campus in Fremantle several times and his teaching and preaching abilities are excellent. He is always able to challenge us to shift from our comfort zone into something a little more delicate where we must think more deeply about what we are doing. In his reflection on work, carefully directed to the Australian environment, he develops scripturally and spiritually what we desire and what we need.

Another contribution from Professor Gerard Moore for this issue is an article about the organic development of liturgical change and how that should and could affect the Plenary Council’s deliberations. As a member of the Council and still enthralled by the ideas that surfaced, I think that this article should be read by many members. There is a lack of clarity around what ‘organic development’ means and Moore clearly poses related questions. Angela Gorman has provided us with two music reviews of recent publications with her usual attention to detail of a liturgical, pastoral and musical nature. She is an enthusiastic and expert contributor to the world of Australian liturgical music.

Book reviews by Tom Ryan, Glenn Morrison and me offer some of the recent gems that are available and worth our attention.

The liturgical resources once again include the ritual for the lighting of the Advent wreath as well as material for the Sundays and Feasts. We hope that you are able to enjoy them and use them to advantage in your parish, school or other setting.

May this Advent and Christmas season be fulfilling and full of beautiful celebrations for you all.

**Dr Angela McCarthy**
Lost in Cyberspace

Lord, why do You squeeze and twist my heart? What makes You wrung my poor spirit? Is it because I feel so lost in cyberspace, in a virtual reality of algorithms hacking into my soul?
Your grip tightens in my entrails, and I feel Your hand tugging and pulling, grabbing and clutching.
The pain is unbearable. How it hurts to feel the frenzy of Your presence.
Is redemption like this, a wrenching force snatching at and seizing the body, heart and soul?
Why do You wrestle with me so, to disturb by online wanderings, to challenge by robotic urgings?
To somehow reinstall the divine neurons of faith and grace, to compel a tug of war between us?

I feel unable to place my spirit in your hand. It is a simple act of faith. But I am lost in amusement!
Commitment, trust, promise and covenant, obedience, formation and journey,
These ancient sounding words, these Edenic gifts, are they programs of your divine intelligence?
Help me Lord for I need to chat with you. I know I am lost in a virtual present that never passes.
I want to escape to savour your "Joy and gladness ... thanksgiving and the voice of song" (Isa 51:3).
I fear anonymity, a cyberspace wilderness of chat robots dampening my creativity and imagination.
I do not know how to commit my spirit into Your hands. Is this why You squeeze my being so?

Lord, how the neurons of salvation begin to shock my automated thinking.
I sense that salvation is not a technological advancement of artificial intelligence introducing
The new gods or goddesses, chat robots and personal assistants, incarnations of AI.
Apple’s Siri and Viv, Microsoft Cortana, and the Amazonians Alexa and Echo
All say they are friends. And Humanoids like Rose, Erica and Pepper act like they know everything.
These new gods and goddesses have disturbed and excited me. But now I want to visualise
New realities amongst the stardust of the future, to teach my humanity the sanity of Your love.

I hunger for your presence O Lord. When will Your divine hand create in me a new heart?
When you tug at my conscience, when you make me shiver, when you remind me I have a soul,
When I feel the turbulence of your presence, I know that You are the Lord.
You tell me that to love is to be vulnerable and even to bear a broken heart.
Then Lord, I ask, I want to know, “What is heaven and what is hell?”
Or is my attachment to virtual worlds a sign of a slow death, that I find it so hard to forgive others,
People whom I have encountered so much of hell, and so little of heaven?

I try to capture a glimpse of your steadfast love fragmented by armies of machines.
The world is changing and adapting to strange and bizarre forms of artificial geniuses and genies.
Search Engines and online platforms create a polluted world of monsters taking form
Within and without, haunting the affective genius of human existence, of wisdom and love.
The surveillance of the dark one, of evil data, watches and catches any bot or human in
cyberspace.
Am I one of these? I know how to surf the internet and send emails. I know the basics, and
more!
The computer, my companion in darkness, teaches me new things. I press keys, therefore I
am!

Perhaps I realise a little, Lord, why Your hand grabs and clutches near my soul. I am no IP
address!
You want to free me, to awake the entrails of compassion and humanity, of being and
existence,
To touch the awareness button in the depths of my heart, and awake a primal fear
Of God within, to love and adore the gardens of Creation, the place of Your Holy Spirit.
Yes, I know I am tempted by the super-information capacities processing an artificial future.
I want to escape from simulations and computations of data with no face of mercy and
compassion.
Deliver me Lord from myself, my automated freedom simulated by machines of virtual
reality.

“Into your hand, I commit my spirit” (Ps 31:5). I want not to become a humanoid, void of
emotion.
Into the sound of silence, into the cave and tomb, out of sight from any electronic brain,
I want to imagine a new world of the human spirit, to overcome the robotic creature in me,
To await for something ever new, to behold and touch the wounds of the risen Christ.
I desire to know the Messiah, to dream of him walking amongst the milky-green eucalyptus
trees
Where no byte or bot, no program or computer can exile my spirit. O Come, O Come,
Emmanuel!

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen.
A Blue Christmas?
Celebrating with those who are suffering loss, pain and isolation
By Chris Kan

This article is peer reviewed

The Christmas period\(^1\) can be a time of striking opposites. Amongst the carols, presents, and mountains of food are often hidden stories of debt, fractured relationships, lost hopes and mental illness. The pandemic, and periods of enforced and chosen isolation, have brought all of these into sharp relief, especially at times that evoke the importance of family and communal celebration.

Liturgical celebrations can be an important buttress in assisting people to both survive and enter more deeply into the Christmas period. Gertrude Mueller observes that it is in ritual and rite that worshipping communities can take into account our most painful human experiences of loss, grief, hunger, pain, sickness, jealousy, guilt and sinfulness. Slowly, and in good time, ritual time, our painful feelings are transformed into the feelings of reparation, repentance, hope and salvation\(^2\).

Two of the key themes for the Advent and Christmas seasons are \textit{waiting} and \textit{hope}\(^3\). Whilst these themes are both incarnational and eschatological in nature, many of those who walk through our church doors each December are both waiting and hoping, often in total unawareness, for peace, redemption, and renewal in their personal lives. They may have a longing for things to be better - or at least different to how they are now. The founder of \textit{Pastoral Liturgy}, Russell Hardiman, reminded readers that the Christmas period was the very time in which we ‘welcome the marginalised, welcome home the ones struggling with their life choices, (and) show an attitude of inclusiveness’\(^4\).

Few involved in the planning and preparation of liturgy are unaware, or untouched, by these factors. The more difficult task is integrating these realities within a worshipping community - either in the context of a stand-alone liturgy or as an overall lens for December celebrations.

\textbf{A Blue Christmas}

Regardless of where we celebrate the Christmas season - in the Northern Hemisphere with freezing temperatures, snow and being confined to the indoors, or the Southern Hemisphere with its very social, often outdoor celebrations - psychosocial difficulties such as anxiety, depression and relational issues are ever present. Many, regardless of location, have a difficult time at Christmas in terms of mood and emotion.

\begin{footnotesize}
\footnote{1} I will use the term \textit{Christmas} throughout this article to refer to the Advent and Christmas period, except where specifically noted.


\footnote{3} For an excellent discussion of these themes see Adrien Nocent, \textit{The Liturgical Year: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany} (vol. 1) (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2013).

\end{footnotesize}
Christian communities have a role in supporting others through this period. Robert Schreiter\(^5\) suggests that congregations can become agents of care for others, in the face of traumatic events and experiences, through three distinct approaches:

- accompanying others with patience and care
- providing a hospitable environment of trust, kindness and safety
- reconnecting those who suffer to the broader community

A recent study provides a clinical confirmation to these ideas; that despite the Christmas season being notable for time pressures, social obligations and financial concerns, which affect the well-being of the community at large, religious practice is a protective factor.\(^6\) Religious Christians – by which the study means practising – don’t find Christmas as stressful in the weeks leading up to the celebration, nor do they suffer an emotional decline after Christmas when compared with the wider population.\(^7\)

Liturgy that is purposefully designed to address the ambiguities of emotions and responses around the Christmas season, especially if approached via Schreiter’s suggestions, is often called *Blue Christmas*.\(^8\) It is often stand-alone in style, i.e. utilising an order of prayer, song and symbol not connected to the regular cycle of services. Whilst this works well, and has become an anticipated moment in some worshipping communities, it is not the only model, and there are opportunities to connect these themes to a parish’s normal liturgical life. For example, themes of restoration and healing connect easily with Evening Prayer / Vespers, as the symbols of light and entrusting to God what has occurred in the past, both recent and historical, are an effective link. Compline too is a viable option, as we pray for peace and deep rest from all that our day, and life, has brought us.

In reality, a morning setting may suit many communities and Morning Prayer / Lauds presents the opportunity to encounter the dawning of a new day, trusting in God’s providence and mercy, providing resonance for those on a journey of hopeful healing. Both my research and experience suggest that this type of liturgy does not often occur within the context of Eucharist, perhaps as, with notable exceptions, its multi-layered symbolism and dense, established texts make it difficult for those returning to Church to access.

Regardless of form, these liturgies remain a ritual celebration - gathering in God’s name to acknowledge, share and heal our suffering. This inner dynamism of moving from a place of retreat to a place of encounter creates liminal space – a place of transition between ‘home and the destination’\(^9\) – where the love of God can be encountered. In the relative safety of ritual and rites we can move out of our fear and trauma by ‘remember rightly’: acknowledging ‘who we are, where we belong and what we hope for.’\(^10\)

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\(^7\) Mutz, *Christmas and Subjective Well-Being*, 1362.

\(^8\) Also sometimes known as *Longest Night* (in the Northern Hemisphere), or a *Service of Solace* – to avoid any Elvis implications!


Gathering and Communicating
This paper cannot provide a ‘set’ liturgy that can be downloaded, printed and delivered (although at the end of this article I have provided some links which might help you do just that!). Each liturgical community has its own dynamics, history, and practices, so at best we can adapt someone else’s work with care. Wholesale importation generally ends up being less than satisfactory, and at worst irrelevant for those participating. Whilst I am holding the idea of a stand-alone celebration in mind, I propose some themes around which communities might think through their liturgical offerings this Christmas. Most of these are just good practice, and I hope helpful reminders.

Space: Sacred and Safe
Richard Giles, an Anglican liturgist who specialises in reordering worship spaces, bravely notes that the ‘seating plan of any liturgical assembly … (has) … the power to spell out, to first-timer and regular alike, exactly what is going on this room’.11 There is a delicate balance to maintain between sharing each other’s burdens by companionable closeness yet providing enough room so that attendees can feel comfortable in their own space. It remains important to emphasise our interconnectedness and awareness of one another, downplaying status and privilege and building shared involvement.12

Depending on the arrangement of the building in which the liturgy will be celebrated, it may be difficult to arrange the space so that people can both see and be close to one another, without being pressed in. Circular spaces are congenial to community building, and a more traditional cross-shaped building may mean people space out too much. People have become used to spaces being defined for them when they attend worship in these pandemic times, so marking out space is a viable option. Roping off pews to encourage sitting in a particular area, utilising the nave or a smaller chapel, can all reduce the impact of a large church space.

Attendees, especially those estranged from Church communities, need to feel that the liturgy will be a ‘safe space’ physically, emotionally and spiritually. Encouraging people to bring a friend or support person, especially in the case of a stand-alone service, will assist in easing feelings of vulnerability and exposure, as will the availability of tissues, water, and easy access to exits. Feeling trapped physically, especially in the face of strong emotion, is not conducive to a ritual experience.

Texts and Language
How language is used in liturgy is always vital, and even more so in contexts where it may have had a history of being used to wound or control. Rather, considering how language can be used to build up, heal and sustain worshippers is central to worshipping communities’ outreach to those on the margins. Adrian Nocent reminds us that we ‘must ask ourselves whether or not the liturgical language, images and symbols we use are intelligible to our contemporaries’.13 When considering forms for worship that invite in those on the fringes of the Church, an awareness of both the way in which we use language, and the biblical texts we choose, are worth some sustained attention.

This especially applies when considering familiar texts, for example, the Lord’s Prayer or the Hail Mary. These traditional texts can be comforting points of connection for those who are tentatively returning, but they may also be ‘triggering’ if Church has been part of the trauma people have suffered. We cannot, of course, plan for each and every individual case, but if we are privileged to know some

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12 Giles, Creating Uncommon Worship, 57.
13 Adrian Nocent, The Liturgical Year, 4.

https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol52/iss1/35
DOI: 10.59405/2653-7834.1073
background stories, we can make appropriate decisions in advance. The same logic applies to choosing a biblical translation for scripture texts - inclusive language for God can serve to avoid imagery that may be oppressive or remind worshippers of negative experiences.

Scripture is foundational in our discerning of what God is doing in the here and now, and the themes of waiting, preparation and hope are universal to our human experience. Those who struggle to celebrate Christmas are often addressed in the Advent texts14 - they are those who feel they have little hope, those forgotten and excluded. They hunger to be ‘filled with good things’, for relationships to be healed, for mercy to be shown.

While there are a myriad of scripture readings that could be used, the lectionary selections for Advent are helpful in themselves, adding a connection for those attending multiple services. Fortunately, the set readings are reasonably similar for both the Roman Catholic Lectionary and the Revised Common Lectionary.15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Lectionary</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advent 1C</td>
<td>Psalm 25</td>
<td>In you, Lord my God, I put my trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advent 2C</td>
<td>Baruch 5: 1 - 9</td>
<td>Take off the garment of your sorrow and affliction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advent 3C</td>
<td>Isaiah 12:2-6</td>
<td>Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Liturgies that are designed for meditation and reflection do not always need more words in the form of a sermon or homily. Allowing the power of proclaimed word, symbol, silence and music to heal and comfort participants is key. However, some communities may expect an oration as part of any church service. In that case I would urge both brevity and simplicity – more of a thought for the day rather than an elongated exposition.

Silence
Antonio Donghi beautifully notes that silence is ‘the living openness of the human heart towards the infinite.’16 While it can of course be difficult for those who are struggling with strong emotion, or who have no experience of Church or of contemplation, a contemplative attitude towards celebrations can create space for encounter, for listening and for presence. Liturgically, this can be helpfully enacted in two distinct ways. Firstly, the unhurried celebration of liturgy in which there are natural pauses and moments for reflection and contemplation. Allowing space for words and readings to resonate and echo back is important, especially if we have removed too much verbosity!

However, a more profound period of silence may also assist in entering deeply into the mystery of the moment - perhaps as a part of intercessory prayer, after the readings, or utilising a Taize-style extended silence of five to seven minutes. In these ways of doing silence, we continue our sense of being together as ‘liturgical silence is not individual, but communal: we are silent together, actively quiet, purposely still.’17

15 Readings available at https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/lections.php?year=C&season=Advent
Music
Whilst the immediate thought for music at this time of year is often Carols, many people have stopped really ‘hearing’ them as they have been besieged since early October in advertisements and shopping centres. Making the service too ‘Christmassy’ can easily reinforce the painful experiences and negative emotions that make this time of year difficult for some. It is worth thinking through how music can be used as a point of connection and as an opportunity for meditation, reflection, and healing.

There are two distinct ways in which music can play a role in solace and healing during liturgy: Music in therapy and music as therapy. Whilst both are modes of participation, they differ in the role the congregation plays. Music in therapy describes how music may be listened to during a liturgy, encouraging reflection and entering into the present moment. This may be a sung solo, an instrumentalist or a recording. Solo instruments are very effective and if your community has a talented musician – I have used both a cellist and clarinetist to great effect – this can add a great deal to the liturgy.

There are a wide variety of secular songs that make excellent choices for a reflective moment. For example, Ron Sexsmith’s ‘Maybe this Christmas’ contains a facing of the present reality (‘maybe this Christmas will mean something more’) with the opportunity for concrete action (‘maybe forgiveness will ask us to call, someone we love, someone we’ve lost’). Even though secular, there is a strong sense of Advent hopefulness and encounter in the text.

The second way music can be helpful is music as therapy, most usually occurring in liturgy as singing together. Outside of the fact that communal singing has incredible mental health benefits, texts that pickup themes of ‘praise, lament, worship, benediction, reframing, participation … emotions of grief, anger, aggression, depression, disappointment’ can provide an encounter with our own reality and a sharing of each other’s burdens, even though unnamed.

One helpful example comes from Australian text writer Elizabeth Smith, who often provides new words to existing tunes. The last verse of her hymn, ‘When will it be that the waiting will end’ brings all of the ‘baggage’ that participants bring to worship, especially the hurt, grief and loss, and offers it to God for transformation:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Holy Eternal One, over to you} \\
\text{Now we hand all that we can and can’t do.} \\
\text{Hopes, tears and questions: we offer you these;} \\
\text{Give us, in answer, a share of your peace.} 
\end{align*}
\]

In a more Christmassy vein, John Bell from the Wild Goose Worship Group based in Iona, offers earthy texts which pick up both Advent themes with a good deal of honesty. ‘Not the powerful’ from his collection ‘Innkeepers and Light Sleepers’ brings both a sense of justice and inclusion. It begins ‘Not the powerful, not the privileged … were the first to hold God’s hand’, and continues in this manner, dismantling any sense of pedigree or achievement, instead championing the homeless, wandering and forgotten in the Christmas narrative.

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19 Ron Sexsmith, Maybe this Christmas, Nettwerk Music Group (2002).
20 For example, Laura Plumb and Theodore Stickley ‘Singing to Promote Mental Health and Well-being.’ Mental Health Practice 20, no. 8 (2017): 31.
21 Calitz, Healing liturgy: The role of music and singing, 8.
22 E. J. Smith, Songs for Saints and Sinners, (Bentleigh Victoria, Beatus Resources, 2008).
In conclusion: Afterwards
The liturgy after the liturgy is important too! After acknowledging and praying for their own needs and the needs of the wider community, connecting with others is essential, as much as participants can manage. Sharing the sign of Peace at the end of a liturgy, safely as local guidelines permit, draws people into a dialogue with one another. Sharing a supper, a glass of wine, or tea and coffee, extends this connection, allowing participants to re-integrate before returning to ‘normal’ life.

This short reflection is only a beginning, hopefully stimulating some ideas for leaders within their own communities to design and offer opportunities for those who find the Christmas season difficult. The themes I have offered are ways of providing ‘safe’ points of entry for those estranged from the Church, and whilst the specifics of texts, music and arrangement will differ in each unique worshipping community, the importance of meeting people where they are at, does not.

The Iona based Wild Goose Worship Group, in their wonderful book *Doing December Differently*, observe that there are many different versions of family and solo Christmases, both full of ambiguities and tensions. When we connect our communal liturgical life to the realities of the ‘everyday’ lives of those who attend our places of worship, we deepen both our relationships with one another, and our understanding of where and how the Spirit is at work. Surely this might go a long way towards easing a *Blue Christmas*.

Postscript
For reference, here are some of the more helpful planning ideas available on the internet.
http://www.textweek.com/christmas.htm
http://www.clergyleadership.com/hope/blueChristmas.cfm
https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2012/11/blue-christmas-worship-resource-index.html

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A New Lectionary: is it a matter of picking a version?
Thomas O'Loughlin

The Tablet recently reported that the Australian bishops are now – like so many other English-language episcopal conferences – thinking about a new translation of the scriptures for use in the liturgy. This is a process that is commonly, but inaccurately, referred to as having ‘a new lectionary.’

In this debate there will be shouts from many sides in this form: ‘I am for Jerusalem Bible!’ ‘I am for English Standard Version!’ ‘I am for formal equivalence!’ or ‘I am for inclusive language!’ It is all reminiscent of Corinth in the mid-first century CE and disputes about the baptism of Paul and that of Apollos.

But is there a more basic question to answer?

The debate about ‘which version’ – for all its validity – distracts everyone (bishops included) from recognising many other real problems that reading the scriptures in a lectionary poses. With all the focus on ‘which translation,’ we are missing the bigger issue. Do we need more than one translation?

**Picking a version**

First, the very idea that it is a matter of ‘deciding on a version’ is itself a decision that is not intrinsically either liturgical or biblical: it is simply a reflex from the world of printing during the Renaissance when both Catholics and Protestants printed out lections in full. The essence of a lectionary is not a large book of snippets, but a list of biblical texts arranged according to a plan. Bible translations can come and go, but a lectionary can be used with any of them. The lectionary is both the list and its rationale; it is only by derivation a book of printed readings. This might seem obvious, but it is noticeable in debates about picking translations that many who have strong feelings about versions have little appreciation of the lectionary’s architecture.

So, what should be our starting point? A lectionary is a means of bringing ancient texts that have been valued in liturgical gatherings before us in such a manner that they are an element in our liturgy. This ordering is based on our liturgical needs today: hence the plan of any lectionary is built upon the structures of the liturgy – most especially the liturgical year and the other needs being celebrated (e.g. a wedding), not upon any supposed ‘plan of the bible.’ As such, the lectionary’s use of biblical texts is a ‘normative canon’ rather than, what is found on a bible’s contents’ page, a ‘prescriptive canon.’ Again, this seems so obvious as not to require being stated, but its immediate corollary is often not noticed: a lectionary is not a ‘guided reading of the bible’ nor is it a ‘bible study plan’ nor is it a catechetical programme. Though a lectionary can supply these within a community’s life that is, a lectionary is actually about having recollections (Justin Martyr’s apomnemoneumata) for celebrations, answering our liturgical needs, rather than focussing on the texts as texts or as part of a larger anthology: ‘The Bible’. This liturgical use has meant that in every situation in Christian liturgy there has been a need to engage in translation into Greek, Syriac, Latin, and any number of ancient and modern languages. Again, this might appear obvious, but note its corollary: one can imagine a liturgical text composed in Latin (e.g. the Missale Romanum) which is then celebrated in either Latin or translation, likewise a liturgy may be composed in English and then celebrated in that language (e.g. Common Worship), but one cannot use a lectionary...
without translation being involved. So, the matter of a version is not accidental to our use of the scriptures in worship but must be looked upon as a basic issue for resolution before and when we celebrate.

But is this really a difficulty? After all, we need bibles in Christian life more generally, and lectionaries for centuries have just used, for the most part, whatever is the most common version in that Church’s culture. Can we not just up-date the version used? If that is the case, then the only issue seems to be between a ‘formal equivalence’ and a ‘dynamic equivalence’ translation strategy. In Catholic circles there is a marked tendency among conservatives to view the Latin liturgy as verbally inerrant (e.g. the transcriptional errors embedded in Eucharistic Prayer 1 were translated verbatim) and to imagine the sanctioned Latin version of the Scriptures as having a quasi-inerrant status. Equally, since the Churches have long used formal equivalence versions, many who prefer older forms for aesthetic reasons tend to defend such translations on the assumption that religion should preserve, as part of its inner rationale, the archaic so that their ‘today’ will be like the golden past of their imagination. By contrast, the defenders of dynamic equivalence appeal to such notions as the existential needs of the community, the need for comprehension, while being conscious of the cultural specificity of texts both in terms of their origins and contemporary uses. Aesthetically, this group see the archaic not as a golden age but as reeking of stale air and cobwebs and declare their affection for the bright lights not only of today but tomorrow.

A moment’s reflection should reveal that this choice – whatever might be claimed in a document such as Liturgiam authenticam – is illusory. Any text, biblical or otherwise, that is going to be valued (as distinct from casually reading a novel translated from another language) must be translated in both ways. If one uses any formal equivalence translation, then one must – at least silently to oneself – further translate it into one’s own language and diction: and even those fluent in reading the originals find themselves doing this as they seek to understand the text. Indeed, it is this very fact of each user making a dynamic equivalence translation of her/his own, however inaccurate, that is the more serious justification for the other strategy. It is only by apparently departing from the original forms that one does not end up with an endless sequence of private / idiosyncratic translations. Likewise, anyone valuing a text which has been read in a dynamic translation finds themselves producing a formal translation of words and phrases when once they need to comment on the detail on the meaning. No individual or group who values a text produced in another cultural setting can ever be satisfied with just one translation or approach to translation: they will need both approaches and yet others besides. As to the aesthetic reasons given for particular translation styles, we shall have to return to this.

Translating the scriptures for liturgy
If no single translation should ever prove sufficient in the matter of ‘choosing a bible,’ are there any specific issues that need to be addressed when we come to consider the use of the scriptures in the liturgy? Three issues must be uppermost. First, and foremost, the texts must be capable of oral reproduction in an aural environment. While this should be obvious there is a problem in many communities where the public reading is almost ignored through the presence of individual texts and the assumption that this reading is, in reality, just announcing the text on which the preaching will be based. However, listening together and reflecting together is one of the basic liturgical activities: shared memories are recalled, shared beliefs are reaffirmed, and the common listening to a common treasury of texts becomes a statement of identity. We appreciate shared listening when we engage with common stories. It is all too easy to slip out of this liturgical vision of sharing memories into a
‘biblical studies mode’ and imagine that ‘bible reading’ at the liturgy is an end in itself to which are tagged on other activities. But if we are sharing memories in common listening, then the form of the translation must be one that has been developed both for oral presentation (this demands that it reflect the structures of speech rather than writing for reading) and one that is intended to be absorbed aurally (this demands that it be possible to follow an often complex text – as in listening to Paul – or a detailed story without the assistance of a printed text before one).

By contrast, despite decades of research on the environment of ancient orality that, on the whole, ancient writings were written to be heard or – as in the case of the gospels – as a support to memory, most translations are produced with reading in mind. Moreover, that reading is done alone, almost certainly in silence, and very probably at a desk. While, again, scripture scholars often note that ancient writers did not work at a desk, nor in a library, there is a constant tug on any biblical translator, be that an individual or a committee, to produce a text that has the classroom in mind. This means that whichever bible one takes up and no matter which translation ‘philosophy’ has been employed, the result is a book for reading. This is as it should be, but the setting of the liturgy is not the same as the study.

The second demand relates to the fact that these texts are heard in a variety of celebrations. The same biblical passage can be read in many different pastoral settings. And, the community may be homogenous one, or highly diverse. It may include children and adults, some deeply committed to liturgy, the occasional celebrants, and those who are virtually un-churched. The notion that one version fits all is illusory. This need to produce specific versions for specific contexts has long been recognised in one case: lectionaries for use in celebrations with children. However, we need not only a child-friendly lectionary, but to extend that principle across the range of celebrations.

Thirdly, while modern lectionaries can justly pride themselves on their architecture by which they bring well thought out selections into use over a three-year cycle, it is also the case that lections are heard as gobbets: the community that hears this lection today, may not remember what they heard last week, while very often the regularity of being present will not match the regularity of the lectionary plan. As such, each lection, or the lections of a particular celebration, has to stand on its own, being both comprehensible and, potentially, of value to that specific assembly. This means not only do we need different versions for different situations, but the style in which a miracle story it narrated needs to be different from that of collection of sayings, part of a letter has to be different from a piece of oracular speech, a piece of poetry has to be different in tone and style from a piece of historical narrative. So even if one is regularly celebrating with a fairly homogeneous group one might need to translate one passage formally, another dynamically, and another in some other way appropriate to that piece of text. Alas, most Bible translations adopt a fairly uniform style across the whole anthology or, as in the case of some dynamic equivalent versions, over whole books or categories of books. But in the liturgy we do not read a whole book, but just a snippet – and it is the style of that snippet that counts.

Two other considerations need to be recalled. The liturgy takes place coram Deo and as such must express the welcome and inclusion that is part of the kerugma of the Christ event. Anything that alienates someone such that they experience a sense of exclusion from the liturgy has no place there or we are arrogating to ourselves a right of judgement that belongs to God alone. It is this basic principle of Christ—ian liturgy that must govern the use of inclusive language. This is not simply a matter of adding ‘and sisters’ when the Greek text has but adelphoi – as the NRSV has done – but of making sure that there are no texts used which are so rooted in a patriarchal culture.
that many women today sense exclusion. The rationale that one must bear witness to 'the original' is not a countervailing argument here for while the text originated in a culture and should be studied in the context of that culture (this is a matter of historical interpretation), theologically we believe that God is as available to every moment as God is to a particular moment in the past: we, therefore, do not canonise any moment in creation’s history as the ‘golden age’. The liturgy is in the divine presence now, and nothing read in this now must serve to subvert the divine will that all should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. The question of inclusive language is not merely a matter of gender inclusive language, but of removing any language which would exclude anyone. So homophobic language, racist language, or language that pillories the handicapped, or sanctions any form of enslavement (as more of our texts do than we often to admit) simply has no place if the liturgy is a celebration of the kerugma today.

The second issue is that the Liturgy of the Word is not simply a matter of speech but includes song – again from the liturgy’s inherent nature that it mingles with the liturgy in the heavenly court. Therefore, any text that is going to be set to music may have to be specially translated with the needs of its musical use as a key criterion. Again, this should be obvious; alas, recent experience of taking poorly translated texts and slavishly seeking to put them to music should be a warning to us.

How many versions do we need?
While this will be read as a ‘counsel of perfection’ we need translations that are sensitive to:

- actual liturgical use
- the celebration
- the make-up of celebrating assembly
- the nature of the text being read as a snippet
- the dangers excluding member of God’s People
- being used in singing

In effect we need to think of all translations as a quarry – it sounds better as a ‘thesaurus’ – from which might help us in the production of particular lections for actual occasions. However, in practice it means that we should be aiming at producing three specific printed lectionaries that can be in regular use. First, we need lections that are suitable to be used in small situations where a highly formal translation does not facilitate reflection. Listening in a small, perhaps informally arranged group is very different from listening in a large gathering where liturgy may be serving other functions for the group quite apart from its own intrinsic nature as an assembly of the baptised praising God. Second, we need specific lectionaries not only for children’s liturgy, but those ‘rites of passage’ where we may have in our gathering many for whom hearing the scriptures is an alien event. And, thirdly, we need a more rhetorically aware translation that is suitable for larger and more formal worship.

In short, just as any public speaker knows that one must adapt one’s style to the setting, so the idea of a single translation is one taken without attention to the situations in which it will be heard. We have forgotten our liturgical basics; we have missed an opportunity.
The season of advent signals to the faithful that Christmas is approaching. In doing this it also reveals the deeper liturgical understanding of the celebration of the nativity, providing a theological and spiritual reference point for the many cultural, social and devotional meanings and practices attached to this joyous feast.

There are two themes underpinning Advent. The first is the mystery of the incarnation. Christ, the light, has come into our world and dwelt among us as one like us, fully human and yet fully divine: And the word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory (Jn 1:14). The second is that Christ will return and complete the renewal of all things in grace. The sense is that our celebration of the incarnation fills us with hope as we await with anticipation his definitive coming when the entire creation is taken up into the full glory of God. The season reflects a wonderful play on words that we find at the close of Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, where the translation reads: Our Lord, come! (1 Cor 16:22). Yet the text is ambiguous and either can mean ‘the Lord has come’ or be an invitation to the Lord to come. This double sense is captured in Advent.

**THE ORIGINS OF ADVENT**

There are a number of aspects to the history of Advent that allow us to understand its current form. The name comes from the Latin verb ‘to come to’, *advenire*. The term *adventus* was well established in pagan Roman religion to refer to the annual visit of a god to his or her shrine to be present to the people and was quickly taken up by Christian theologians to convey belief in the incarnation and second coming of Christ.

There is evidence from the late fourth century that in parts of Gaul the custom was to hold baptisms during Christmas, and consequently the weeks leading up to time were given over to baptismal preparation. This is our first hint in the development of the season of Advent and gave the time a slightly penitential character since it involved fasting, prayer and self reflection. Some two centuries later the season was established in the city of Rome. However, there it was not related to baptism, and so the penitential aspects were not present. Rather the celebrations were focused on the feast of the incarnation and joyful anticipation of the Second Coming of Christ. Nevertheless, during December in Rome there was a fast in preparation for the olive harvest, and so the month had something of a penitential flavour. In sum, we can see here the origins of our current focus on waiting and expectation, as well as the muted penitential spirit that is part of our sense of the season.

The mention of the olive harvest is a reminder that Advent coincided with the onset of winter, the shortening of the days, the coming of difficult and dangerously cold weather, and a general sense of the precariousness of life and the power of death. All these are at play in the spirituality of the season but make this liturgical period somewhat difficult to embrace when celebrated outside the northern hemisphere.
THE FOUR WEEKS OF ADVENT
The four weeks that make up the season are divided along the two emphases. The readings and prayers for period from the First Sunday up until the 16th of December lead us to meditate the second coming of Christ. The Preface for this time says it well: Now we watch for the day, hoping that the salvation promised us will be ours when Christ our Lord will come again in glory (Preface of Advent I). Across the three year cycle the Gospel reading for the first Sunday reminds us to stay awake because our salvation is near at hand. The Gospels for the Second and Third Sundays speak of John the Baptist and his message that salvation is immanent. The first readings on these Sundays deal with prophecies of the coming of the messiah, and are taken mainly from the prophet Isaiah, though Jeremiah, Baruch and Zephaniah are called upon in Year C. The second readings carry themes that fit the meaning of Advent. The readings for the weekdays feature prominently the prophet Isaiah, with his promises of the salvation that will come.

From December 16th the focus is directly on the celebration of the Nativity. Again we find this clearly in the preface: In his love Christ has filled us with joy as we prepare to celebrate his birth, so that when he comes he may find us watching in prayer, our hearts filled with wonder and praise (Preface of Advent II). Each of the Gospel readings in the three year Sunday cycle prepares us for the birth of the Lord. Similarly, the weekday Gospels are concerned with the events that led up to the nativity, while the texts for the first reading open up a series of Old Testament prophecies about the coming of the messiah. The season closes with morning Mass on Christmas Eve.

The liturgical colour for Advent is violet, signifying a combination of preparation, penitence and expectation. Often blue is used, moving away from the penitential aspects and looking into the sense of the depth of night which will give way to reveal the coming of salvation.

ADVENT DEVOTIONS
The most popular Advent devotion is the wreath containing four candles, one for each of the Sundays leading up to Christmas. There can be variations in the number of candles, but the sense is to mark the time until the birth of Christ, and all the celebrations and gifts that follow. Wreathes and candles carry a strong sense of a season entering more deeply into winter, and a community looking to break the hold of darkness and the cold. The sense of the second coming of Christ seemingly has not found a devotional base.
At Worship with Dag Hammarskjöld
By Tom Ryan

‘True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth’ (Jn 4:23).

How are those words from John’s Gospel true of Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the United Nations—the only person to have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize posthumously—who died in a plane crash in 1961? We look to his personal journal, translated and published in 1964 as Markings. The collection had a surprising impact, with certain passages often quoted, both then and now.

Markings could be rendered as ‘guideposts’ or ‘cairns’ used by mountaineers (a pastime of the author) as reference points on an unchartered mountain. With its Swedish and Lutheran background, the journal captures Hammarskjöld’s cultivated practice of conscious (and honest) self-scrutiny, a poetic sensibility, a persistent desire for truth and, significantly, for a relationship with God centred on the person of Jesus Christ.

From 1954 onwards, Hammarskjöld’s journal was something akin to his personal Book of Common Prayer—reflecting his regular access to the Anglican version, the Scriptures and medieval mystical writers. To return to the opening question: in what sense does Markings reveal how Hammarskjöld was a ‘true worshipper’, honouring and appreciating God from the deepest recesses of his mind and heart? Let’s ponder this text from 1954.

Thou who are over us,
Thou who art one of us,
Thou who
—
Also within us,
May all see Thee – in me also,
May I prepare the way for Thee,
May I thank Thee for all that shall fall to my lot,
May I also not forget the needs of others,
Keep me in Thy love
As Thou wouldest that all should be kept in mine.
May everything in this my being be directed
to Thy glory
And may I never despair.
For I am under Thy hand,
And in Thee is all power and goodness,
Give me a pure heart – that I may see Thee,
A humble heart – that I may hear Thee
A heart of love – that I may serve Thee,
A heart of faith – that I may abide in Thee.¹

The first thing to note is how the first and the last four lines mirror each other. There is a balance of adoring wonder and needy prayer— so that the life of the Trinity may radiate in Hammarskjöld’s person, attitudes and dispositions in his relations with others and in his conduct. The entry, as with the one below, is couched in exquisitely simple language. The last verse is very easy to memorise and repeat silently whenever you want to.

Again, this prayer reminds us that the Trinity is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be lived and shared. It is a reminder that, through baptism, ‘we are ‘partakers of the divine
nature’ (2 Peter 1:4). Again, if we are open to love, Jesus promised that the Father, Son and Spirit would love us in return and come to make their ‘dwelling place’ or home in us (Jn 14:23).

Consider a second entry from 1961, about two months before his death.

Have mercy
Upon us.
Have mercy
Upon our efforts,
That we, Before Thee,
In love and in faith,
Righteousness and humility,
May follow Thee,
With self-denial, steadfastness and courage,
And meet Thee
In the silence.

Give us
a pure heart
That we may see Thee,
A humble heart
That we may hear Thee
A heart of love
That we may serve Thee,
A heart of faith
That we may live Thee,

Thou

Whom I do not know
But Whose I am

Thou

Whom I do not comprehend
But Who hast dedicated me
To my destiny
Thou—²

This prayer’s context comes from Hammarskjöld efforts, as Secretary-General, to resolve situations of conflict, for instance, in the Congo and Tunisia in 1961. Still, it is a prayer for ‘us’, of a person of action in collaboration with others.

Starting with what Lipsey describes as a ‘Kyrie eleison’, Hammarskjöld asks that all action be guided by goodness and courage. Repeating words found in the first entry above, his closing lines evoke his faith that ‘God is unknown yet we belong to Him, beyond comprehension yet He takes a hand in our destinies and we can speak with him intimately as Thou’³.

Even though belonging to God may be to the God who is hidden (the dark side of faith), there is a sense of a daring familiarity in Hammarskjöld’s use of Thou in both entries. It is a mix of intimacy (‘one of us, ‘within us’) but also of wonder. For that reason, the repetition of ‘Thou’ suggests a sense of distance between God and humanity, an expression of reverential awe. God is beyond and over us. Union with God is to be under God’s hand. God
gives but also makes demands on us. For Hammarskjöld, within both mystery and reverential friendship, there is peaceful surrender to a sacred task, a form of belonging that calls for a consecration.

Hammarskjöld’s entries remind us how much ‘true worship’ must find its origins in the ‘heart’ – in the biblical sense of the deepest core of the person embracing mind, will, decisions and freedom that is open to God. Worship can be present in someone prayerfully reflecting through the entries of a pen in a journal at the end of the day. But, also, in their willingness to share such personal secrets and intimate thoughts with others.

For Reflection
1. As you read these prayers, what did you resonate with?
2. Is there a particular phrase that appeals to you?
3. Do these prayers draw you to make them (or parts of them) your own?
4. Do you see your belonging to God as involving a ‘sacred task’ in life?

2 Markings, 176.
In the beginning man and woman worked. From the moment Adam emerged from that lump of clay imbued with God’s breath, they picked up tools and went to work, tilling the soil. The story of creation strikes me strange sometimes. Here we have almighty God creating the universe, with the planets, the stars, the flora and fauna. And then God designs a garden of paradise, places two people there, and sends them off to work, charging them to ‘take dominion of the planet.’ Why not simply seat them on thrones, place them on a palace balcony where they could view the garden and watch over it? Instead, they must work it. It appears that human labour is important to God.

In the Scripture, many people are introduced by the work they do. We hear of shepherds, fishermen, midwives, women drawing water, priests and soldiers. We learn that Paul was a tentmaker, Lydia traded in purple goods, Matthew and Zacchaeus were tax collectors, and Jesus was a carpenter. Also, Pope Francis mentions that in the Bible many people meet God while at work: Moses heard God’s voice while tending Jethro’s flocks, and Jesus called the disciples while they were fishing. Even God worked. It took six days for creation to unfold, and then God rested. I suppose that being made in the image and likeness of God means that we too must work, as well as rest.

The sacredness of work is expressed well in the prayer ‘For the Sanctification of Human Labour.’ (This prayer is found in the Roman Missal under the heading ‘Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions,’ n. 26). Here we read, ‘O God, who through human labour never cease to perfect and govern the vast work of creation, listen to the supplications of your people and grant that all men and women may find work that befits their dignity, joins them more closely to one another and enables them to serve their neighbours.’

Our liturgy, too, is work. Its root word, leitourgia, means ‘the work of the people.’ We are always working. And it is through our work that we find our dignity and we are joined with one another. The Church regards human labour rather highly. Look back to Pope Leo XIII in Rerum Novarum: ‘The Church should not be so preoccupied with the spiritual concerns of her children as to neglect their temporal and earthly interests.’ The teaching of Rerum Novarum, published in 1891, provides a landmark for the Church. This is why later popes have commemorated its anniversary: Pius XI for the 40th anniversary, Paul VI for the 80th, John Paul II for the 90th and the centenary. Also, John Paul II coined the term, the ‘Gospel of Work.’ He says that the value of work is determined by, not so much the kind of work being done, but by the person who is doing the work.

Our work should enable us to flourish in three significant areas. First, work enables us to support ourselves and our families. Second, by working we can make a contribution to the greater community through the goods and services we produce and the money we earn. Third, our work should provide us with a source of creativity. In sum, human labour should support human dignity.

Having said that, I admit that there are times when temptation creeps in and my work doesn’t seem so dignified. The evil spirit sounds off, telling me that my work is meaningless: there is so much effort for so little profit. The evil spirit spooks me with a hissing voice: ‘You are trying to teach, but do you really think that your students will remember all you’ve taught them . . . after the test?! Do you think that it will have a lasting effect on them, that it will move them, or really change them?! You’re casting your pearls before swine.’ Some days, I admit, I don’t feel the dignity from my work.
But then the Holy Spirit grabs me and drags me out to the desert . . . to the scene where a mob of five thousand people are following Jesus, hoping for healing and to satisfy their hungers. The disciples worry: how can we feed so many with so little? It’s not enough! But I remember how he took five loaves of bread and two fish, multiplied them miraculously, and fed all those people.

And then I can hear the Lord say, ‘Give me what you have! Don’t tell me it’s not enough. Don’t count; don’t measure. Give me the little you have and I will multiply it. Give me your teaching and your study, your prayer, your preaching, and all your preparation. Give me your cooking and cleaning, along with your care for your kids and your elders. Give me your service and your creativity. Give me your success and your failure. Give me your work and I will multiply it. I will feed them and they will eat so much they’ll be stuffed, and they’ll carry home doggie bags to continue the feast.’

It’s like what we do whenever we celebrate the Eucharist. We present the Lord with a few hosts of bread and a small cup of wine, ‘the fruit of the earth and the vine, and the work of human hands,’ and we ask the Lord to bless it so it becomes ‘the Bread of Life and our spiritual drink.’

It’s in our work that we come to know ourselves, standing before God and with one another.

May God bless our work. Amen.
Organic development and its place within the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: some Plenary reflections
By Gerard Moore

There is a continuing debate around the implementation of the liturgical reforms instigated by the Bishops at the Second Vatican Council and established in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (4 December 1963). No doubt it will emerge at the Plenary Council. This paper is offered to bring a bit of clarity to a point that bubbles under the surface of the implementation and is particularly driven by proponents of the ‘reform of the reform’ movement. This paper seeks to place the idea of organic development within its context in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (SC) and then as seen in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM). These are the most influential official documents of the liturgical reform.

The two guiding principles of the Constitution
The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy summarised the deepest concerns of the Vatican Council in two succinct principles. The first is that the reformed rites are to be true to the mystery that they signify. The second is that they allow for active participation of the community. The Constitution reads:

> In this restoration both texts and rites should be drawn up so as to express more clearly the holy things which they signify. The Christian people, as far as is possible, should be able to understand them with ease and take part in them fully, actively, and as a community (SC 21).

It cannot be stressed enough that this is the very core of the reform. Everything that follows in the document is designed to be of service to engagement with the mystery of God through participation in the rites. Engagement with the divine mystery is at the core of faith and moves beyond propositions about God to an experiential relationship with God, a relationship determined by God. Participation, full, active and communal, allows that the history, culture, language and living present of the people is essential. It could be said that this is the environment in which the Spirit is at work amidst the community in history. Theologically the reference to mystery opens onto ongoing ‘revelation’, while participation opens onto continuous ‘incarnation’. The divine mystery is present to the world and its cultures and languages as they express the meaning of the human community. If the Plenary Council is to seek any guidance from the liturgical reform, it ought to be around these two seminal principles.

‘Organic Development’ in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy and the General Instruction of the Roman Missal
In the Constitution, the statement of intent was followed by four sets of norms, established by the Bishops in Council to guide the reform. It is within this second level of norms that we find reference to ‘organic development’. It is valuable but far from front and centre. The first in the series of four norms is given the title of ‘general norms’ and covers the authority in liturgical regulation, the place of tradition and the role of scripture (SC 22-25). The dynamic of ‘organic development’ is found within the discussion of tradition. The

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3 The other sets are Norms Drawn from the Hierarchic and Communal Nature of the Liturgy (26-32), Norms Based in the Educative and Pastoral Nature of the Liturgy (33-35) and Norms for Adapting the Liturgy to the Temperament and Traditions of Peoples (37-40).
germane paragraph sets out the need for a balance between sound tradition and legitimate progress (SC 23). Those aspects of the tradition that are sound are determined through careful theological, historical and pastoral investigation. There is to be a conjunction between study of the structure and form of the liturgy and the experience of the faithful regarding more recent reforms. Innovations are required to meet the criteria of the good of the Church, and also a relationship to former liturgical forms. Here the sense of the good of the Church is a reference to the earlier mentioned sense of mystery and ease of participation.

Within this, there is a working presumption that the reformed ritual and experience will be different, yet recognisable. Using the ‘organic’ metaphor, the Constitution balances the need for care that the new and the old are compatible with the need for freedom to make decisive changes if required for the good of the Church: ‘Finally there must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them, and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing’. This is not the final word however. The coherent yet diverse environment of Europe had long been the cultural milieu of the Church of Rome, but there was a recognition that the Church needed to think beyond these limits. The Constitution had a broader sense, not terribly well articulated but present nevertheless. The bishops did not discount the possibility of great difference between forms new and old, or forms in adjacent territories: ‘As far as possible, notable differences between the rites used in adjacent regions should be avoided’ (SC 23). Here is an understanding that liturgical rites could be very different.

As can be seen, the dynamic of organic development is included in Sacrosanctum Concilium where it is placed within a larger framework of service to the mystery and active participation, and set in conjunction with theological, historical and pastoral study. There is a predisposition that the reformed rites may be different from those in the Tridentine liturgy and may even vary across regions. Interestingly, the reference to organic development is not included later in the Constitution when many of these norms are reiterated as part of the discussion of the revision of the rite of the Mass (SC 50). The dynamic of organic development, then, is an aspect of the revision of the liturgy, but not entirely at centre stage, and the Church leaders recognised it was important but not universally applicable.

Organic Development in the third edition of the Roman Missal
There is a second sense of ‘organic’ change introduced in the third edition of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, published as part of the third edition of the Missale Romanum (2000). The incorporation into the Mass of the Roman Rite of customs and cultures from different peoples and Churches is described in part as an ‘organic’ process: Throughout the ages, the Roman Rite has not only preserved the liturgical usages that arose in the city of Rome, but has also in a deep, organic, and harmonious way incorporated into itself certain other usages derived from the customs and culture of different peoples and of various particular Churches of both West and East … (GIRM 397).

As applied here, the metaphor is one of incorporation rather than growth. The supposition appears to be that the Roman rite is able to ingest certain usages and become the richer for it to the benefit of the universal church. The context is not that of mystery and participation, as in the Constitution on the Liturgy, but rather of an anxious concern to maintain the integrity of the faith from error or contamination, and to preserve the riches of the Roman rite.4 This is not consistent with the Constitution and has little connection with the encounter

4 The sense of anxiety, not found in the Sacred Constitution, is apparent in closely connected references to error, the integrity of the faith, the rule of belief and any serious harm consequent on the loss of the treasure and patrimony of the Roman church: ‘These are to be maintained not only so that errors may be avoided, but also so that the faith may be passed on in its integrity, since the Church’s rule of prayer (lex orandi) corresponds to her rule of belief (lex credendi). The Roman Rite constitutes a notable and precious part of the liturgical
with the divine mystery or the respect for Spirit at work in the culture and language of peoples. Interestingly, for a metaphor about ‘organic’ growth, this seems more like a ‘graft’. There is a further contrast between the paragraphs in the Sacred Constitution and the most recent General Instruction. While the General Instruction continues on to repeat the Council statement that new forms in some way ought to grow organically from already existing forms, it places this within a highly restrictive view of inculturation. As set out in the GIRM, the needs of particular cultures are to be served only by adaptations that are not at variance with the distinctive character of the Roman rite (GIRM 398) and which do not impinge upon the integrity and unity of the Roman Rite (GIRM 399). This does not match the acknowledgement in the Sacred Constitution that in some places and circumstances radical adaptation of the liturgy may be required: ‘In some places and circumstances, however, an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed’ (SC 40). For our purposes, it is clear that the interpretation of the dynamic of organic growth in the General Instruction is to restrict change and to circumscribe inculturation.

Organic Development in liturgical writings

With this level of confusion, it is worth asking how the dynamic is understood in liturgical writings, what is the range of meanings attributed to it, and indeed what are the origins of the term.

It is difficult to garner any precision or consensus amongst contemporary authors about what constitutes organic development. The term is not clearly defined in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, and when used set in apposition with other norms. More recently a number of commentators have given organic development a degree of prominence as the key determinant in assessing liturgical change, yet it is difficult to find a clear definition in their works. Interestingly some of its keenest proponents have little time for the Missal of Paul VI but seem more intent on the re-emergence of the 1570 Roman Missal as the ‘classic’ formulation of the tradition and the best worship book for the celebration of the Eucharist. Australian liturgist Clare Johnson offers a close analysis and critique of current usages and provides a compelling approach for future application. Her exploration is set within the context of the continuing fraught nature of the discussion due to the unease the Council fathers had with the idea that it was possible that the liturgy could change. Johnson notes the three synonyms for change identified by O’Malley – aggiornamento, ressourcement, and development, where development was also linked to evolution and progress. Development appeared to be the term that caused the least concern, and enabled a comforting sense of continuity between past, present and future.

In this, two distinct approaches to continuity emerge in the post conciliar discussions. Joseph Ratzinger, later Benedict XVI, is representative of the group that saw the 1969 Missale Romanum and its vernacular avatars as a rupture in the liturgical tradition. It was too great a change, and had ruptured the sense of a steady, slow and cautious development, which was organic in that it was simply and explicitly an extension of what had gone immediately before. This was in opposition to the body of Church leaders and scholars who were faithful to the revisions, and understood them as organic in that the grounds for the changes had been laid over a long period of time through scholarly exertion and judicious
experimentation, and that these were now coming to fruition. Consequently, as radical as the change may have seemed, it had emerged from good stock.

Some considerations around terms
It is worth noting that a range of terms are in use but are often applied loosely and imprecisely. The descriptors ‘growth’, ‘development’, ‘evolution’ and ‘progress’ are each quite different understandings of change, and emerge from a variety of philosophical, cultural and scientific underpinnings. In parallel, the meaning of the word ‘organic’ is perhaps more unsettled when viewed through the lens of the processes of nature, such as natural life cycles where each part of the cycle is spectacularly different from the one before or after. Also described as organic are the responses in nature to evolutionary dynamisms which are imposed upon the organism and cause the organism to undergo modification or become extinct. As well ‘organic’, in terms of entropy, can denote the inevitable spiral of organisms from life to death.

Conclusion
Our study is a reminder that concepts such as organic development do not come to us without some baggage. Firstly, it has to be placed within its context in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, and then examined in the later General Instruction of the Roman Missal. It is evident that the additions to the third edition of the GIRM show a different and at some points divergent use of organic development to the Constitution. What cannot be lost sight of in any Plenary Council deliberations is that the two principles of reform remain as pillars of theology and practice; engagement with God’s unfolding of the Divine Mystery as the Spirit-led people in history, culture, language that we are.
Music Review
By Angela Gorman

Collection 1
Deep Peace Songs, Litanies and Anthems
by Barbara Bridge
Published by OCP

Collection 2
God Be In My Head, Coral Anthems for the Church Year
Robert Farrell
Published by OCP

Published by OCP, these two collections have been recorded in the same studio, with almost the same musicians, singers, conductors and technical crew. The production quality of both collections is high, particularly the clarity of the choir and solo voices. This factor alone makes both collections worthy of our attention. It is clear that the composers have utilised many years of experience, dedicated ministry and great skill in compiling these beautiful recordings.

Upon deeper listening one is drawn to the themes of tranquillity and simplicity in collection 1. In these extremely challenging times amidst the pandemic of COVID-19, the lyrics and lilting melodies touch the soul. Phrases such as “deep peace to you,” “I will never forget you,” “Be still and know that I am God…” and “set us free from all our fear and anger, set us free to love,” would easily draw the singer, musician and listener into deeper prayer and reflection.

Collection 1 is a compilation of songs, litanies and anthems – written by Barbara Bridge over the span of 20 years. The Litanies would have direct application to a variety of liturgies across the Liturgical Calendar, together with additional application across a variety of prayer forms. With their repeated phrases throughout, they would be a simple addition to any parish choir repertoire. The Litany of Saints, for example, is a strong, relatively simple arrangement for the Easter Vigil. The metred responses for the assembly, together with the male/female cantor parts, creates vocal interest in what can be an otherwise difficult and lengthy litany. The other litanies in the collection – Litany of the Earth and Litany of Peace would be an excellent addition to parish and school repertoires. In fact, the applications for these litanies would be endless across a variety of school and parish liturgical and prayer settings.

The anthems and songs in Deep Peace would be easily accessible for most choirs. Experienced choirs would learn them quickly. Smaller music ministry groups would perhaps use these anthems and songs in unison with simple accompaniment, whereas SATB choirs would bring out the deeper beauty of the collection. The vocal range of every track is gracious and achievable. The fact that each piece of music includes at least 3 voices (SAT) means that an alternative line may be chosen, where the vocal range of the choir is limited. This is important in smaller parishes, where often there is no lead voice, only a musician, or sometimes voice/s only without musical accompaniment.

Additional applications for this collection would include prayer services, reconciliation liturgies, ‘quiet’ gatherings in churches and chapels and simply individual prayer and
reflection. “Many songs include Taize-inspired chant, creating meditative atmospheres that promote personal prayer and reflection, with lyrical repetition that allows for introspection.”

The lyrical simplicity of this collection gives it a compelling and intense character, drawing the listener into deeper union with God.

Collection 2 comprises twelve choral anthems for use throughout the Church’s liturgical Seasons of Advent, Christmas, Holy Week, Easter as well as other liturgical and prayer celebrations. Composed by Robert Farrell, an accomplished organist and prolific composer, this - his first full-length collection with OCP - includes pieces published over the last ten years.

Upon listening to these tracks, one is immediately captured by the beautiful arrangements containing challenging harmonies, strong organ accompaniment and surprising dissonance followed by peaceful resolution – almost causing one to hold your breath in anticipation.

Applications could be made across a variety of settings in Catholic music ministry. For the well-rehearsed SATB choir, accustomed to singing the traditional chant and choral style of Catholic liturgical repertoire, the collection contains 5 beautiful anthems for the Advent/Christmas season. With varying degrees of difficulty in vocal range and musical style, these tunes, once learnt, would no doubt become favourites for the choir and assembly. Farrell’s version of O Gladsome Light (Phos hilaron) has obvious application for Evening Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours, but also, I would suggest, as a prelude or postlude to any liturgy. There are 4 anthems with directly quoted biblical text (Peace I Leave with You, I Know That My Redeemer Lives, God So Loved The World and Remain in My Love) making them suitable for their particular Sunday’s in the liturgical year. These tunes mostly have keyboard accompaniment lines written, rather than organ, making them that little more accessible for the parish choir. However, with the vocal range often reaching up to E above middle C, some smaller choirs or assemblies, may struggle. The title track God Be In My Head arranged for SATB choir, could also be sung in unison and applied to the Liturgy of the Hours, Sunday Mass and other prayer services. The written organ accompaniment might also be played on keyboard/piano. It is a beautiful anthem with a haunting melody. The dynamics, including pauses and crescendos add to the impact of this anthem.

In summary, although quite complex in parts at first glance, this collection could have some successful application for large and small choirs at a parish level, with careful preparation and rehearsal. Cathedral choirs, together with more experienced choirs would find direct application of these beautiful anthems. An obvious addition to prayer services and private reflection, too, this is a solid collection, worthy of your attention. One can well imagine the beauty of these anthems performed within the grand architecture, spaces and ambience of a cathedral.

These two collections are available through OCP. They come with CD and/or accompanying Octavo Packets at www.ocp.org

OCP products are distributed in Australia by Brumby Sunstate (brumbysunstate.com.au) and in New Zealand by Pleroma Christian Supplies (christiansupplies.co.nz)

1 Deep Peace Product Announcement Sheet, OCP, 2021
2 God Be In My Head, product announcement sheet, OCP 2021

*Receiving means to keep ourselves carefully tuned in, sensitive to the music of Eternity.*

*We can never adore enough.*

These words from Evelyn Underhill (Anglican writer and spiritual guide) are the unifying thread to this tapestry of her reflections woven together with skill and sensitive insight by Australian author and theologian, Robyn Wrigley-Carr. After a brief prologue, the book has four stages and an epilogue, each followed by discussion questions and a closing prayer – all designed for daily use over a month.

In Part 1, we welcome God’s coming, eyes set on the mystery of God. For Evelyn, our reflections (and the spiritual life) begin, not with our search for God, but rather with the God who continually seeks us out. We are called to ponder the ‘mighty symphony’ of God, of eternal love overflowing into creation, inviting us to share the divine life. We must listen attentively to the music ‘of Eternity’ so as to respond to its quiet promptings. This section ends with praising God in worship, drawing on the Lord’s Prayer.

Part 2’s focus is Advent: we await God’s coming, now in the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. For us, as for Mary, Advent (and life itself) reflects how we are amphibians, straddling two worlds. The busy, visible arena of everyday activities overlaps with the unseen, inner world of the Spirit’s tranquil workings. We must be attuned to detecting the signs of God at work. As we wait for the Christ-child, Evelyn reminds us about waiting, expectancy, hope, silence, meditation and prayer.

Part 3 illuminates God’s coming in Christ as ‘Emmanuel’ (God with us) - the longest section, since time and space are needed to ‘gaze upon’ God’s human face in Christ. With Evelyn, we accompany Jesus from His birth through his temptations, public ministry, to his transfiguration, the Emmaus encounter and, finally, His glorification.

Part 4 deals with ‘holy living’, how we respond to all God has done - His coming in Christ and ‘in every moment’ (4). Highlighted are key responses to our Triune God suggested by Evelyn - adoration, the Eucharist, sacrifice, virtuous dispositions such as humility, love, forgiveness and peace.

In her Epilogue, Wrigley-Carr returns to the opening metaphor of Eternity and the mighty symphony of the Trinitarian God. Standing between the already and the not yet, our ‘ears’ need to be ‘awake’. By straining to hear Eternity’s music and let ourselves participate in God’s Eternal song, we may echo John Donne’s words (used in Evelyn’s retreats): ‘I shall be made Your music – as I come’ (5).

The text, while enhanced by Dr. Wrigley-Carr’s judicious commentaries, reflects Evelyn’s voice, one that is engaging, enlightening and encouraging. Her writings and retreats, firmly anchored in the Scriptures, reflect her own spiritual journey and offer glimpses into her relationship with God. Evident, too, is Evelyn’s practical wisdom in understanding and
helping people together with a down-to-earth quality in her thoughts and prayers. Consistent with her artistic sensibility, they are sprinkled with images from nature or rural or domestic life and, often, couched in the immediacy (and cadences) of the spoken rather than the written word.

The Advent framework enables us to accompany Evelyn in reflecting on the mystery of God’s loving plan of salvation and redemption - highlighting the richness of the season in the process. Running unobtrusively beneath Evelyn’s spiritual teaching is the water-course of seventeenth century French spirituality and Cardinal Bérulle’s influence: the triadic pattern of adoration/communion/cooperation as grounded in the ‘pure capacity for God’; the centrality of the human Jesus; the Gospels as access points to share in the attitudes and dispositions of Jesus and Mary; the role of worship and of the Church; the need of virtues and, importantly, of moral responsibility for others and the world.

This book reflects Underhill’s persistent appeal to God as Creative Spirit (or to the Holy Spirit) for the divine nudges and whispered harmonies to catch our attention. Such a perspective might suggest a more inclusive approach to the divine/human relationship - in terms of gender, other religious traditions and secular approaches to spirituality. These latter considerations align with Underhill’s long-held view that wonder prompting adoration is the first and greatest of life’s responses to the spiritual realm, to an unseen reality beyond us.

As this book intimates, Evelyn’s underlying scholarship as retreat giver and spiritual guide (as in Mysticism and Worship) is worn lightly. So too with Dr Wrigley-Carr in her editing and guiding observations; they are in harmony with Evelyn’s ‘music’ and the alluring metaphor that pervades and unifies the book.

We are indebted to this Australian scholar for this collation from the later writings and retreats of Evelyn Underhill—a significant influence in the twentieth century Anglican tradition. We have been offered a thoughtful (and congenial) companion leading into Christmas and, it could be suggested, a gift for all seasons.

This review has also been published in the *Australian Journal of Liturgy*, volume 17, 4, 2021. It is reproduced with permission.

Francis Moloney is a distinguished Johannine scholar and, in this instance, has brought his scholarship to bear on *The Revelation to John*. This final book in the Christian canon of scripture is most often interpreted in the light of eschatological disaster leading to paradise for those who have survived and in extremely literal interpretations has been used as a code to predict various apocalyptic events. Moloney declares that ‘some fanatical groups have done great damage to themselves and to an understanding of Christianity through a fundamentalist and fanatical “end-time” reading of the book of Revelation’ (p. xv). Not so for this book, which is an offshoot of his major academic work, *The Apocalypse of John. A Commentary*. Moloney attempts to unlock the secrets of Revelation by using as its key ‘Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection as its theological and literary heart’ (p. xvii). Rarely have I heard a good homily on the book of Revelation, most homilists seem to avoid it, and so Moloney’s dedicates the book to all Christian pastors in the hope that it will shine Easter light on their ministry of the Word. He uses words from the *Roman Ritual for the Ordination of a Deacon* in the dedication: ‘Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what you preach’ as a brotherly [and sisterly] reminder to all those who preach.

Moloney insists that Revelation is not to be interpreted as a Jewish-Christian apocalypse, even though there are many literary features of Jewish apocalyptic material, because the author, John, sees the slain Lamb as having been raised. Humankind does not have to wait until the end of time for God to complete earthly life and save those who are good. ‘John believes that Christians already enjoy access to life because of the death and resurrection of Jesus’ (p. 2). ‘The book is a celebration of the perennial significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus… from the beginning of creation down to the time of the Christian Church’ (p. 11).

Following the introductory chapter, the structure of the book is based on its use in the Liturgy of the Hours from the second to the fifth week of Easter. Chapter Two through to Chapter Ten take each section of Revelation from its beginning to its conclusion with each Chapter subtitled ‘Making Sense of Revelation’. To follow the author’s literary design Moloney describes the structure of passages so the that the author’s literary design is evident (p. 17). Monday of the Second Week of Easter uses the prologue and the initial heavenly encounter and closes with the Easter message where Christ names himself as the Alpha and the Omega. Tuesday to Thursday the letters to the seven churches are announced: Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. Seven is the number of completeness which echoes Genesis 1 as God created the world in six days and then rested bringing it to completion.

Chapter Three makes sense of Rev 4:1-5:14 which occurs in the Office of Readings on Friday and Saturday. This section is ‘dedicated to the opening of the seals of a scroll held in the right hand of God by the slain yet risen Lamb’ (p. 39). The continual presence of the understanding of resurrection confirms Moloney’s interpretation. In Friday’s reading from 4:1-
11 John sees the divinity seated on a throne. All the great noises of creation, which are regularly heard in theophanies, are present as they indicate the origin and authority of God. Moloney uses a different font to allow for an exegetical reading and his interpretive nuances for the passages that appear regularly on important liturgical celebrations (p. 190).

Saturday’s reading, 5:1-14, describes the Lamb and universal salvation. Moloney declares that there ‘is a logical, theological, and Christological link between the Lord and creator God of Israel, the Scripture of Israel, the slain and risen Lamb as the giver of life and the Christian community. But the sequence between them is not historical. The heavenly visions transcend history but make sense of history’ (p. 45).

Chapter Four deals with Rev 6:1-8:1 used in the Office of Readings for Sunday and Monday of the Third Week of Easter. The opening of the seven seals are described with the final three seals making known the ‘saving effects of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ’ (p. 52), again the focus being shown on this theological and literary heart of Revelation. The following Chapters follow the same format, and the brevity of this book review does not allow a full summary. What is impressive in Moloney’s book is that his depth of academic rigour is evident in this writing, but it is completely accessible. It will support those men and women who use the Office of Readings and those who are newly exploring this material for the purpose of their role as preacher. Chapter Ten presents Rev 22:6-21 which returns to the themes of the prologue and hence is inescapably the epilogue. The perplexing capacity of John to speak of the past, present and future at the same time instructs us that the ‘saving effects of the crucified and risen Christ have been present in history from its foundation and will be present until the end’ (p. 181-182). As Moloney has made clear – *The Revelation to John* is an Easter book.

The Church is a mystery of communion, covenant and promise revealing the salvific presence of Christ in the world. Within the mystery of God’s eternal love in Creation, the history of the body of Christ given for the world has been embroidered through the sacraments and liturgy, the prayers and theological searching and questioning of the people of God. All such activity produces, as it were, an infinite artwork of faith, an artwork ongoing through time that can only be completed by the hand of God. However, members of the Church have the potential to damage such sacred ‘artwork’. What therefore could be done to restore such artwork where damage has been done to especially vulnerable people like children?

Thomas Ryan’s recent book, ‘Shame, Hope and the Church: A Journey with Mary,’ has sought to imagine a response, to the shame of sexual abuse in Church in light of renewing the biblical appreciation and Jewish origins of Mary as much as, ‘The central place of Mary in the Catholic imagination’ (p. 2). Ryan’s book works towards hope in the moments where all seems lost. Of particular focus of bringing words of healing and hope to the Church is Ryan’s portrayal of Mary’s personal experience of shame in the Gospels. He utilises the example of Mary in her relation to Christ for approaching victims of sexual abuse especially in ‘the Australian context and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child sexual abuse’ (p. 99).

Ryan’s purpose is at once pastoral, spiritual and moral. Relating the mystery of Mary as a companion and archetype of faith, Ryan sets a foundation to share about the human condition. Drawing from his experience as a priest and pastoral theologian, he presents a journey into understanding the dynamics of shame. He does this in terms of testifying to the prophetic call to care about others in terms of healing. To this end, he reveals four moments of encountering the painful emotion of shame. First, putting a name to how we feel. Second, claiming the emotion and depth of feeling by having a voice and making an I-statement such as ‘I feel ashamed’. Third, through understanding, awareness and learning how to tame the emotion of shame by freeing oneself from its force and control as a ‘learned response’ (p.22). Fourth and lastly, aiming to continue the process of self-awareness and healing of shame to help one discern and accept personal limitations of the vulnerable self. In almost a poetic and poignant manner, Ryan describes succinctly the four moments of shame: ‘Shame named, embrace and shared is tamed and "aimed"’ (p. 22).

Building on the pastoral expression of shame, Ryan is never far away from looking at Mary in connection with her Son. A question that does not escape any theological perspective is ‘Who is Jesus Christ today?’ Ryan’s response is deeply incarnational. Assuming the vulnerability of humanity, ‘Jesus was subject to harm, pain, decay and death’ (p. 26). For the purpose of salvation history, these experiences overflowing with emotions and feelings like shame, fear and rejection, helped to animate Jesus’ mission and vocation as the Messiah. Through shame and betrayal, through being misunderstood, Jesus experienced God’s surprising and disruptive word to think and act otherwise. Beyond the temptation of self-preservation or ‘public embarrassment’ (p.32), Jesus in the footsteps of his Mother anticipating God’s will at the Annunciation, names, claims, tames and aims at his encounter of shame though his messianic mission. Ryan demonstrates in a revealing way how the
Gospels give witness to the ‘visible’ nature of: (i) Jesus’ ‘shame at the service of love’ (p.32) as we see in Jesus healing the leper in Mk 1:40-5; and (ii) ‘Jesus ‘love at the service of shame’ (p. 33) in his prayer at Gethsemane (Mk 14:42). This creative use of language gives meaning to shame that such an emotion is not for nothing and reveals transforming moments of hope ‘towards what is good’ (p.33).

We know that Jesus cares deeply for the outcasts of society, the people persecuted who are voiceless, vulnerable and reduced to silence. Jesus laments with them to cry out to God. Ryan captures the interest of his audience by revealing that Mary too is one of these outcast ones. For she is ‘a defenceless woman’ with a ‘child in danger’ (p. 50). This is no metaphor. The experience is real and compelling. If we are to see Mary in this way, we see her son also. Out of the depths of shame where all seems lost heralds the possibility and hope for new beginnings. Here, Ryan points out that the Church must return to its scandalous beginnings to see and understand the paradoxical yet overarching revelation of the humiliating death of Christ upon the Cross. Further Ryan points out that Mary, as a type of Church, in her shame and defencelessness, reveals the compelling Pauline truth: that ‘God’s power and love, paradigmatically embodied in Jesus Christ, are at best in weakness and limitation (2 Cor 12:9)’ (pp. 108-9).

In terms of facing the suffering of victims of sexual abuse, Ryan’s first pastoral chapters (one to six) come to a momentum towards a spiritual response in Chapter Seven, ‘Listening to Victims with Mary’ and a moral response in Chapter Eight, ‘A Church Disgraced: Guideposts from Mary’. These are two decisive chapters that Ryan gives the reader much preparation to attend and begin to approach. They are decisive because it is not easy. Speaking of shame before the truth of the other’s outrage and suffering is not meant to be easy. It is one of the hardest things to speak about. Even more so about the shame, trauma and spiritual wounds of children. This is why we need Mary as a companion and guide to speak about such horrors of evil in the Church and world.

In Chapter Seven, Ryan, integrating his pastoral concerns towards a spiritual horizon, has a section entitled, ‘Spiritual Healing: Possibilities’. The positive support of loving relationships forms a foundation to approach God and receive the gift of healing grace that Ryan describes uniquely as ‘a process of re-ordering the victim’s imagination’ (p. 105). This means that wounds upon the soul need images and stories to help to process the shame and trauma of sexual abuse. Accordingly, Ryan invites readers to reflect upon Mary at the Cross as a means to reveal the spiritual insight: ‘Healing grace comes from the cross’ (p. 106).

In Chapter Eight, looking at Mary’s shame (such as the crucifixion of her son) and the Church’s disgrace over sexual abuse, Ryan dares to ask a piercing and moral question: ‘... is there a window through which we can try to make some sense of all that has been happening?’ (p. 117) Through pondering with both Jesus and Mary, the window of the Church community must scrape off, so to speak, all the apathy, defensiveness, and lack of tears and care. The challenge then is to accompany Mary at the foot of the cross so that together the Church community knows and feels about shame and brokenness as much as the pathway to hope and healing. For Ryan, such a pathway towards compassion must be addressed also in the current Plenary Council here in Australia.

To ponder with Mary about these issues is to pray, to lament and to learn that in and through Christ the Church faithful may find the courage and confidence ‘to listen to and learn from victims’ (p. 126). This is a moral imperative that reveals an affectivity of faith: the bodiliness of Mary and of Christ. Mary, spontaneously and without hesitation, shares in the pain of her Son at the foot of the Cross. In her powerlessness, she points the way to stand with victims of sexual abuse. Offering a narrative and memory of empathy and compassion, Ryan attests to Mary’s witness at the cross. He points out that this signifies Mary’s Jewish heritage of
prayer and lament and further to the effect of the transformation of the soul, namely the courage to face suffering, claim it and seek justice.

In sum, Ryan’s book is one that has the potential to instil a pathway of prayer and formation within the Church. His questions for reflection at the end of each chapter add a dimension of allowing Mary’s companionship to remain as a source of hope, patience and endurance amidst the experience of shame. Not only does Ryan seek to value Mary as an archetype and companion of faith, but his book also works to help members of the Church at all levels to know the Gospel and the sufferings of others, and in particular the suffering of the victims of child sexual abuse. The book is constant in its effort to exemplify that at the soul of theology is Scripture, the very ingredient that helps people to digest the challenges and stirrings of faith. Hence, Ryan invites his readers to take a biblical path with both Jesus and Mary towards the Cross to evoke hope for resurrection in the Church. He thereby encourages the journey of faith following Mary’s example.

Ryan succeeds in his book to create a pastoral, spiritual and moral sense of understanding the emotion of shame to move towards appreciating and valuing Mary’s humanity and care for the Church faithful. The aim then of the book is to nurture ‘a culture of trust, a ‘heart change” (p. 145). This is nothing more than being true to the biblical tradition of caring for the vulnerable members of society. There is also something Messianic and hopeful about this. Waiting for the day of salvation, we become vigilant like Simeon and Anna greeting, meeting and blessing the Holy Family, Joseph, Mary and the Child Jesus. The hopes of Simeon and Anna for salvation lie within Mary’s arms. Here lies hope for Church, the Sacrament of Christ, to discover a ‘heart change’: to return to the image of the fragility and vulnerability of the baby Jesus presented at the Temple (Lk 2: 22-38). The Church may then learn humbly to go and journey ‘in peace’ (Lk 2:29), and behold the splendour, grace and blessing of the beautiful Marian ‘artwork’ of God - that in the arms of every mother, there is a precious child giving joy and hope to the world.
Pastoral Liturgy Vol 52, 1 YEAR C  November 2021 – February 2022

Reflections and music lists due Friday 15 October 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Sundays and Feasts</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reflections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Sunday of Advent</td>
<td>28 November</td>
<td>Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Sunday of Advent</td>
<td>5 December</td>
<td>Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Monday)</td>
<td>8 December</td>
<td>Patricia Gemmell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Sunday of Advent</td>
<td>12 December</td>
<td>Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Sunday of Advent</td>
<td>19 December</td>
<td>Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) Vigil</td>
<td>24 December</td>
<td>Joe T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) Midnight Mass</td>
<td>25 December</td>
<td>Joe T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nativity of the Lord Mass in the Day</td>
<td>25 December</td>
<td>Joe T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Holy Family (Sunday)</td>
<td>26 December</td>
<td>Doran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary, the Holy Mother of God (Saturday)</td>
<td>1 January</td>
<td>Joe T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epiphany (Sunday)</td>
<td>2 January</td>
<td>Joe T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Baptism of the Lord (Sunday)</td>
<td>9 January</td>
<td>Doran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Sunday in Ordinary Time</td>
<td>16 January</td>
<td>Joe T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Sunday in Ordinary Time</td>
<td>23 January</td>
<td>Doran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia Day</td>
<td>26 January</td>
<td>Guest writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time</td>
<td>30 January</td>
<td>Doran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time</td>
<td>6 February</td>
<td>Doran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time</td>
<td>13 February</td>
<td>Doran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time</td>
<td>20 February</td>
<td>Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time</td>
<td>27 February</td>
<td>Moore</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Our Contributors

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Dr Chris deSilva is a liturgical musician whose activities include singing, composing, choir direction and parish music ministry. He has served the parish of Bedford/Inglewood in Perth for more than thirty years and is currently involved in both the music ministry and the RCIA process there. He has been the Musical Director of the Julian Singers in Perth for more than fifteen years. As Music Consultant to the Perth Archdiocesan Centre for Liturgy, he supports parish musicians and facilitates music workshops for them. His original compositions are available from his web site, www.laudamus.com.au

Anthony Doran
Anthony Doran is priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, currently Parish Priest of Ringwood. Prior to entering the seminary, Anthony was a secondary school teacher, teaching in country and suburban schools in Victoria. Ordained in 2003, he has held various appointments in suburban and country parishes. He completed further studies in Liturgy, focussing on the Rite of Dedication of a Church. He has written for Liturgy News, The Summit and The Australian Journal of Liturgy. He is the immediate Past President of the Australian Academy of Liturgy, and a member of Societas Liturgica, the international society for liturgical study and renewal. Since 2017, he has been a member of the Board of the Catholic Development Fund for the Archdiocese of Melbourne. He has undertaken the Foundations of Directorship Course of the Australian Institute of Company Directors is an Affiliate Member of the AICD.

Patricia Gemmell
Patricia Gemmell has Masters in Theology, is a member of the Australian Grail national Leadership Team and has been a parishioner of St Leonard’s Parish Naremburn for 34 years. She is also part of the team responsible for Australian Women Preach https://australianwomenpreach.com.au/

Angela Gorman
Angela Gorman (Bendotti) has background studies in Education, Music and Theology, and directs her ministry business Shine Creations, currently in its 22nd year. This ministry has provided music and liturgical consultancy across Western Australia, including work at a diocesan, parish, school and individual level. Angela brings information, enthusiasm, joy and grounded experience to all she does. A musician, vocalist and composer, Angela’s passion is to draw people to Jesus – especially through the promotion of Catholic Liturgy – the summit and source of Catholic life.

Chris Kan
Chris Kan is Dean of Campus Ministry at Sacred Heart College, Sorrento in Western Australia, a Narrative Therapist and Recording studio owner. An Oblate of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia, his academic interests include Monastic Liturgy and history, Narrative Therapy and Anglo-Catholic Socialism. Chris holds Master's Degrees in Research, Theology and Education.

Alessio Loiacono
Alessio Loiacono is a teacher in the Catholic school system in the Archdiocese of Perth, an organist and is also the Music Field Officer for the Centre for Liturgy- Archdiocese of Perth. He also facilitates workshops for Catholic Education Western Australia. He holds a Bachelor
of Music Education (UWA) and a Masters of Religious Education (Notre Dame). Away from music, Alessio enjoys going for walks, coffee and going to the movies.

**Michael Mangan**

Michael Mangan is a composer, educator and liturgist who is based in Brisbane. A former specialist music teacher, he has composed over 250 pieces which are widely used in Liturgy and Religious Education programs in schools and parishes throughout Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA. Michael tours extensively each year presenting concerts and workshops for students, teachers and parish musicians and speaks and performs at conferences and events throughout Australasia and North America. His music is published in North America by GIA/WLP. Michael holds a BA (Mus), a Grad Dip Ed (Arts Ed) and an M. Theol (Liturgical Studies). He is a member of the Australian Academy of Liturgy, National Chair of the Australian Pastoral Musicians Network, and Leader of Music Ministry at All Saints Catholic Parish in Brisbane. In addition to his commitments with Litmus Productions, Michael works as Liturgical Education Consultant with Liturgy Brisbane.

**Angela McCarthy**

Dr Angela McCarthy is an adjunct senior lecturer in theology at The University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle campus. Her first degree from Sydney University included work in Biblical Studies and Fine Arts. After time spent rearing a family, Angela resumed secondary teaching and further studies in theology and education in 1993 at Notre Dame and was awarded her PhD in 2007. Since then, she has completed a further Research Masters in Theology in the field of Scripture, art and theology. Angela has published in the areas of liturgy, icons, art and theology, liturgical music, educational practice and theological aesthetics. She is editor of the Australian Journal of Liturgy, a member of the Australian Academy of Liturgy, Chairperson of the Mandonla Art Award, a member of the Chamber of Arts and Culture WA and the Fellowship of Biblical Studies, and the editor of Pastoral Liturgy.

**Gerard Moore**

Professor Gerard Moore is the Principal and CEO of Broken Bay Institute – the Australian Institute of Theological Education. His most recent publications are *Earth Unites with Heaven: an introduction to the Liturgical Year* (Melbourne: Morning Star 2014), and *The Disciples at the Lord’s Table: Prayers over Bread and Cup across 150 Years of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2015). He is also a member of the Charles Sturt University Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre.

**Glenn Morrison**

Glenn is associate professor at the University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle, lecturing in systematic and pastoral theology. He has a PhD from Australian Catholic University. He is also the author of *A Theology of Alterity: Levinas, von Balthasar and Trinitarian Praxis* (Duquesne University Press, 2013).

**Thomas O’Loughlin**

Born in Dublin in Ireland, Thomas O’Loughlin is Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology in the University of Nottingham. His most recent book on liturgy is *Eating Together, Becoming One: Taking Up Pope Francis’s Call to Theologians* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 2019). He is directing the new *Brepols Library of Christian Sources*: a series of bi-lingual editions of patristic and medieval texts (‘an English language Sources Chrétienes’).

**Tom Ryan** is a Marist priest living in Sydney, Australia. He has been involved in tertiary theological education and adult faith formation for many years and held honorary positions in theology at the University of Notre Dame Australia and the Australian Catholic University. Since 2005, he has been a Judge on the Regional Marriage Tribunals in both Brisbane and...
Sydney. Apart from chapters in books, he has published numerous articles in theological journals both national and international. His recent book is *Shame, Hope and the Church: A Journey with Mary* (Strathfield, NSW: St. Pauls, 2020).

**Tom Scirghi**
Fr. Thomas J. Scirghi is Associate Professor of Theology at Fordham University, where he specialises in the theology of sacraments and liturgy, as well as homiletics, the theory and practice of preaching. He earned a Master of Divinity degree from the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley, California; an S.T.L. from the Weston Jesuit School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts; and the Doctor of Theology from Boston University. A member of the New York Province of Jesuits, he has taught at the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley and the Jesuit College of Theology in Melbourne, Australia. In 2013, he was appointed to the Thomas More Chair of Catholic Studies, a joint appointment to the University of Western Australia and the University of Notre Dame, Australia. He has lectured on liturgy and preaching for clergy and laity throughout America, as well as in Africa, Asia, and Australia. Recently he published *Longing to See Your Face: Preaching in a Secular Age* (Liturgical Press, 2017), *Everything Is Sacred: An Introduction to the Sacrament of Baptism* (Paraclete Press 2012), and *Living Beauty: The Art of Worship*, with his colleague Alejandro Garcia-Rivera (Rowman and Littlefield Press).

**Joe Tedesco**
Joe Tedesco has been involved in tutoring and teaching theology for over ten years at the University of Notre Dame Australia and at the Centre for Faith Enrichment in the Archdiocese of Perth. He completed Masters level studies focusing on scripture and Christian anthropology. He recently completed a thesis in the area of Wisdom Literature and its relationship to moral theology.
Artwork

This issue also includes artwork by Tricia Walsh. Her beautiful and clear graphical style is published in two books, *Graphics and Prayers for Feasts and Seasons* and *Graphics and Prayers for Ordinary Time*, both published by John Garratt Publishing. © Used with permission of the publisher.

Ps 67:5

Let all the nations praise God.
## Musicians' Appendix

### Abbreviations and Explanations

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*Email info@willowconnection.com.au*
Mass Settings:
Recommended by the Australian Catholics Bishops Conference

Mass of St Francis (Paul Taylor – Archbishop’s Office for Evangelisation. This Mass can be downloaded from www.cam.org.au; Orders: Central Catholic Bookshop, Melbourne)
Mass of Our Lady, Help of Christians (Richard Connolly – Publisher: CanticaNova)
Missa Magis (Christopher Willcock – Publisher: Oregon Catholic Press, www.ocp.org)
Mass of Christ the Redeemer (Bernard Kirkpatrick – Publisher: Oregon Catholic Press)

FURTHER MATERIAL by Michael Mangan

General Gathering Songs: (* Masses with Children)
Come, Live Life LCC
Gather in Jesus’ Name LCC
Hearts on Fire SHOF
Shout Out with Joy (Ps 100) LCC
Sing New Songs of Joy FWS/CWBII
We Rejoice (PS 122) SYJ
Come Together* GLM/SYJ
Celebrate, Let’s Celebrate* TWB
Come Gather* GLM
Stand Up* SHOF
Let the Children Come* LCC

General Preparation Of Gifts Songs
Blessed be God LCC
We Bring These Gifts LCC

General Communion Songs (* Masses with Children)
Given for You* SHOF/CWBII
In Memory of Me* LCC
In the Body of Christ LCC
One Body in Christ TWB
One Body, One People SHOF
Take and Eat TT
The Bread of Life SHOF
We Come, We Come TWB
We Remember You LCC

General Recessionalss (* Masses with Children)
Chosen and Sent LCC
Do What Jesus Did* GLM
Hearts on Fire SHOF
Let’s Go*  
Live God’s Dream  
Love God, Love Each Other*  
Sing New Songs of Joy  
Taking it to the Streets  
Till the End of Time*  
True Colours Shine*  

COLLECTION CODES

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Ps 95:1

Come sing out our joy to God.
First Sunday of Advent wreath lighting, Year C

Introduction (This would usually be read on the first Sunday of Advent)
Within the four weeks of the Advent season, the Church's liturgy draws attention to different facets of how God's plan has been revealed in Christ, is now revealed in every Mass we celebrate, and that Christ will be revealed in his glory at the end of time. For each Sunday of Advent, we take our focus for the wreath from our Advent traditions. Like the people of the Old Testament, we live in hope for the fullness of the revelation of Christ the Messiah when he comes in glory to judge the living and the dead. This year we will also anticipate and pray for the process and outcomes of the Plenary Council.

The Advent Wreath Responsory often replaces the Penitential Act and therefore leads into the Opening Prayer.

The Presider blesses the wreath and the assembly with the sprinkling of holy water, using these or similar words:

Let us pray:
May the sprinkling of this water remind all of us gathered here of our first sharing in the grace of baptism.
During this time of Advent may we prepare for the Lord's coming with open hearts and minds.
May this wreath be a symbol to us of this time of prayerful watching and waiting for the coming of the Lord now and for all time.

The Presider, or an assistant, lights the first candle, which is often named the Prophets' Candle as the prophets prepared the way for the future coming of the Messiah.

V. Lord Jesus, you come among us now as we read the prophet Jeremiah's words who promised that there shall be honesty and integrity in the land.
R. Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, that we may love one another and the whole human race as you did.
R. Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, we must stay awake as you will come again as the Son of Man.
R. Come, Lord Jesus.

Presider (Collect first Sunday of Advent Year C)

Let us pray:
Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God, the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ with righteous deeds at his coming, so that, gathered at his right hand, they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your son, Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

R. Amen
Second Sunday of Advent wreath lighting

Presider

*The Presider, or an assistant, lights the second candle.*

V. Lord Jesus, your coming was proclaimed by the prophet Baruch when he proclaimed that God will show your splendour.
R. *Come, Lord Jesus.*

V. Lord Jesus, you will bring us to the perfect goodness for the glory and praise of God.
R. *Come, Lord Jesus.*

V. Lord Jesus, you call us to repentance and to prepare the way for you so that all humankind shall see the salvation of God.
R. *Come, Lord Jesus.*

Presider (Collect second Sunday of Advent Year C)

Let us pray:
Almighty and merciful God,
May no earthly undertaking hinder those who set out in haste to meet your Son,
but may our learning of heavenly wisdom gain us admittance to his company.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

R. *Amen*
Presider

Presider, or an assistant, lights the third candle.

V. Lord Jesus, your coming was proclaimed by the prophet Zephaniah as the who will exult over us and renew us by your love.
R.  Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, you revealed to Paul that if there is anything we need we just have to ask for it with prayer and thanksgiving.
R.  Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, as declared by John the Baptist, you will baptise us with the Holy Spirit and fire.
R.  Come, Lord Jesus.

Presider (Collect third Sunday of Advent Year C)

O God, who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord’s nativity, enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

R.  Amen
Fourth Sunday of Advent wreath lighting

Presider

The Presider, or an assistant, lights the fourth candle.

V. Lord Jesus, your coming was proclaimed by the prophet Micah as coming from the house of David and who will rule over all Israel and be peace.
R. Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, you make us holy by the offering of your body made once and for all.
R. Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, you are the blessed fruit of the womb of she who believed that the promise made to her would be fulfilled.
R. Come, Lord Jesus.

Presider (Collect fourth Sunday of Advent Year C)

Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,
your grace into our hearts,
that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel,
may by his Passion and Cross be brought to the glory of his resurrection.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

R. Amen
Introduction

An Advent reflection
How to speak to Advent this year, and perhaps to last year as well? The pandemic is challenging Christian faith, not around medicine and science, but around our social fabric. The social fabric of our town and state, of our nation, of our region, of our cultural alliances. If I could put it with a shock, clearly Jesus is not the answer, rather the Church is! We are in the midst of a social and communal upheaval, one that will send waves across the coming decades: is the Spirit filled community of faith able to bring the healing, the comfort and the hope of Christ?

As we enter the Christmas season through an Advent spirituality, will we have more to offer than tired pieties and studied avoidance of the situation in our midst. Starting from home, the Australian community is in its second year of isolation, loneliness and for a hidden number, impoverishment. Our leadership seems fractured. This might be overplayed as the federal and state governments take somewhat diverging paths but actually in much the same direction. The political exchanges are frustrating but they are not characterised by much of the feral behaviour and divisions seen in North America, and extreme views in Australia have not taken too much hold. The leadership picture is dispiriting, but the pandemic is a constantly unknowable dynamic and seems to chart a different course at short notice. The suffering is in the community and across the nation. Some states will approach Christmas in a degree of security, others in fear of further restrictions and lockdown. Yet all are affected. For a second year, grandparents will not hold grandchildren, newborns will not be cradled by kin, families will not meet unless by zoom, cultural ties will be hampered. For a second year the elderly in care will be left with few visitors; young people seeking romance will be left without places to go or people to see; school children will be left completing a year without accomplishment; teachers, nurses, police, medical services, doctors and social workers will be exhausted; workers will have pivoted so much that they are dizzy. It is a long and tiring list, which trails on.

So, will the feast of Christmas be a break? There are already challenges around gift buying, delivery, and organising get togethers. There may be no cricket for the distraction of many or a few. Holidays and travel seem almost tangible but planning remains a lottery. What is the 'coming', the adventus, that we celebrate? The feast of the coming of Christ is not a distraction from our woes but an advent of hope and light. The need for hope today, in the midst of COVID-19 and its multiple variants, is far different from that of other years. We need to do more than recognise the love around us, the graciousness of giving, the joy of family and the challenge to be our best selves. We are confronted with a crisis in and of community itself, and we are best placed to respond as a community, as a church. Perhaps our focus this time should turn from how we gather at the Eucharist, how can we worship, to how does our worshipping community offer hope to a tired suburb, a fatigued city, a drained community. This is a struggle indeed, as we are within this suburb, city and community, and equally drained and fatigued and tired. What does the indwelling of Christ give us that we can use to be a support?
It would be good to stop here, but there is another dimension of our Spirit inspired mission. We live surrounded by countries and connected to cultures that have not fared so well. What is our Christmas gift beyond our shores?

**Penitential Act**
Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you revealed yourself to humankind with power and glory.
Lord, have mercy.
You are the righteous one from the Father.
Christ, have mercy.
You came and we are redeemed.
Lord, have mercy.

**The Advent Devotions**
The Advent Wreath is a popular devotion for this season, focusing on the twin themes of the light and the coming near of Christ.

**Collect**
*Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,*
*the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ*  
*with righteous deeds at his coming,*  
*so that, gathered at his right hand,*  
*they may be worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom.*

Advent opens with a call to run forth to meet the Christ, however it is not the babe in the manger. The Christ to whom we run is the one who is to come, in whom is the fulfillment of all things. Advent, then, begins with a focus on the second coming of Christ, a perspective carried in the first Advent Preface: *when he comes again in glory and majesty.*

Our collect has a sense of energy and purpose. The use of ‘run’ is quite common in the ancient orations and conjures something of that running to the empty tomb on Easter morning, and even the eagerness of the forgiving father to meet his prodigal son (Lk 1:11-32). We need to be mindful that the prayer is a petition. There is no claim to privilege or worthiness here. Rather we are seeking the eagerness to propel ourselves to the coming One because we have in grace lived as fully as possible within his righteousness. The end point is to be ‘gathered’ into Christ, conveying warmth and intimacy: disciples are gathered. Further to ‘possess’ means to fully belong and to be taken up by. With the coming of Christ is our perfection (in his righteous deeds), belonging (gathered) and fulfilment (possession).

**First Reading**
*Jeremiah 33:14-16*
Our Advent readings open with the proclamation of the Lord our Justice. It is a statement of hope beyond the environment of despair and disappointment that was the lot of the Jewish people in exile.

**Psalm**
*Psalm 24(25):4-5,8-9,10,14*
*To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.*
The psalm looks with confidence to a God who is truth, teacher, saviour; who will show the path to those who stray and who is faithfulness and love.

**Second Reading**
*1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2*
To strengthen the community, Paul prays for an increase in love, enabling the members to conduct themselves within the holiness of God

Gospel Reading


In the Gospel we are reminded that The Christ will return and live now so that we may stand before God.

Reflection

Our Advent readings open with the proclamation of the Lord our Justice. It is a statement of hope beyond the environment of despair and disappointment that was the lot of the Jewish people in exile. This text within the Book of Jeremiah apparently was written later and added to the corpus of poems from the prophet. The reading opens into the period where the exile was coming to a close, and with it the uncertainty whether it would be better to stay in exile or return to Jerusalem or simply merge into the empire of the Persians. The poet maintains the people’s hope. There will be a time when their homeland will be safe for them. There will be a time when God’s city will be secure. There will be a time when the people more strongly feel the justice of God. Indeed, they will feel it as ‘our’ justice, justice brought by God for them. With it are a couple of features. This justice is that already promised by God, so it has begun to take hold. It is for a united ‘house’, Israel and Judah together, the two parts of the kingdom at peace. It is framed within the legend of the beloved king David. The line of David may be no longer extant, but the spiritual lineage of David’s leadership is maintained.

Referring back to our introduction to the theological dynamics of Advent, we can see how this reading introduces us to the central themes of the season: hope, looking forward, the coming of the one, the reign of justice. But our Advent this pandemic year/s cannot have the luxury of looking forward without being part of the solution. As a community of faith, we are in the midst of ‘exile’, physical, spiritual, communal. For this writer, now is the time for the parish and faith community to be the hope, to be the unifier, to be the safety and security for others. If the coming of the saviour is the source of hope, we the people of the Christ-child are asked to be bringers of hope into the festivities that the nation celebrates.

The first Letter to the Thessalonians has two endings. It seems that Paul finished and then got up another burst of energy, and on he went. Our passage is from the first ‘ending’, and contains a moral exhortation: Finally we earnestly ask and exhort you … Of course, there is also a second letter to the same group. It seems Paul was keen to keep in correspondence with this community.

As with our first reading from Jeremiah, the text puts forward a theology for Advent. It is not quite ‘behave yourself’ but a richer spiritual exhortation. Beginning with a prayer that God will increase the love in the midst of the community, it also acts as a reminder to the women and men that love is at the centre of the Christian life and our conduct should take its cue from this.

With this there are some deeper concepts. Our love should reflect the holiness of God. Holiness’ is an attribute of God alone: for Paul we are called to love as God loves. It is wholehearted and blameless. Here is the sense of what it means to ‘please’ God. It is far from doing things to win favour. Rather it is to act in such a way that God ‘recognises’ the divine within us and the transformation it achieves as we take up the fullness of being loved by God. This transformation is the grounds for Jesus recognising us as his own when he returns.

Again, we can see the theology of Advent being opened for us. Right behaviour, loving as God loves and living within the ‘recognition’ of God all are concerned with our conversion. These match one of the ancient origins of Advent as a season in preparation for baptism. With this is the understanding of the Second Coming of Christ. This becomes a theme of the final two weeks of the season.

https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol52/iss1/35
DOI: 10.59405/2653-7834.1073
The pandemic is asking us to offer to the community this Advent response. As I am writing, the phone interrupts with a call from a friend and colleague who has spent the evening prior helping a neighbour through lockdown-induced depression. In our environment, to see ourselves as ‘conducting ourselves to please God’ is to recognise the pain and suffering around us and from our isolation bring community and hope. Let us be recognised by Jesus because of the hope we bring.

Our Gospel reading, made from two passages from the one chapter in Luke, aligns with our first two readings. In this, two Advent themes are brought to the fore. The Christ will return, and consequently live now so that you may stand before God. Yet this is a stark reading, with apocalyptic currents and a degree of despair. In a way, the evangelist has Jesus addressing the Christian community of the future. Just as in Luke’s Gospel Jesus soon will face his passion, so will the future church soon enough face a time of trial and passion of its own.

The trigger for this is a set of events that are part of the life of the community Luke is addressing in his narrative. Already the Temple has fallen, already Jerusalem has fallen, what then is left? The answer is that life in Christ does not mean escape from the realities of history, but that there is another outcome, one formed in Christ. In response, the Gospel teller is calling his hearers to live within the actual moment, to be aware of what is around, to avoid escapism, to wait upon the Lord.

The apocalyptic nature of the text can be jarring, and that is the intention of the narrator. We are meant to be confronted, to be called to account, to be roused and surprised. Interestingly there is a degree of apocalyptic thought in our culture at present, but more to the point there is a strong dystopian element to our stories, novels and streaming series at present.

What then is the time of trial we are facing, what is the ‘passion’ we are undergoing. Once more the reading allows us into ways of thinking through the pandemic. However, the apocalyptic note of the readings and the dystopian preference in literature and the arts is pointing us to the crisis of climate change and the dangerous predicament of our sister earth. In the face of these, we are called to be vigilant and to have the strength. In the coming feast of the nativity, we take the incarnation of Christ as the centrepiece of our lives. We cannot take the incarnation with full seriousness without taking up our current situation, our human condition and the condition of creation.

Perhaps it is time to bring in Pope Francis:

> This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). Laudato Si! paragraph 2.

Come Lord Jesus!

Come the church of Jesus the Lord!
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
As we begin our new liturgical year in this season of Advent, we submit our needs to you with humble hearts.

Petitions
We pray for the Church, especially Pope Francis, that through him the Church will continue to zealously use the instruments of God’s love as we walk the journey to the Synod of Bishops. May the work of the Plenary Council in Australia enrich the Church.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for leaders of all nations that you grant them discernment so that they can govern the people with compassion and love, particularly as we continue to endure the pandemic.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are suffering at this moment, especially those who suffer physically and spiritually, that you will console them with your mercy. We pray particularly for those suffering mental illness due to the pandemic.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our Christian brothers and sisters who are persecuted for their faith, that your Spirit will strengthen them so that their faith will not fail.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for ourselves gathered around your altar that your Holy Spirit will continue to grant us communion and the spirit of service so that we may better serve our parish community in this busy pre-Christmas period.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are impoverished by the pandemic that they will find the strength to have hope for the future and that family, friends and neighbours will help in every way they can.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
In these difficult times we offer these petitions in the sure hope that they are heard and granted according to God’s will through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ Jesus.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Advent litany. B. Farrell. 279
O come, O come Emmanuel. J. M. Neale et. al./ Gregorian Chant Melody. 285
Wait for the Lord. Taize. 283
Wake, O wake, and sleep no longer. J. S. Bach. 282

AOV1
First Sunday, Advent. C. Smith. 108 (Entrance Antiphon)
O come, O come Emmanuel. J. M. Neale et. al./ Gregorian Chant Melody. 174

AOV2
Open the heavens. B. Boniwell. 163

AOV4Kids
Christmas is coming. J. Bell. 55 (Verse 1)
O Emmanuel. M. Mangan. 52

AOVNG
Come, O Lord, and set us free. Mike Balhoff/Gary Daigle/Darryl Ducote. 31

CWB
Come, O long expected Jesus. Charles Wesley. 657
The coming of our Lord. Charles Coffin, Tr. Anthony G. Petti. 816
Wake, awake! For night is flying. Philipp Nicolai/Tr. Catherine Winkworth. 853

CWBII
Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
Come, O long expected Jesus. Charles Wesley. 232
Open the heavens, Lord. Brian Boniwell. 243
The coming of our Lord. Charles Coffin, Tr. Anthony G. Petti/John Chandler. 248
Wake, O wake! the night is dying! Philipp Nicolai, adapt. Harry Hagan OSB. 252
Advent Litany. Bernadette Farrell. 253
To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. The Grail/ICEL. 632
Additional selections by Chris deSilva
Come to set us free. Bernadette Farrell. 233
Wait for the Lord. Taizé Community. 251
City of God. Daniel L. Schutte. 453

S&S1
To you, O God, I lift up my soul. Bob Hurd. 60
City of God. Dan Schutte. 106
Find us ready. Tom Booth. 109

S&S2
To you, O Lord. Timothy R. Smith. 251
Come, O Lord. Pedro Rubalcava. 287
Emmanuel. Steve Angrisano. 290
I trust in you. Greg Lee and Bobby Fisher. 291
Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy
Psalm 24: To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.
Psalm 24: Robert J. Thompson/Joseph Gelineau SJ. CWB 168
Psalm 24(25): Christopher Willcock SJ. CWB 592
Psalm 25: To you, O Lord: Christopher Willcock. GA 26
Psalm 25: Jenny O’Brien. JOBC pg. 8
To you, O Lord: Paul Mason. PM pg. 22
To you, O Lord, I lift my soul. LPC. Marty Haugen p.5

Music selections by Michael Mangan
O Emmanuel (TT/SYJ/CWBII) [Gathering, Communion, Recessional]
Come, Lord Jesus, come CH & V1 (SYJ/ CWBII) [Advent Wreath]
Help me know your ways (FWS) based on Ps 24 (25) [Gifts]
To you, O Lord (LCC) Ps 24/25 (Ch’s Lectionary [Psalm, Gifts]
Watch out, wake pp (TT/SYJ) [CHILDREN: Gathering, Recessional]
We come, we come (TWB) [Communion – esp V3]
Waiting for the child (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection - Gifts]

There will be signs in the sun
and the moon and the stars.
Introduction
Our readings bring themes of salvation, hope and the coming of the Christ. This continues to
prepare us for the feast of the nativity as a feast of the transformation of the world.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you gave us a new heart through the shedding of your blood.
Lord have mercy.
You gave your life that we might have hope through the darkness.
Christ have mercy.
You bring us to the New Jerusalem.
Lord have mercy.

Collect
Almighty and merciful God,
may no earthly undertaking hinder those
who set out in haste to meet your Son,
but may our learning of heavenly wisdom
gain us admittance to his company.

The backdrop of this oration is the second coming of the Christ. The sense of ‘haste’
conveys willingness and desire rather than being caught short and unprepared. Indeed, the
prayer is all about our preparation. The oration sets in play earthly undertakings, heavenly
wisdoms and admittance to Christ’s company. This is not a dull contrast between earth and
heaven. Rather, heavenly wisdom is the wisdom of Christ. The term conjures up the
sapiential books of the Old Testament, which have much sagacious, practical and earthy
advice. In New Testament terms, to be erudite in heavenly wisdom is to know the beatitudes.
And to be learned in the ways of Christ is to be steeped in the knowledge that whatever we
do for the least we are doing to Christ. When we clothe the poor and feed the hungry, we are
in the company of Christ. The ‘mundane’ and ‘earthly’ are the things that hold us back from
this encounter with Christ on earth.
And so, the prayer unfolds. In the Christian wisdom of care for the poor and the recognition
of Christ in all, we are already in his company and experience his mercy. This learning fuels
our desire, our haste, to be in his company fully and knowing the power of divine mercy.

First Reading
Baruch 5:1-9
As God returns Jerusalem from exile, the mercy of God will turn mourning and misery into
the peace of justice.

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 125(126)
The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy. The psalmist speaks joyfully of the return from exile, as does Baruch.

Second Reading
Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11
God who has begun such ambitious good work in us will also bring it to fulfillment.

Gospel Reading
Luke 3:1-6
While the coming of Jesus is set within the political and religious reality of his time, we are introduced to him through John the Baptist’s call for repentance.

Reflection
The Advent meaning of the first reading is that God will save. There will be restoration and the end of exile. It is a powerful hope that the prophet Baruch keeps alive for the dismayed and disheartened people living under conquest outside of the promised land. The poet is preaching hope.

The text from Philippians is also preaching hope, with an emphasis on the Second Coming of Christ. This is one of the themes of the Advent season, as it ‘plays’ across the celebration of the incarnation and the fulfillment of all things in the return of Christ.

The Gospel returns us firmly to preparation for the feast of the incarnation, introducing us to the Baptist. Soon enough John will facilitate the advent of the adult Jesus at his baptism and commencing his ministry. The reading begins with setting our protagonists within history. Jesus and John carry out their ministry amongst real historical figures and amidst events real to their own lives. Luke’s scope begins broad, and introduces Tiberius, the Emperor of Rome. The focus narrows to Pilate whom we know plays a pivotal role in Jesus’ death, and lesser figures such as Herod. He also we meet later, and significantly rules Galilee, the homeland of Jesus and a place rife with rebellion. Nothing much good comes from there, and particularly under Herod’s rule. The list concludes with the pair of High Priests, again both of whom we know from later in the narrative. The evangelist gathers the Emperor, regional leaders and the religious leaders into an opening historical set piece. Historical accuracy is not quite Luke’s intention, rather John emerges and soon Jesus, to minister in a world led by invasive forces attached to a ruthless empire which has co-opted the religious leadership. Australian scholar Brendan Byrne sees this passage as an example of a ‘hospitality’ to the realities of culture and an ‘at-homeness’ in the world that is part of the wider sense of the ‘hospitality of God’. By situating Jesus firmly within his time, his historical reality and his religious context, Luke is exploring the meaning of the incarnation. From him, what does it mean for the light to come into the world if it does not mean shedding light on the world as it is, a world that God unreservedly loves.

The Gospel, then, is used in the feast to highlight the adventus of Christ. For Luke, Jesus takes up the prior message of the prophet John, whose baptism of repentance sought to bring conversion to his followers and have them live under the forgiveness of God. Luke needs to highlight John and set his message at the service of Jesus. John preaches the poetry of Isaiah as a reminder that his work is only the beginning, and that there is greater hope on the way. Within our passage there is a contrast between the current rulers from amongst the invaders as well as the religious leaders, Rome and Temple as one, and the one who is coming from the desert, from the wilderness, from ‘no place’ and ‘no power’. Yet no obstacle can withstand his leading all humanity straight to God!
If we take up Brendan Byrne’s observation about the hospitality of God embracing the real state of the world, from its politics to its environment, our path to Advent in these pandemic times is different from other years. How can we be more like John, bringers of light that leads to Christ? In a sense, this year it is the world that is waiting, and it is we who are the bringers. Across all that has been happening, have we as a community been able to make paths straight and mountains flat so that all may reach the safety and security needed. It is a time to acknowledge how our teachers, nurses, carers, parents and police, amongst others, have filled in valleys, polished rough roads and exemplified the hospitality of God in culture and history. This remains an unusual Advent, and one in which the church as the bringer of the Good News has a role to celebrate and continue.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
As people of God, we pray that the Lord will be with us as we prepare for Christ’s coming this Christmas and at the end of time.

Petitions
We pray for the Church and all who live the resurrection, particularly Pope Francis and members of the Plenary Council. As we all work the road to the Synod of Bishops, may their leadership and example encourage us in our seeking the way of the Lord.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray in thanksgiving for the gift of John the Baptist calling your people to you, knowing himself to be the bridegroom’s friend and the one whom Jesus commended.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of all nations that decisions they make in governance will be for the common good of their people, particularly for those who have suffered due to the pandemic.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for people suffering in any way. Help us to show your love toward them so that we may help bind their wounds.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for your community gathered here, that we will inwardly digest the Word that we have received today. Make us gentle and kind, to be as Christ to all we meet and to reach out to those in our community who have been impoverished by COVID-19.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have died commending them into your loving hands. Be with those who mourn and give them your peace which passes all understanding.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
Father, as we make our way to Bethlehem, hear that prayer that we offer in our weakness. We keep our hearts fixed on you knowing that you will answer our prayer and that the world might believe the wonderful freedom you offer in Jesus. We know that our needs will be granted through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus our Lord.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

**GA**
Advent litany. B. Farrell. 279
Advent song. D. Browne/ J. Wood. 281
My soul in stillness waits. M. Haugen. 280
O come, O come Emmanuel. J. M. Neale et. al./ Gregorian Chant Melody. 285
Prepare the way. B. Boniwell. 284
Wait for the Lord. Taize. 283

**AOV1**
O come, O come Emmanuel. J. M. Neale et. al./ Gregorian Chant Melody. 174

**AOV2**
Open the heavens. B. Boniwell. 163

**AOV4Kids**
Christmas is coming. J. Bell. 55 (Verse 2)
Fill ev'ry valley up. M. Mangan. 54
O Emmanuel. M. Mangan. 52

**CWB**
On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry. Charles Coffin, tr. John Chandler. 780
Prepare the way. Brian Boniwell. 794
Take comfort, God's people. Omer Westendorf. 813

**CWBII**
*Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions*
Hark! a herald voice is calling. Tr. Edward Caswall. 239
Open the heavens, Lord. Brian Boniwell. 243
Prepare the way. Brian Boniwell. 250

*Additional selections by Chris deSilva*
Comfort, comfort now my people. Johann G. Olearius, tr. Catherine Winkworth. 238
On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry. Charles Coffin, tr. John Chandler. 244
Wait for the Lord. Taizé Community. 251
Like a shepherd. Bob Dufford SJ. 538

**S&S2**
Ready the way. Curtis Stephan. 293
We shall prepare. Janet Vogt. 294

*Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy*
Psalm 125: *The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy.*
Psalm 125: Noel Ancell. CWB 177
Psalm 126: The Lord has done great things for us: Noel Ancell. GA 74
Psalm 126 (125): Jenny O'Brien. JOBC pg. 9
The Lord has done great things for us. LPC Tony Alonso p.8
Music selections by Michael Mangan

Fill every valley (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]

O Emmanuel (TT/SYJ/ CWB II) [Gathering, Communion, Recessional]

Come, Lord Jesus, come CH & V2 (SYJ/ CWBII) [Lighting Advent Wreath]

We come, we come (TWB) [Communion – esp V3]

Waiting for the child (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection - Gifts]
Introduction
While today’s feast celebrates the Catholic Church’s belief that Mary was conceived without the stain of original sin, the Scripture readings focus on God, whose divine purpose is to bring salvation to the whole of creation in and through his son, Jesus Christ. It is in accepting God’s will that Mary makes this possible and so becomes the mother of God.

Penitential Act
Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:
Lord Jesus, you are the Son of Mary. Lord have mercy.
You are the glory of God. Christ have mercy.
You show us the Father. Lord have mercy.

First Reading
*Genesis 3:9-15, 20*
When God learns of how Adam and the woman came to eat of the forbidden fruit, God curses the serpent in a poetic passage that the Church has interpreted as a foretelling of the coming of Christ. In this interpretation the enmity between the woman, Mary, and the serpent will be resolved by the victory of Mary’s son, Jesus, over Satan.

Responsorial Psalm
*Psalm 97(98):1-4*
*Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done wonderful deeds.*
Psalm 97 sings joyfully of God’s marvellous deeds, not only for Israel and the nations, but indeed for the whole of creation.

Second Reading
*Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12*
Today’s reading, most likely written by a disciple of Paul, is part of a long and beautiful blessing prayer. What is clearly stated is God’s love for us from before the beginning of the world, a love expressed in the divine purpose throughout history and made visible in Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reading
*Luke 1:26-38*
In Luke’s account of the Annunciation, a frightened young woman is asked to make both a huge leap of faith and a courageous decision. Luke presents Mary as the first and best model of discipleship in her total acceptance of what God asked of her, knowing how much it would cost her but ultimately trusting in God’s compassion and love.
Reflection
In all three readings today, we are made aware that what we are living is God's story. God is the one in command, knowing what God wants but always desiring that we creatures collaborate in a spirit of love and gratitude. God will never force us against our will and desires nothing but our good. How will we respond to God's invitation?

In the beautiful opening hymn of the letter to the Ephesians, there is no room for doubt: "Before the world was made, he chose us...chosen from the beginning, under the predetermined plan of the one who guides all things as he decides by his own will." It is an expression of early Christian faith, and now ours, that we have been loved by God since before the world began, and we are a part of the ongoing divine plan. However, this is no cause for complacency but rather for striving to be "holy and spotless, and to live through love," with all that that entails of humility and self-sacrifice.

We are well acquainted with the first reading from Genesis, but how do we interpret it in the light of an understanding that God has a predetermined plan? After all, God is directly involved in this particular story. He is the one who sets the arbitrary rule that the fruit of certain trees is forbidden. Does he actually set Adam and the woman up for failure? Or can we think of the fall, not so much as a failure, but rather as an inevitable step in human growth and development? Do we not all eventually come to know good and evil? Is this not an intrinsic part of being human?

While we are accustomed to thinking that God sent his son into the world because Adam sinned, we can take heart from an alternative theology, expounded in the works of medieval theologian, Duns Scotus, the great Karl Rahner, and, more recently, many of our contemporary eco-theologians. They all say that God intended the incarnation from the very beginning, because God, who is Love, must, by God's very nature, necessarily have longed for union with the beloved, the world of creation. As theologian Elizabeth Johnson puts it, "the incarnation is not dependent on the sin of our first parents. It was Love's very intent from the beginning." Or to put it another way, in the words of the eminent Australian theologian, Denis Edwards, "God's self-giving in the incarnation is the very purpose and meaning of creation."

In today's Gospel, in which the angel of the Lord announces the Incarnation, he makes no mention of Adam or Eve. Nevertheless, there is quite definitely a plan in God's mind. Mary is to have a son, Jesus, the Son of the Most High, who will fulfill the ancient hopes of Israel by ascending to the throne of his ancestor David and ruling over Jacob's house forever. In other words, God is going to enter human history, to begin a reign that has no end. "Rejoice," says Gabriel. He brings good news.

He calls Mary, "so highly favoured." We are more familiar with the translation, "full of grace." The original Greek word used by Luke means something like "having been endowed with grace," and appears nowhere else in the New Testament. It is this particular word of salutation that is commonly cited as witness to the Church's belief that Mary was so graced by God that she was conceived without the stain of original sin. She, in particular, was chosen before the world was made, to be holy and spotless. What is important for us to grasp here is that the fullness of grace in Mary is a matter, first and foremost, of God's initiative. This is gift, freely given. She has been chosen to be the mother of God. But God will not force her. God desires her consent.

Deeply disturbed by the angel's greeting, she asks herself what this greeting could mean. Of everything the angel says to calm her anxiety and convey his message, the one thing she grasps is that she is going to have a baby. Now she has real reason to fear, given her unmarried state and the culture in which she lives. When she asks how this can possibly be, since she is a virgin, the angel explains that the Holy Spirit will come upon her. And if Mary
still has any doubts, the angel finally tells her, to prove that “nothing is impossible to God,”
that her barren kinswoman, Elizabeth, is now six months pregnant.
The angel spends a good deal of time telling Mary how great her son Jesus is going to be,
but it seems to me that Mary is far more impressed with the fact that Elizabeth is
miraculously pregnant. It is this bodily, physical reality that speaks more to her of God’s
compassionate, loving kindness than the angel’s prophecies. Fear in the knowledge of what
this pregnancy might cost her gives way in the light of this particular revelation. Immediately
she embraces God’s will in all humility. “I am the handmaid of the Lord,” she says. “Let what
you have said be done to me.” And then the angel left her, because he had received what he
had come for: Mary’s consent to God’s will.

If the readings today tell us that God has a predetermined plan, the psalm reminds us that
salvation is for the whole of creation, just not human beings.

\[
\begin{align*}
All \ the \ ends \ of \ the \ earth \ have \ seen \\
the \ salvation \ of \ our \ God. \\
Shout \ to \ the \ Lord \ all \ the \ earth, \\
ring \ out \ your \ joy. 
\end{align*}
\]

In the midst of an undoubted global ecological crisis, what is God’s cosmic, grace-filled plan
for the salvation of our earth? Mary’s story shows us that each one of us, no matter how
seemingly unimportant, has a part to play in it. We have been chosen and grace has been
given, to live through love in God’s presence. What will that mean for us today?
The virgin is with child and shall bear a son and she will call him Emmanuel.
Prayer of the Faithful

**Introduction**
As we honour Mary in her Immaculate Conception, let us offer our needs to our Father, who is our Creator.

**Petitions**
We pray for Pope Francis, all Church Leaders and members of the Plenary Council. Guide them to be leaders of integrity and that they respectfully consider the voices of those they serve as we all walk the journey to the Synod.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray that as a Church we will be open to the challenges and opportunities that the Plenary Council will present. May the ‘God who is, who was and who is to come’, live in our hearts throughout this important time of discernment and decision making.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for us all, that in the midst of our nakedness and fragility, we do not hide but are open to listening to your voice.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all expectant mothers; as our Blessed Mother was responsive to the calling to be a mother, that they too may be receptive to their calling.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for women who are struggling to have babies as did Elizabeth, that their bodies may conceive and give birth to healthy babies.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are not well, particularly those affected by the pandemic. May they be strengthened in you, especially when the pain is unbearable, and may their carers show them love and compassion.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for ourselves that she, who is full of grace, may pray with us on our pilgrimage.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

**Conclusion**
Father in heaven, hear the prayers we lay before you as we pray with the Immaculate Virgin Mary, through the power of the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus our Lord.

Amen.
Music
by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Hail Queen of heaven. H. Hemy. 546
Immaculate Mary. Foley/ Lourdes. 549
Magnificat (Tell out my soul). T. Dudley Smith/ W. Greatorex. 550
My soul rejoices. O. Alstott. 250
There is nothing told. C. Willcock SJ. 548

AOV1
O holy Mary. O. Alstott. 141

AOVNG
Among all. Chris de Silva. 8
All the ends of the Earth. Bobby Fisher. 5

CWB
Holy Virgin, by God's decree. Jean-Paul Lécot, tr. W. R. Lawrence. 714
Immaculate Mary, we praise God in you. Brian Foley. 723
O Mary of graces and Mother of God. Tr. Douglas Hyde. 769
Sing of Mary, pure and lowly. Roland Ford Palmer SSJE. 808

CWBI
Holy Virgin, by God's decree. Jean-Paul Lécot, tr. W. R. Lawrence. 410
Mary, Mother of Good Counsel. Murray J. Kroetsch. 411
O holy Mary. Owen Alstott. 413
Immaculate Mary, we praise God in you. Brian Foley. 416
There is nothing told. Didier Rimaud SJ, tr. Christopher Willcock SJ. 418
Holy light on earth's horizon. Edward Caswall. 442

S&S1
All the ends of the Earth. Bobby Fisher. 75

S&S2
All the ends of the Earth. Ken Canedo. 270
Hail Mary: gentle woman. Carey Landry. 336

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy
Psalm 97: Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done wonderful deeds.
Psalm 97: Anthony Briggs. CWB 472
Psalm 98 (97): Jenny O'Brien. JOBF pg. 59
Sing to the Lord a New Song. Marty Haugen and David Haas. pg.126 LPSF

Music selections by Michael Mangan
Sing new songs of joy (FWS/CWB II) based on Ps 97 (98)
All the ends of the earth (LCC) Ps 97/98 (Chn’s Lectionary [Psalm, Gifts]
Mary Said Yes (TT/SYJ) [CHILDREN: Gathering, Recessional]
My Spirit Sings (FWS/SYJ/CWB II) Magnificat
Waiting for the Child (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection]
Introduction
As we prepare to celebrate the coming of the messiah, we are reminded of the qualities of the life of faith. John the Baptist gives them an edge, but it is important for the Christian community to realize that its ‘feet are being held to the fire’ in our own circumstances. In an echo of the sermon on the plain, the Gospel from Luke is preparing us for the radical teachings of the beatitudes and the sermon that leads on from those blessings: these are set before us as a meaning of Christmas.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you baptise us with the Holy Spirit and fire.
Lord, have mercy.
You guide us when we are despairing.
Christ, have mercy.
You show us the perfect example of love.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect
O God, who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord’s Nativity, enable us, we pray, to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.

This third week of the season heralds a turn from an emphasis on the second coming of Christ to the impending feast of Christmas. The collect describes us as awaiting the feast of the Nativity of the Lord. Interestingly the sixth century original was slightly more theological, speaking of our expectation of the ‘incarnation’ rather than the ‘birth’. For contemporary believers three images come to the fore here. The most profound is that of the incarnation: the divine one taking flesh and living as fully human. Following the patristic wisdom of St Irenaeus, ‘what is not taken up of our humanity cannot be saved’. The primary unpacking of the incarnation is that the savior must be born to be of one flesh with us. From this flows the prayer’s understanding of the ‘nativity’. The term seeks to focus our attention on the full humanity of Jesus. However, uppermost in our consciousness today, following the piety of the medieval period, is the way we immediately equate the nativity with the actual birth of the child Jesus to Mary his mother in a stable in Bethlehem, angels, magi, animals and stars all included. While the birth of a child is always a cause of joy, and a safe birth under such conditions well worth celebrating, the joy that underpins our worship and the rejoicing that can only be defined as solemn is because the divine took flesh and we have been offered salvation.
First Reading
Zephaniah 3: 14-18a
The prophet Zephaniah applies hope to our Advent worship.

Responsorial Psalm
Isaiah 12:2-6. R. v.6
Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.
The psalm calls us to cry out because God is our salvation, our strength, our song.

Second Reading
Philippians 4:4-7
Rejoice the Lord is near! The author of the letter to the Philippians wants us to be happy, always happy in the Lord.

Gospel Reading
Luke 3:10-18
John the Baptist preaches the good news to the outcasts while encouraging them to see their expectations fulfilled in the one who is coming.

Reflection
This slightly diverse set of readings are being applied to our Advent piety. We start with the little-known prophet Zephaniah. Our passage is the closing section of the short book. It is a hopeful ending, whereas the rest of the book was more concerned with God's wrath at false worship in Jerusalem. The setting is the tyranny of the great nations jostling for power (Egypt, Assyria, the Sythians) and the people of Israel in their midst making strategic and political alliances but forgetful of what constitutes true worship.

Perhaps a fruitful application for us is around the theme of hope. The prophet ends with hope despite his dire prophecies. In a typical ancient world fashion, the hope is in a leader to come. Here we have the close application to Advent and the coming of the Lord. We do not live in a 'strong man' society or politic, though strong leadership of a democratic form is prized! However, our hope for the present situation may well be to call upon the gifts we already have in our midst as a church, and to bring these to the fore.

In the scriptures the term 'true worship' has depth and resonance. It is more than appropriate celebration of the Eucharist and the sacraments. While including this, and bringing us back to this, it also reflects the integrity of the life of the assembly. They must be true to God – true worship with heart and mind and soul – and true to the reign of God – love of neighbour as self.

The short excerpt from the Letter to the Philippians has a lovely balance. The Advent seasonal centrepiece is Paul's declaration that 'the Lord is near'. For young children, Christmas is a countable number of sleeps away. Yet the author does not place all in the future. The present is to be marked by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving and quieted hearts. This is the age of the good news, and the peace of Christ is already guarding the hearts of the faithful. This active faith is the setting for the hope in the imminent coming of Christ. It is our hope too. Perhaps the sentiment that is most apposite for us comes early in the reading: ‘your kindness should be know to all’. The impending coming of Christ as celebrated in Advent, or as understood by Paul to be a coming that was soon to be realized, should not be a excuse for embodying the good news here and now. Our communities should be renowned for their kindness.
The Gospel serves the theme of the season with a further declaration of the ‘adventing’ of Christ. As we approach the feast of the inbreaking of the light, the Baptist is described as exhorting those who are listening to him to await Jesus. Still John is allowed something of his own flourish. As a prophet of repentance, he has an apocalyptic streak. The Christ will bring both the Holy Spirit and fire. The Spirit may be disruptive enough but further there is a hard cleansing to come, a strong winnowing, a reckoning of sorts. While this does not match the eventual preaching of Jesus, but Luke allows that John too preaches the good news. In this preaching the Baptist is attractive to those on the outside of religious observance and good piety. Tax collectors, soldiers and other extortionists find hope with John, as do the poor. They are to be fed and clothed. There is much here that will be assumed into the preaching of Jesus.

For our liturgical setting, these characteristics mark who is to come. As we prepare to celebrate the coming of the messiah, we are reminded of the qualities of the life of faith. John gives them an edge, but it is important for the Christian community to realize that its ‘feet are being held to the fire’ in our own circumstances. In an echo of the sermon on the plain, in this reading Luke is preparing us for the radical teachings of the beatitudes and the sermon that leads on from those blessings. As we await the celebration of the coming of the Good News, we are challenged by our readings and our immersion in the pandemic to ask whether we are good news to those around us. John reached beyond the usual restrictions to touch those considered beyond the bounds of God’s love. As we are stretched, how well are we actually stretching to extend the bounds of God’s love?

**Prayer of the Faithful**

**Introduction**

As we await the feast of the Lord’s nativity, let us turn to God now with our petitions to guide us in attaining the joys of so great a salvation.

**Petitions**

We pray for the Pope Francis, and all other Christian leaders that they may be guided by the Holy Spirit in representing Christ as we move towards the Synod of Bishops next year. May the efforts of the members of the Plenary Council continue to bring fruitful discernment for our Church in Australia.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are separated from family and friends due to the pandemic, be comforted with your peace and rest as we move into the Christmas season.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for a rejoicing amongst the hungry and the homeless, and that their stomachs will be filled and a roof put over their heads during this season of Advent.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our own community, that just like John the Baptist, we can point towards Christ in all his power and glory through the work the Lord has called us to do.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all of those who have yet to meet you, Lord, that in leading up to the season of your nativity, they will come to know the Good News.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.
We pray for all those suffering ill health in mind and body. May the care and generosity of others enable them to find comfort and solace.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

**Conclusion**

Father, all these prayers are from those who love and rejoice in you. We trust that you hear them and give us peace in understanding you will grant them in unity with your Son, Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
A voice cries out. M. Joncas. 278
My soul in stillness waits. M. Haugen. 280
O come, O come Emmanuel. J. M. Neale et. al./ Gregorian Chant Melody. 285
Prepare the way. B. Boniwell. 284
The Spirit of God. L. Deiss. 185
The voice of God. P. Icarus/ W. Greatorex. 476
Wait for the Lord. Taize. 283.

AOV1
O come, O come Emmanuel. J. M. Neale et. al./ Gregorian Chant Melody. 174

AOV4Kids
Christmas is coming. J. Bell. 55 (Verse 3)
Fill ev'ry valley up. M. Mangan. 54
O Emmanuel. M. Mangan. 52
Rejoice in the Lord always. Traditional. 75

CWB
On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry. Charles Coffin/Tr. John Chandler. 780
Rejoice, the Lord is king! Charles Wesley. 799
Take comfort, God's people. Omar Westendorf. 813

CWBII
Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
Hark! a herald voice is calling. Tr. Edward Caswall. 239
Prepare the way, O Zion. Mikael Franzén, tr. Charles P. Price. 245
Wait for the Lord. Taizé Community. 251
Additional selection by Chris deSilva
In the Lord I'll be ever thankful. Taizé Community.522

S&S2
Cry out with joy. Joshua Blakesley. 289

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy
Isaiah 12: Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel. 180
Isaiah 12: Jenny O’Brien. JOBC pg. 10
Cry out with joy and gladness. LPC Marty Haugen. pg.11

Music selections by Michael Mangan
Fill every valley (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
O Emmanuel (TT/SYJ/CWB II) [Gathering, Communion, Recessional]
Come, Lord Jesus, come CH & V3 (SYJ/CWBII) [Lighting Advent Wreath]
We come, we come (TWB) [Communion – esp V3]
One body in Christ (TWB) [Communion – esp V2]
Waiting for the child (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection - Gifts]
19 December 2021
Fourth Sunday of Advent

Reflection by Gerard Moore

Introduction
As the feast of Christmas looms, the readings for the final Sunday of Advent take us closer to the expectations of the one who is to come. There is a shift that allows us greater insight into the sense that Christ comes not from the great but from the more lowly, that God chooses differently to human society. With this is the understanding that Christ, the mighty ruler, brings peace not to rule by might. This is strengthened with the narrative of the Visitation, where the two kinswomen Elizabeth and Mary, meet and exchange greetings and recognitions. Interestingly, this is the story of two strong women, each pivotal to salvation, carrying faith in strength and hope. They will be the teachers of Jesus and John, and they are our teachers.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:
Lord Jesus, you came to do your Father's will.
Lord, have mercy.
You came as a little one but offered yourself for our salvation.
Christ, have mercy.
You will rule with majesty and power for all eternity.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect
Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord,
your grace into our hearts,
that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son
was made known by the message of an Angel,
may by his Passion and Cross
be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.

Our opening prayer this Sunday is steeped in theology and piety. Theologically it recounts the salvific deeds of Christ: incarnation, passion and death, resurrection. It seeks that we be brought into the glory of Christ’s resurrection through the crucifixion. The Advent focus is on the incarnation, with the reference to the message of the Angel offering an appreciation of the biblical narratives of the birth of the child. The depths of the taking flesh are seen in the passion and cross, while the supremacy of grace over death comes forth in the resurrection. The prayer, also the concluding collect for the thrice daily Angelus, evokes devotion to Mary. The Angelus reflects God’s work of incarnation with a dialogue that rings with Mary’s fiat and its outcome in the Word becoming flesh. The private message of Gabriel to Mary opens onto the public pronunciation of the angels to the shepherds, and ultimately made known to us. The prayer can be difficult to proclaim precisely because it is so well known to many of the faithful. Yet it evinces that potent seasonal mixture of theology, piety, devotion to Mary and the Christ-child, and nativity stories. Most importantly, it closely connects the Cross to the incarnation, and sets them within the triumph of the resurrection.
First Reading
Micah 5:1- 4c
The ruler who is to come is first and foremost a bringer of peace.

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19
Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.
As with the reading from Micah, there is great hope that the Lord will come.

Second Reading
Hebrews 10:5-10
Our passage from Hebrews continues to prepare us for the coming of the divine as fully human.

Gospel Reading
Luke 1:39 - 45
As these two strong kinswomen meet, with Elizabeth greeting Mary, the salvation of all creation is brought before us.

Reflection
The readings for this final Sunday in Advent move us towards an understanding of the Christ who is coming. The reading from the prophet Micah offers some new notes and brings forth themes that will be taken up in the Visitation, our Gospel text.

As with the extracts from the prophets over the last few weeks, the underlying theme is the emergence of a new leader, something of a ‘strongman’, to take up the reins of the nation and to rule under the reign of God. Further features are revealed here. The coming one is from humble leadership stock. The leading clans are not able to bring forth such a true leader. However though coming from the lowly ranked tribal group, the emergent ruler has a lineage that is ancient, and so has integrity born from the most original faith in God. There is a connection being drawn between the lowly, the humble and the true. The ultimate result is not national riches, defeat of enemies or empire, but peace. The ruler brings peace.

There is another point that can be made here, and though obvious is absolutely key to Christian faith. Micah speaks of the ruler born of a woman, a point made forcefully in the Gospel. The feast of Christmas is the feast of the incarnation, of the coming of the divine amidst creation as truly flesh as truly divine. Micah’s down to earth statement presages the pivotal point of the revelation of the depth of God’s love.

Regarding the second reading, there are three features of this extract from the Letter to the Hebrews that enrich our Advent theology. The passage begins with a modified verse from the Ps 40. The striking phrase is that God has prepared a ‘body’ for the Christ. While there are a range of ideas at play in that verse, this is the one that ties the reading to our preparation for the feast of Christmas.

With this comes the reference to the obedience of Christ. There are a pair of themes here. Foremost is the obedience of Christ, who takes flesh for our salvation. This is a strong message in the Letters of Paul and is echoed here as well. But, given the context and the
Gospel that will follow, there is too an intimation of the obedience of Mary. It is Mary’s fiat that enables the Christ child to be born, and her obedience is integral to the incarnation. Mary the Mother of the saviour and Mary the faithful believer, are one.

The third point is a subtle shift in the text itself, testament to the theological view of the author. We have before us the line “the offering of the body of Jesus Christ …” I am leaving aside the language of sacrifice and offering what are central to Hebrews and turning our concentration to the appellation Jesus Christ. Our author rarely joins these two names so closely, yet here places ‘Jesus’ the earthly one and ‘Christ’ the divine signification together. The writer is highlighting the integrity and absolute unity of the incarnation. We are quite used to this after 2000 years, but here there is a particular effort to ensure there is no loss of the full sense of the incarnation, an important contribution to our preparation for the feast of the incoming of the light.

Our Gospel passage is the narrative of the visitation of Mary to Elizabeth. Let’s not forget as we take up the Advent interpretation of this text that it is a profound encounter between two strong women. The readings from the prophets across the season have focused on the coming male leader, the ideal king of justice, of peace, of the reign of God. Here the final advent reading features two strong women, both poor, both bearing children of enormous significance, both supportive one of the other, both willing and able to read and enact the will of God.

It might be best interpreting both as prophets, as tellers of the will of God. Mary has conceived by the Spirit, Elizabeth too is filled with the Holy Spirit. As the elder cousin reveals Mary’s pregnancy, she does so in the language of the beatitudes, the language of Jesus most famous preaching. She also allows that her child will give way to Mary’s child, not just in respect but in full joy.

With all this there is a theological profundity as the meaning of the incarnation is explored. The coming of the divine to take flesh is a cooperative venture, and Elizabeth praises her younger kin for her faith. The faith of the young woman is inseparable from the salvation of all creation in Christ. She is the ‘mother’ of ‘my Lord’. These two women are the teachers of Jesus and the Baptist: are they our teachers too?

The divine inbreaking is a cooperative event. The Spirit is present, but so too is the will and willingness of these two individual women, prophets who wring in the reign of God. Perhaps there is something systemic that the church could learn from this.
Mary was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
As we move to celebrate the great event of Jesus’ birth let us bring to our Father the needs of our Church and the needs of our community.

Petitions
We pray for the leaders of our Church, especially Pope Francis, that they will continue to work in humility for the coming of the Kingdom as we all journey towards the Synod 2023.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of countries worldwide that they will respect the needs of Christians to celebrate this glorious feast.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for people throughout the world who suffer illness and grief because of the pandemic. May world leaders ensure that there is equitable distribution of vaccines and necessary medicines.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who work in the retail trade and in the hospitality industry that they will be able to contemplate the real meaning of the Christmas season in a way that brings them peace.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those affected by domestic violence at this time of the year. May they find places of safety and protection and may the perpetrators seek to remove the source of their violence.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who deeply mourn at this special time of the year loved ones who have died. May they have peace in knowing that those grieve for are with God.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
Father, we bring these needs to you knowing that you hear our prayers that we make through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus our Lord.

Amen.
Music
by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Let all mortal flesh keep silence. Liturgy of St James/ French Carol Melody. 190
My soul in stillness waits. M. Haugen. 280
O come, O come Emmanuel. J. M. Neale et. al./ Gregorian Chant Melody. 285

AOV1
O holy Mary. O. Alstott. 141

AOV2
Open the heavens. B. Boniwell. 163

AOV4Kids
Christmas is coming. J. Bell. 55 (Verse 4)
Like Mary. G. Holmes. 53
O Emmanuel. M. Mangan. 52

AOVNG
Among all. Chris de Silva. 8

CWB
Holy Virgin, by God's decree. Jean-Paul Lécot, tr. W. R. Lawrence. 714
Now sing my soul, 'How great the Lord'. Michael Saward. 754
The angel Gabriel from Heaven came. Sabine Baring-Gould. 815

CWBII
Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
O come, O come, Emmanuel. Tr. John Mason Neale et al. 242
Open the heavens, Lord. Brian Boniwell. 243
Saviour of the nations, come. Martin Luther, tr. William Reynolds/Martin L. Seltz. 246
The coming of our Lord. Charles Coffin, Tr. Anthony G. Petti/John Chandler. 248
You heavens, sprinkle dew from above/Rorate caeli. Adapt. Rev. Percy Jones. 254
Holy Virgin, by God's decree. Jean-Paul Lécot, tr. W. R. Lawrence. 410
Immaculate Mary, we praise God in you. Brian Foley. 416

Additional selections by Chris deSilva
Come to set us free. Bernadette Farrell. 233
Lift up your hearts. Robert F. O’Connor SJ. 539

S&S2
Hail Mary: gentle woman. Carey Landry. 336
Psalm 79: Lord, make us turn to you; let us see your face and we shall be saved.
Psalm 80: Lord, make us turn to you: Kathleen Boschetti. GA 47
Psalm 80 (79): Jenny O’Brien. JOB pg. 13
Lord, make us turn to you. LPC Marty Haugen. P.14

Music selections by Michael Mangan
O Emmanuel (TT/SYJ/CWB II) [Gathering, Communion, Recessional]
Come, Lord Jesus, come CH & V4 (SYJ/ CWBII) [Lighting Advent Wreath]
Mary Said Yes (TT) [CHILDREN: Gathering, Recessional]
We come, we come (TWB) [Communion – esp V3]
One body in Christ (TWB) [Communion – esp V2]
Waiting for the child (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection - Gifts]
24 December 2021

The Nativity of the Lord
Christmas Vigil

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction
Mary will give birth to a son, and he will be called Jesus. God’s saving plan is unfolding in our midst, God is coming to be with us as one of us! Now, no one need be called ‘forsaken’ or ‘abandoned’ again.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, by your birth you brought hope to the world.
Lord, have mercy.

You came so that all people may be saved.
Christ, have mercy.

You are the Prince of Peace.
Lord, have mercy.

First Reading
Isaiah 62:1–5
God’s deep love for God’s people bursts forth in emotional imagery akin to a groom’s love for his bride. This love causes the people to escape the clutches of abandonment and desolation.

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 88(89):4–5, 16–17, 27, 29
For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.
The psalm echoes Isaiah in the delight of a covenant that will endure.

Second Reading
Acts 13:16-17, 22-25
In line with the words of today’s Psalm, Paul expresses how Jesus is the high point of the story of salvation built on the tradition of David.
Gospel Reading

Matthew 1:1-25 or Matthew 1:18-25

Through the people of Israel, God’s chosen people, the Lord has shown that God longs to be close to us. Now, through the faithfulness of Joseph and Mary, God will be made fully present in Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us.

Reflection

The Christmas story typically told around this time of year, though obviously most heavily relying on the Gospels of Mathew and Luke, is well understood to be an amalgamation of all the Gospel narratives and some non-Biblical material as well (the beautiful but most definitely apocryphal Drummer Boy legend being one example). However, close attention to the Christmas narratives as they appear in the Gospels is always a good place to find fuller meaning of the season.

In Matthew’s version we see Joseph featured and the narrative is driven through Mary’s betrothed more than any other figure. Further, the first mention of Jesus himself seems somewhat unremarkable; Mary is ‘found to be with child’ (1:18). It is a discovery that is being made rather than an announcement proclaimed as it is in Luke. It is in Luke’s Gospel we have the visitation of the angel Gabriel to Mary announcing God’s plan to her and then, from Mary, further celebratory announcing with Elizabeth then Zechariah. In the reading that features in the Midnight Mass, we will have further announcing in another classic scene from the Christmas tale with angels appearing to shepherds singing and praising.

But our Gospel doesn’t have that for us this evening. It is more subdued and restrained in feel. There are no grand announcements made to Joseph, Mary or anyone else. Even when the Magi appear on the scene, an event that has become understood as the visitation of the ‘three wise men of the East’ which will feature on Epiphany Sunday, there is no announcement. The Magi are understood to have discerned a ‘new king’ was being born because of their observation of celestial events. They, like Joseph, find the ‘new King of the Jews’ rather than have it declared to them. The ‘flight to Egypt’, again a unique feature of Matthew, adds to the intriguing nature of the infancy narrative. Secret escapes and quiet covert movements rather than bold proclamations seem to feature.

It is something of a cliché of Christmas to recognise the true ‘reason for the season’ is easily missed. The preparations for the day itself, the gift buying (sometimes desperate and last-minute), the work Christmas parties, the start of school holidays – there are all number of things that pull us away from the heart of Christmas which is the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We tend to think of this as a modern issue, a problem particular for our times where increased secularism joins with seemingly endless consumerism in an inescapable pincer that all but squeezes the true meaning of Christmas out of view. With that in mind, Matthew's tone is telling. Though the circumstances themselves are quite different, it has always been hard to gather what God is doing at Christmas.

Returning to the Gospel reading itself, Joseph has no idea at first. All he (and we along with him) are told is that Mary is with child. Luke fills in the details of how and when Mary knows what is going on, but that perspective is not present in Matthew’s version. Rather, as mentioned, it is Joseph’s perspective which is most prominent, and he simply begins the process of nullifying the betrothal as would be quite customary in the day. The quiet way Joseph was set to do so was a sign of his respect for Mary and his righteous character. That this child is all part of God’s doing and plan from the very beginning is not recognised – and why should it be given the information provided? The only clue given is the long genealogy offered in the longer version of our Gospel reading. But this sits as a prologue to the narrative, not a feature of it – a scene setter typical of the style Matthew is writing in. Joseph may be aware of his heritage, but Mary being ‘found with child’ does not directly sit in line with traditional understanding even if this were a clue.
That Joseph could so easily miss the occasion is testimony to how easy it might be for us to miss this wonderful and most precious gift of God’s presence. It comes as something looking like one thing but is actually something quite different. It appears the occasion to end the relationship with Mary but is, actually, the reason why Joseph is to draw her and her precious child even closer to form the most vital community that we can have – the family unit. A necessary framework in which Jesus is to grow into the adult whose ministry will bring God’s saving activity into full view.

Christmas is about many things, but perhaps this version of the story reminds us of how hidden God can be in our world. That God is with us in our very existence is given due testimony in our reading. That Jesus is titled Emmanuel, ‘God-is-with-us’, clearly expresses this. However, God’s presence is not always obvious. In some ways it looks ahead to the ultimate purpose of Jesus’ life which was to lay it down at Calvary, an event which looks like death will burst forth in new fullness of life offered to all. But well before that event, here at Christmas we are called to look carefully at our world. What looks like plans going awry, may well be God doing a new and precious thing. Just like the vulnerable infant child of Christmas, what looks like precarious helplessness may well be the very place God’s most powerful saving activity can manifest.

God is ever present, even in events and moments where it seems most unlikely. We would do well to have the heart of Joseph who is calm and honourable and, perhaps most importantly, open to hearing God’s prompting in the quietness of the heart. Bold, colourful and enthusiastic celebration has its place at Christmas and other occasions besides, but so does quiet peaceful reflection. Let us make sure we are open to God’s movements and find pleasant surprise in just how wonderfully subtle our God can be, quietly closer to us than we may ever imagine.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
As we gather here tonight to share the wonderful story of our salvation through the Incarnation, let us prayerfully offer the needs of our families and community to our Father.

Petitions
We pray for the leaders of our Church who must witness to the world the coming of our Saviour. May they be strengthened to do the will of God and to walk humbly with Pope Francis towards a more synodal Church.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for leaders of all nations that they will honour their own people and serve their needs with honesty and integrity. We pray too that there will be respect and equitable distribution of vaccines and medicines throughout the world.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are suffering or in need at Christmas. May they be given support and comfort so that they truly know how the Spirit works in the world.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for families who are separated at this time of the year and have been separated because of COVID-19. May their unity in love be evident in some meaningful way and may they find a way to celebrate Jesus’ birth.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.
We pray for those who mourn family members at Christmas, particularly those who have died from the pandemic. May their grief be eased by the love of those around them.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who work in the hospitality industry. May the people they serve throughout this season be filled with a spirit of love and gentleness and may their patrons choose to be patient.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

**Conclusion**

Father, we offer these needs with real confidence in the love that you have shown us through the birth of your Son. We make our prayer through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus our Lord.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Angels we have heard on high. French Carol. 286
Away in a manger. J. McFarland/ W. Kirkpatrick. 289
Hark! the herald angels sing. C. Wesley/ F. Mendelssohn. 294
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 295
O come, all ye faithful. J. Wade. 287 (Verses 1-3)
O little town of Bethlehem. P. Brooks/ L. Redner. 296
Once in royal David’s city. H. Gauntlett/ C. F. Alexander. 297
The first Nowell. English text and melody. 298 (Verses 1, 2, 4& 6)

AOV1
Hark! the herald angels sing. C. Wesley/ F. Mendelssohn. 171
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 170
O come, all ye faithful. J. Wade. 167 (Verses 1-2)
The first Nowell. English text and melody. 169 (Verses 1, 2 & 5)
What child is this? W. C. Dix/ English melody. 165 (Verses 1-2)

AOV2
Angels we have heard on high. French Carol. 140
Sing we, sing we Noel. K. Poelker. 124

AOV4Kids
And did you see Him little star? C. Gibson/ H. Clyde. 60
Out on the road to Bethlehem. M. Nicol. 61
Baby lying in a manger. P. Combe. 63
Can this really be true? L. Newton/ T. Wittwer. 64

AOVNG
Emmanuel. Raymond Badham. 40
Let the season shine. Judy Bailey. 87

CWB
A child is born in Bethlehem. Tr. Ralph Wright OSB. 612
Unto us a boy is born. Tr. Percy Dearmer. 849

CWBII
Good Christians all, rejoice. John Mason Neale. 261
Unto us a child is born! Tr. Percy Dearmer. 273

S&S2
Born this day. Ken Canedo. 296

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 88: For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.
Psalm 88: Stephen Somerville/Christopher Willcock SJ. CWB 385
Psalm 89: I will sing for ever: Roger Heagney. GA 50
Psalm 89 (88): Jenny O’Brien. JOBC pg. 14
Forever I will sing. LPSF Tony Alonso. pg.6

Music selections by Michael Mangan
Glory to God (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
Glory, gloria (STAR) [Children, Gathering, Recessional]
There is a child (TT/SYJ) based on Is 9:1-7
This little boy (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection - Gifts]
Three wise men came from the East.
25 December 2021
The Nativity of the Lord
Christmas Midnight Mass

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction
Tonight's liturgy is one of the most celebratory of the Christian calendar. The readings exclaim the exuberant wonder of God who multiplies our blessings, who lifts our burdens and brings peace to the world. Glory to God in the highest!

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, by your birth you brought hope to the world.
Lord, have mercy.

You came so that all people may be saved.
Christ, have mercy.

You are the Prince of Peace.
Lord, have mercy.

First Reading
Isaiah 9:1–6
Isaiah proclaims the ever-increasing blessings of the Lord. God whose reign is marked by righteousness, peace and freedom from oppression is promised to us in this joyous reading

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 95(96):1–3, 11–13
Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord (Lk 2:11)
The response to this psalm is taken from Luke’s gospel but the verses are from psalm 95 where the rejoicing of heaven and earth are proclaimed. This event is not just about a humble baby born in Bethlehem; it is about the whole of creation crying out because justice will rule in the world.

Second Reading
Titus 2:11–14
St. Paul reminds us how we are to find the fullness of God’s revelation celebrated this night. We are to live lives dedicated to the good, something made possible through Jesus’ sacrificial love.

Gospel Reading
Luke 2:1–14
We are invited to join with majestic angels and lowly shepherds in celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ, Saviour of the world.

**Reflection**

Of the various masses available on Christmas Day, the Mass During the Night, also known as the Midnight Mass, presents to us some of the most familiar imagery of Christmas. We have the story of Mary and Joseph having to travel to Bethlehem due to the occasion of a Roman census. The lack of room at the inn most likely due to the swelling of numbers caused by the Roman decree. The subsequent birth of the child being laid in a manger followed by angels appearing to shepherds in joyous praise. The shepherds’ visit following the angelic appearance in Luke 2:15-20 is the only thing that doesn’t quite make it into tonight’s Gospel reading – otherwise the classic Lukan narrative is near complete and well known.

The Lukan material forms the bulk of the content for many Christmas plays and nativity scenes. The practice at most vigil or night masses will be to place a baby (sometimes real where possible) in a manger in the church to mark the celebration. The visual elements allow us to hold the Christmas story in mind perhaps better than many other narratives from Scripture. Even those whose Christian practices may be sparse to non-existent would have some familiarity with these significant elements of the Christmas story (even if there are embellishments, conflation and imaginative additions included).

This itself causes us to reflect on this iconic story in a particular way. Like many scriptural narratives, this is not simply a story being told to us, but one that we are being invited to join in on. When the angels make their proclamation to the shepherds, they are effectively being told to go and see for themselves. God is doing something new, and the shepherds are not simply being told about it but are being invited to join in on the occasion itself; to have their story intertwine with Jesus’.

So, it is with us. We too are being invited not simply to hear the story from a detached stance, but to find our story within God’s story that is being made known to us in a special and new way at Christmas time. We, following the shepherds, are invited to look on the face of God by looking on the face of an infant child.

God is imaged in all sorts of ways. Whether drawn from the Bible, legendary story, wider literature or any other number of sources, God can be and has been depicted in any number of ways. Typically, when people are asked to think about what God looks like, they may well go to images of a God of power, a Creator God, a God among the clouds or stars. When depicted in human form, the cliché mature, strong, bearded figure is not an uncommon image drawn – Michelangelo’s famous paintings being an example of this.

Less common is to imagine God as an infant child, vulnerable and entirely dependent. Certainly, the babe Christ Jesus is a well-represented artistic motif at all levels – drawn at Christmas time by many a school child and found in the highest artwork through the ages. Yet, when asked “what does God look like” most will not go to the infant child as a default. Nevertheless, that is what we’re being asked to hold in our minds this night.

When the shepherds are told of the Good News that “born today is the Messiah, the Lord” (2:11) it is a proclamation of God doing something magnificent and mighty for them and for all. But, at the same time, God who we witness today is coming not in recognisable power, but humility. God is for us, but God’s designs might be. God always invites us to join God in the process. The babe God also needs us. God never forces Godself onto us, regardless of how perfectly good in swaddling clothes is an invitation by God who, in a certain sense, needs humanity which his presence comes to save. Not in the philosophical or ontological
sense, God, by definition, is ‘simply complete’ as classic theologians would put it. Nevertheless, in the plan of salvation, in God’s plan for God’s desire to show love and bring peace to the world, God invites us to recognise that God’s power is going to come through fundamental vulnerability – vulnerability that is necessary for human family and human community.

This makes total sense because God is not interested in autonomous individuating power. God’s very design for the fullness of life is predicated on our ability to form communities. Later, when Jesus begins his public ministry as an adult, he will begin and build it with a core group of followers, the apostles, and other disciples. Further, the Church that continues Jesus’ life-giving presence and mission is essentially a community that is known by its love of neighbour and of God.

Here at Christmas, that foundational dimension is laid out for us. A family, stripped of any luxury and pretence, presents to us what matters. They remain true and committed to each other and to care for the newborn baby in their midst; it is all that God ultimately needs. Shepherds, considered lowly and insignificant by society of the day, are invited to experience God’s joy and, thus, remind us that the ordinary matter in that sense too.

We don’t need to bring ostentation, any façade or worry about what the world thinks. We simply need to start by coming and looking and experiencing. We need not be afraid; look how vulnerable and humble our Lord is in front of us – an infant child on a cold night, well away from the comforts we sometimes think are essential. Hear then the invitation; look on God who is present among us and respond to the call to experience ‘great joy’ and ‘peace’ found through God and with each other.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As we gather on this holy night, let us rejoice and be glad to receive the true light, Christ the Lord. Let us pray for the needs of our Church and the needs of the world.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis, bishops and all Christian leaders, that through the light of Christ, they may be able to lead the people of God to eternal life.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the members of the Plenary Council that they may continue to discern what God’s wants of Australia and that the results may contribute fruitfully to the Synod in 2023.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of all nations, that their decisions are guided by the light of Christ so that they make fair decisions for all people in this time made difficult by the pandemic.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray that the light of Christ can shine in our parish and community during Christmas time and that we can see Christ in the poor and the marginalised. May we have a missionary focus, not one that is only about ourselves.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.
We pray that in this festive season we will not forget Christ, who is the reason for our celebrations, but keep him foremost in our minds and actions.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who suffer at Christmas because of loss or separation from loved ones, or from the trauma of domestic violence. May they find safety and peace in the care of those who love them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

**Conclusion**

Father, we pray with confidence that you hear our prayers which we make through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ our Lord.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Angels we have heard on high. French Carol. 268
Away in a manger. J. McFarland/ W. Kirkpatrick. 289
Hark! the herald angels sing. C. Wesley/ F. Mendelssohn. 294
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 295
O come, all ye faithful. J. Wade. 287 (Verses 1-3)
O little town of Bethlehem. P. Brooks/ L. Redner. 296
Once in royal David’s city. H. Gauntlett/ C. F. Alexander. 297
Silent night. J. Mohr/ F. Gruber. 290
The first Nowell. English text and melody. 298 (Verses 1, 2, 4 & 6)

AOV1
Hark! the herald angels sing. C. Wesley/ F. Mendelssohn. 171
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 170
O come, all ye faithful. J. Wade. 167
Silent Night. J. Mohr/ F. Gruber. 168
The first Nowell. English text and melody. 169 (Verses 1, 2 & 5)
What child is this? W. C. Dix/ English melody. 165 (Verses 1-2)

AOV2
Angels we have heard on high. French Carol. 140
Sing we, sing we Noel. K. Poelker. 124

AOV4Kids
And did you see Him little star? C. Gibson/ H. Clyde. 60
Out on the road to Bethlehem. M. Nicol. 61
Baby lying in a manger. P. Combe. 63
Can this really be true? L. Newton/ T. Wittwer. 64

AOVNG
Emmanuel. Raymond Badham. 40
Let the season shine. Judy Bailey. 87

CWB
A child is born in Bethlehem. Tr. Ralph Wright OSB. 612
Angels we have heard on high. Tr. J. Chadwick. 622
Unto us a boy is born. Tr. Percy Dearmer. 849

CWBII
Angels we have heard on high. Tr. James Chadwick. 255
Good Christians all, rejoice. John Mason Neale. 261
The people who in darkness walked. John Morison. 272
Unto us a child is born! Tr. Percy Dearmer. 273

S&S1
Go, tell it on the mountain. Spiritual. 114

S&S2
Born this day. Ken Canedo. 296
Break forth, O beauteous heavenly light. Timothy R. Smith. 286

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 95: Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.
Psalm 95: David C. Isele/A Gregory Murray OSB. CWB 189
Psalm 96: Today is born our Saviour: Colin Smith. GA 56
Psalm 96 (95): Jenny O’Brien. JOBC pg. 16
Today is born our Saviour. LPSF Arr. Tony Alonso. pg.9

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Glory to God (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
Glory, gloria (STAR) [CHILDREN, Gathering, Recessional]
Sing new songs of joy (FWS/CWB II) based on Ps 97 (98)
There is a child (TT/SYJ) based on Is 9:1-7
This little boy (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection - Gifts]

You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.
Introduction
The Mass during the day draws us to reflect on the mystery of God whose divine majesty far surpasses our understanding yet dwells among us; this is Jesus Christ, fully God and fully human. The creative force of God entwined within creation itself. The 'true light' that darkness cannot overcome, pushing into the shadows of our existence.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus you came so that we could have life.
Lord, have mercy.

You gave us your Word that brings light into the darkness.
Christ, have mercy.

You came so we could become children of the light.
Lord, have mercy.

First Reading
Isaiah 52:7–10
Sentries looking out from the walls of a battered city see their hero return to relieve and restore the desolate people. This hero is not like any other, it is God’s very being. The Redeemer and Comforter is among us, all the world is welcomed to witness the salvation of God.

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 97(98):1–6
All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.
It is astounding that a psalm written possibly 1000 years before Jesus was born is so apt for the feast of Christmas.

Second Reading
Hebrews 1:1–6
The Letter to the Hebrews opens by expressing how Christ is the climax of divine revelation. God's powerful Word brought creation into being and has spoken to the prophets of the Hebrew tradition. This same force is now present as a ‘perfect copy’ of God’s glory and nature in the person of Jesus Christ.
Gospel Reading

John 1:1–18 or John 1:1–5, 9–14

God spoke into the darkness, light burst forth and creation began to unfold. This imagery found in Genesis inspires John’s opening to the Gospel. The Word that was ‘in the beginning’, the light that casts out darkness, is now entwined fully in the human story.

Reflection

We human beings long for many things. Christmas time can thrust in front of us the tendency we have to excite our longings in rather material ways. The question asked, “what do you want for Christmas” is one of many common phrases heard leading up to this day. Of course, there is nothing wrong with this. Gift giving and receiving is a delightful custom of the season and symbolically appropriate. Nevertheless, it does bring to our attention the question of what we really want, what we really need and, perhaps, most importantly, how we might find it. The readings of today’s liturgy do speak to this.

Starting with the reading from Isaiah, it speaks of a bursting forth of joy that comes from sentinels, guards on a figurative city wall, who see the “return of the Lord to Zion” (52:8). What is this great joy based on? What is Zion exactly and where has God gone that a return is needed? These are just some of the questions that can come at a quick reading of the text.

To briefly unpack this, the setting of this text is a people who have been subjugated by the Babylonians and whose population has been taken into exile away from Jerusalem. Jerusalem, here at least, refers both to the place and to the people of God – thus, the ‘ruins of Jerusalem’ are the people themselves as well as their homeland. Other words used to describe the people used in this section of Isaiah includes plundered, looted, trapped in holes, and forgotten prisoners (42:22). Moreover, these sorts of terms are a culmination of understanding that God is no longer present, the Lord has been absent to their senses. The word Zion refers to a hill that, once conquered by King David, was renamed to the more familiar Jerusalem and, with the surrounds, became the capital of a united Israel.

With that background in view, in Isaiah, it represents the idealised expression of God’s presence with the Lord’s people. It is where the people are free to be their most blessed and happy versions of themselves. Under the protection and guidance of the Lord, experiencing peace (shalom) and, as such, being something of a beacon of God’s goodness to the world. When Isaiah expresses that the “Lord returns to Zion”, it is speaking of a restoration of a people to themselves. Jerusalem, the geographic location, never went away. It was there, but, without God’s presence, it was dead. Similarly, the people of God remained, even if as a remnant, but they are empty, forgotten, trapped; as good as dead. God’s return to Zion is a return to life. God’s return to Zion is the people moving from mere existence to vitality.

Turning to the Gospel, the message there and for this Christmas day is, similarly, that God is indeed with us. In John’s Gospel it is the imagery of light that catches our attention. Like the words of Isaiah, it speaks of a God who is speaking into a place that exists, where there is life of sorts, but it is missing vitality – it is dark. God not only speaks into this darkness, but pushes into it and, so, pushes the darkness way. That is what light does, it ‘expels’ darkness.

At Christmas we are celebrating God’s presence in the world; “The Word become flesh” (1:14) to quote the Gospel. The Word came into a world that is dark, but not empty. It was a world that was full of activity, full of human structures and accomplishments. Though there is reference to the creative force of God, the Word that was ‘in the beginning’ (v. 1) and
through which the ‘world came into being’ (v. 10), the incarnation is made present into a creation that was very much under way, as it is for us now. God’s light does not come to bring something altogether new (the second reading attests to this), but to enlighten something already there. Moreover, the light that comes into the world suggests that there is darkness that needs expelling. What is this exactly?

A complete response is clearly not possible here, but we can note two general understandings of darkness that John is referring to. Firstly, it is to the more obvious sense of darkness that we experience in the form of human despair caused by any number of circumstances, human created or otherwise. Natural disaster, social injustices, sickness, wicked and selfish ambition causing poverty and oppression – there is a long list of such things which are still with us as they were when John’s Gospel was penned. But there is another dimension here too. That being when we confuse mere existence with life. Further, we confuse human ability with absolute worth, inherently limited human vision with complete knowing.

In this sense, the contrast of light and darkness is a quite deliberate imagery. Darkness has no power on its own. Its power is that it confuses us. In darkness, we are bound to our inability to clearly see and decide well. We can move, but with unknown purpose. We can look active, but to vague and obscured effect. I suspect John is speaking to a world that, in many circumstances, is full of activity, but futile in efforts to find meaning and true worth. To return to our opening reflection, a world full of the question ‘what do you want’ and ‘what do you need’ but that struggles to answer that in a complete manner.

Evidently, it is difficult to answer that sort of questioning. However, at Christmas we are again reminded that there is one that does know the answer. As will be stated later in John, Jesus is “the way the truth and the life” (14:6), and this grace is offered to all. We can never know fully, and we can never fully grasp ‘the light’ either, we can only believe and allow God to enlighten our way so, through the journey of faith, we come to find our true end, our true purpose; that is, what truly matters.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

Today we gather in a special festive atmosphere of love, so let us turn to our loving God with our needs and the needs of our community.

Petitions

We pray for the Church leaders throughout the world, especially Pope Francis. May their leadership inspire others to seek the love that God that expressed through the birth of Jesus.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the members of the Plenary Council in Australia. May they continue their work towards the final assembly in July next year and be of value to the Synod of Bishops in 2023.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for leaders of nations throughout the world. May they be honest as they work for the good of the people they serve and acknowledge that Christians have a need and a right to
celebrate today. As we celebrate the saving power of God may they be equitable in meeting the needs of everyone during this global pandemic.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.
We pray for all those who are homeless and in need on this day, that generous people will assist them in love and charity.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.
We pray for those serving in the hospitality industry that the joy of the day will not be overshadowed by the poor behaviour and the overindulgence of their customers. May the peace of Christ be evident in their celebrations.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.
We pray for artists, that their creativity be a vehicle to express the joy of the Incarnation in ways that extend our understanding.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

**Conclusion**
Father, we know that, in your generosity, you will answer our needs as we pray through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, the Lord.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Angels we have heard on high. French Carol. 622
Away in a manger. J. McFarland/ W. Kirkpatrick. 289
Hark! the herald angels sing. C. Wesley/ F. Mendelssohn. 294
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 295
O come, all ye faithful. J. Wade. 287 (Verses 1-3)
O little town of Bethlehem. P. Brooks/ L. Redner. 296
Once in royal David's city. H. Gauntlett/ C. F. Alexander. 297
The first Nowell. English text and melody. 298 (Verses 1, 2, 4 & 6)

AOV1
Hark! the herald angels sing. C. Wesley/ F. Mendelssohn. 171
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 170
O come, all ye faithful. J. Wade. 167
The first Nowell. English text and melody. 169 (Verses 1, 2 & 5)
What child is this? W. C. Dix/ English melody. 165 (Verses 1-2)

AOV2
Angels we have heard on high. French Carol. 140
Sing we, sing we Noel. K. Poelker. 124

AOV4Kids
And did you see Him little star? C. Gibson/ H. Clyde. 60
Out on the road to Bethlehem. M. Nicol. 61
Baby lying in a manger. P. Combe. 63
Can this really be true? L. Newton/ T. Wittwer. 64

AOVNG
All the ends of the Earth. Bobby Fisher. 5
Emmanuel. Raymond Badham. 40
Let the season shine. Judy Bailey. 87

CWB
A child is born in Bethlehem. Tr. Ralph Wright OSB. 612
Of the Father's love begotten. Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, tr. John Mason Neale etc. 779
Unto us a boy is born. Tr. Percy Dearmer. 849

CWBII
Of the Father's love begotten. Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, tr. John Mason Neale et al. 268
Unto us a child is born! Tr. Percy Dearmer. 273

S&S1
All the ends of the Earth. Bobby Fisher. 75

S&S2
All the ends of the Earth. Ken Canedo. 270
All the ends of the Earth. Bob Hurd. 271
Born this day. Ken Canedo. 296
Sing to the Lord a new song. Angus McDonell. 272
Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy
Psalm 97: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.
Psalm 97: Joseph Roff/Joseph Gelineau SJ. CWB 185
Psalm 97(98): Christopher Willcock SJ. CWB 598
Psalm 98 (97): Jenny O’Brien. JOBC pg. 18
All the ends of the Earth: Paul Mason. PM p. pg. 72
All the ends of the earth. LPSF David Haas and Marty Haugen. pg.14

Music selections by Michael Mangan
Glory to God (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
Glory, gloria (STAR) [CHILDREN, Gathering, Recessional]
Sing new songs of joy (FWS/CWB II) based on Ps 97 (98)
All the ends of the earth (LCC) Ps 97/98 (Chn’s Lectionary [Psalm, Gifts]
There is a child (TT/SYJ) based on Is 9:1-7
This little boy (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection - Gifts]

A holy day has dawned upon us.

https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol52/iss1/35
DOI: 10.59405/2653-7834.1073
Introduction
Our joy at the birth of Jesus is not, cannot be contained in just one day of celebration yesterday. Rather it overflows into a whole week of celebration and rejoicing, including today’s feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Let us continue to rejoice in this gift of God’s love, made manifest for us in the new-born child of Bethlehem.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you humbly came into the world as a child.
Lord, have mercy.

You showed us how to love through our own lives.
Christ, have mercy.

You came so we could become children of the light.
Lord, have mercy.

First Reading
1 Samuel 1:20-22, 24-28
Today’s first reading tells the story of another holy family, that of Elkanah and his wife, Hannah. When their son Samuel is born, Hannah dedicates him to service in the Temple as a gift in return for the gift of his birth.

Responsorial Psalm
Ps 83:2-3, 5-6, 9-10. ¶ v 5
How happy they who dwell in your house, O Lord.
In this psalm, devotion and love of God is expressed in devotion and love of the house of God, the Temple, which was considered to be the special dwelling place of God’s presence on earth.

Second Reading
1 John 3:1-2, 21-24
This reflection from John’s first Letter on the fact of our being children of God is appropriate in this season of the Incarnation. Through this mystery, we have been ‘adopted’ by God as God’s own beloved children.

Gospel Reading
Luke 2:41-52
Apart from the infancy narratives, today’s Gospel tells us almost all we know of the Holy Family. Unique to Luke’s Gospel, we hear the story of the finding of the child Jesus in the
Temple after three days. In this, it prefigures another story of finding Jesus, again, after three days.

Reflection
On this Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph, today’s first reading from the First Book of Samuel tells the story of another family: that of Elkanah, Hannah and Samuel.

Hannah had gone for many years without having a child, a situation that had caused her to become a laughing stock within her community. But these years of emptiness did not dim Hannah’s faith in God. Every year she prayed for the gift of a child. When her prayer was finally answered, Hannah gave thanks for God’s goodness and offered the child back to God. And as we read in today’s reading, Hannah took the child Samuel back to the Temple, and “there she left him, for the Lord.” (1 Sam 1:28). It might sound a bit strange to us, but Hannah’s act points to her understanding in faith. She knows that her child is not her possession, but rather a gift from God. And is always a gift from God.

The Gospel Readings chosen for the feast of the Holy Family tell us all we know about the family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The story we hear in the Gospel today is one that we all know well. Indeed, it is the fifth joyful mystery of the rosary. Luke tells us that the family of Mary and Joseph would travel every year to Jerusalem for Passover. And how, this particular year, the twelve-year-old Jesus stays in Jerusalem when the party starts its return journey. How Jesus was lost for three days. Those of you who have children can well imagine the distress and anxiety that Mary and Joseph must have felt. And when they finally find the boy, they are not especially interested that their son has been in conversation with the doctors and teachers of the Law. No – they rebuke the boy. As Mary says: “My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.”

Jesus’ response to Mary and Joseph almost seems out of character. Jesus sounds like a particularly obnoxious teenager: “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father’s affairs?” Luke the evangelist then adds the post-script that Mary and Joseph did not understand what Jesus meant.

If we read this story as simply a narrative of historical events, yes, Jesus does sound obnoxious and Mary and Joseph will not understand what is going on. But this is no historical narrative. It is a narrative of salvation. A revelation of the person and personality of Jesus.

To outward appearances, Jesus is simply the child of Mary and Joseph. But, he is also Son of the Father, possessing a unique and mysterious relationship with the Father. Jesus is the Father’s gift to the world, to history, to all of creation. This mysterious relationship is revealed, little by little, through Jesus’ obedience to the Father’s will, through Jesus’ concern for his Father’s affairs. But the identity of Jesus will not be fully revealed until after Easter, when again, after three days, he will be found again, but in different circumstances.

This is why Mary and Joseph do not understand. Mary and Joseph are a bit like the disciples on the way to Emmaus after Easter. These disciples on the road to Emmaus did not understand for they were reading the events of the first Easter as a collection of historical events and not as the narrative of salvation. Mary and Joseph did not quite understand because, it seems, perhaps they were looking for human answers, when really the answer lay in the mystery of God’s salvation of all people. An answer that will be made clear when the full reality of the relationship of Jesus and the Father will be revealed. An answer that only comes with the death and resurrection of Jesus. An answer that comes when the full identity of Jesus as the supreme expression of the Father’s love for us is made known. And it becomes clear when the angel at the empty tomb announces that Jesus has been risen from the dead.
Open our hearts to receive Christ’s light.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
As we gather here today as God’s people to honour the Holy Family of Nazareth, we turn to God with confidence that our needs will be heard.

Petitions
We pray for Pope Francis and all our Church leaders that through God’s strength they will guide their flock in peace and integrity on the journey towards the Synod in 2023.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all the leaders of our world. May the leaders of wealthy countries be very conscious of the needs of developing countries during this pandemic.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are sick and suffering in this world, particularly those suffering from effects of the pandemic. May they see God’s compassion and mercy through those who care for them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all families who are victims of violence and abuse. May they find safety, peace and a place to heal their bodies, minds and souls.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all families travelling during this holiday period. May they find courtesy and generosity on the roads and hospitality wherever they go.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who grieve for loved ones. May they find gentleness and compassion in those who care for them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray elderly people in care facilities who no longer receive visits from family and friends. May those who they long for find the strength and compassion to visit them and patiently hold onto the person they knew and the person they see now.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
Loving Father, you welcomed the children that came to you through the love of your Son and so we have confidence that you listen to our prayer, which we make through the guiding presence of the Spirit in the name of Christ our Lord.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Angels we heard on high. French Noel. 286
Away in a manger. J. McFarland/ W. Kirkpatrick. 289
For the beauty of the earth. F. Pierpont/ D. Evans. 427
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 295
Once in royal David's city. C. F. Alexander/ H. J. Gauntlett. 297
Ubi caritas/ Where true love and charity are found. Gregorian Chant. 319
Ubi caritas. Taize Chant. 324
Where there is charity and love. R. Connolly. 323

AOV1
For the beauty of the earth. F. Pierpont/ C. Krocker. 123
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 170
What child is this? W. Dix. 165 (Verses 1-2)

AOV2
Angels we heard on high. French Noel. 286

AOV4Kids
Baby lying in a manger. P. Combe. 63

AOVNG
Among all. Chris de Silva. 8

CWB
Canticle of Simeon. Frank Quinn OP. 636
Once in royal David's city. Cecil Frances Alexander. 782
Sing of Mary, pure and lowly. Roland Ford Palmer SSJE. 808

CWBII
At last, all-pow'rful Master. The Grail. 225
Lord God, you now have set your servant free. Rae E. Whitney. 226
My master, see, the time has come. Frank Quinn OP. 227
Once in royal David's city. Cecil Frances Alexander. 269
There is nothing told. Didier Rimaud SJ, tr. Christopher Willcock SJ. 418
In the temple now behold him. Henry John Pye/William Cooke. 427

S&S2
Hail Mary: gentle woman. Carey Landry. 336

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy
Psalm 83: How happy they who dwell in your house, O Lord.
Psalm 83: Peter Waters. CWB 194
Psalm 84: How happy they who dwell: Kevin Siddell. GA 48
Psalm 84 (83): Jenny O'Brien. JOBC pg. 20
Blessed are those who fear the Lord. LPC Tony Alonso. P.18

Music selections by Michael Mangan
Glory to God (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
Glory, gloria (STAR) [CHILDREN, Gathering, Recessional]
Sing new songs of joy (FWS/CWB II) based on Ps 97 (98)
This little boy (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection - Gifts]
**1 January 2022**

Mary, the Holy Mother of God

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

**Introduction**

The calendar year begins with the solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God. As we look forward to the year ahead, this celebration reminds us that God’s grace is offered every day and every day we can make an authentic response to it. Following Mary, our response allows God to become manifest in our world. This day is also declared World Day of Peace by the Holy See.

**Penitential Act**

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came and we are redeemed.
Lord, have mercy.

You came so that we are can become your heirs.
Christ, have mercy.

You came to fill us with your joy and peace.
Lord, have mercy.

**Collect**

*O God, who through the fruitful virginity of Blessed Mary bestowed on the human race the grace of eternal salvation, grant, we pray, that we may experience the intercession of her, through whom we were found worthy to receive the author of life, our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.*

Our prayer highlights the role of Mary in the divine plan of salvation, and in this continues the liturgical sense of the Christmas season and the theology of the incarnation it embodies. As well, the collect brings out the way in which God’s plans do not reflect human wisdom. After all, it is the virgin who is fruitful, and later in the petition we hear that the humble bearer of a life is carrying the author of all life. God has truly entered human history and become vulnerable to the conditions of human and material life. As the new year begins the faithful petition that they may feel under Mary’s intercession, a sentiment that resonates with the care of this mother for her newborn infant. And so, the year is commenced in prayer with the mystery of redemption, the unfathomable ways of God, the agency of the young woman, and a sense of the ongoing care of the mother.
First Reading
Numbers 6:22–27
This ancient prayer that was once recited daily over the people of God, reminds us that God’s perennial purpose is to bless all.

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 66(67):2–3, 5–6, 8

May God bless us in his mercy.
This psalm echoes the blessing of Moses in the first reading. With God giving blessings it is necessary for us to respond with praise and this beautiful psalm encapsulates such praise.

Second Reading
Galatians 4:4–7
Through the Holy Spirit, we are called to be sons and daughters of God. This is made possible with the sending of God's Son, born of a woman.

Gospel Reading
Luke 2:16–21
The shepherds visit the child Jesus and recall their experience of the angel's proclamations. Mary’s response gives us another dimension of faith in practice, she reflects and contemplates these events in her heart.

Reflection

Obviously, this feast day honours Mary and is appropriately part of the Christmas Octave given her part in the Christmas story. This solemnity is one of several special days that feature Mary in the liturgical calendar. But what is it about this day that is special? At the risk of sounding discourteous, why another day and why this day?

We can start by looking at the wording of our feast today; Mary, Holy Mother of God. It is something that can slide out without thought. But think about it; Mary, a woman, is a mother of God? How can that be? How does God have a mother and still somehow remain God? This is the sort of question that vexed many, especially in earlier days of Christian history. There was a name for a particular group that had issue with it that emerged in the 5th century called Nestorians. More extreme proponents of Nestorianism thought it was illogical and belittling to God to suggest that God could be ‘born’ at all and, likewise, suspicious of elevating Mary, a human being as any other, to such a high station.

The theological concerns and responses are quite sophisticated and well beyond a simple reflection like this one, but we do know that the confrontation within the Christian tradition caused the Church to look carefully at what it meant by such phrasing and how it serves us to hang on to it.

The first thing to consider is that such a title is not primarily trying to say something about Mary in herself, but something about God and how God comes to be present in the person of Jesus Christ. It is an expression of God’s nature which is to bless. The beautiful prayer that forms the First Reading known as the ‘Aaronic blessing’ speaks of this reality. The text from Numbers, in its poetic form, is believed to be among the oldest pieces of poetry in Sacred Scripture. It is a foundational revelation of God’s nature and of what God would bring
to us; blessing, peace, graciousness. Though repeated as a prayer that we may well recite for and with each other, it is, in fact, God’s own blessing for God’s people. It is an expression of God’s very heart.

It is this very heart which is manifest in the person of Jesus. The understanding that Mary is ‘the Mother of God’ was important to the early church and is still held by Catholics to this day because it is a statement of how and what God blesses. Those who sought to dismiss such an understanding such as the Nestorians did not doubt that God is good and that God blesses; however, they did have trouble that God blesses through our humanity. They understood that Mary was only the mother of the humanity of Jesus, not the totality. They effectively sought to divide the divine Jesus from the human Jesus. The counter forms the kernel of the solemnity celebrated today; Mary is the mother of Jesus that is both fully human and fully God.

God is not a part-time God. When God wants to be ‘with us’, God does not do it in some half-baked approach – Mary as ‘the mother of God’ is a statement that God is all-in with us. A saviour came into the world in Jesus; fully God and fully human to redeem the all of humanity to be with the all of God.

Further, God’s presence to us in the person of Jesus expresses God’s intention to bless humanity in a particular way. Jesus is born of a woman like any other human. Jesus had, indeed, needed a mother. To be human is to be born, with all that goes along with it. A newborn is entirely dependent, requiring nourishment, protection, shelter and comfort, none of which it can provide for itself. As we grow, we still need our human family and wider communities to inform and teach us what matters and how to belong. God is present in this because God essentially has deemed this the right and proper way for humans to actually be human.

Thus, when we look on the Second Reading, we see that our blessing comes by being called children of God, that is, into a family of God. Jesus models for us the importance of being with each other in true relationship; with all the vulnerability and strength that comes with that. Further, it reminds us that God continues to desire to bless our world through humanity; through you and through me.

Mary, Mother of God is not only a statement of the status of Mary herself, or even of Jesus (though it is that of course). Mary also provides us the model for all our lives; that is to manifest the blessing and presence of God in our world. We may not feel we’re up to it, we may not feel we’re good enough, we may not feel we’re worthy enough. We may even have good reason to think this. Like the Nestorians, we may think that a perfect God cannot possibly be entirely entwined with an imperfect humanity. Nevertheless, God’s presence through Mary’s child Jesus is a statement by God’s very being that we are quite good enough for God.

As we open our calendar year, we hold onto this recognition that God still desires to bless and, further, that we are interwoven in the process of this blessing nature of God. We need God’s blessing every day, and every day we are invited to be God’s blessing to each other. God does not wait for our perfect selves to manifest before offering blessing. Rather, God blesses through our imperfect selves. As we bring Jesus’ presence to life through healing, forgiveness, goodness and humble dealing with each other, we continue the calling modelled by Mary, Mother of God and the truth that is captured in this understanding.
Let the clouds rain down the Just One and the earth bring forth a Saviour.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
Like Mary our mother who always put her hope in God, we now present our needs to God with humble confidence.

Petitions
We pray for Francis our Pope, our Bishops, the clergy and members of the Plenary Council. With Mary, as Mother of our Church, may they find inspiration in her discipleship and willingness to be guided by the Spirit.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of all nations, that they may be guided by the Holy Spirit to govern with integrity and fairness and to support all those who are on the front line fighting the pandemic. On this World Day of Peace, we pray that their efforts will be just and right.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all parents, that following the example of Mary and Joseph, they may lovingly raise their children to know and love God.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for couples experiencing infertility or the loss of a child, that God will give them comfort, strength and hope in their time of grief.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the needs of the community gathered here today, that strengthened by God’s grace and the intercession of Mary, we will continually conform our lives to God’s will and work towards peace in every aspect of our lives.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those suffering ill health in mind, body and spirit, particularly those suffering from the pandemic. May they be restored through the care of those who love them.

(Pause) Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
We offer these needs to our loving God with complete confidence that they will be answered. We make these prayers through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ our Lord.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come. R. Maurus, et al./ Thomas Tallis. 376
Hark! the herald angels sing. F. Mendelssohn. 704
Magnificat (Tell out my soul). T. Dudley Smith/ W. Greatorex. 550
May God bless and keep you. C. Walker. 441
My soul rejoices. O. Alstott. 250
There is nothing told. C. Willcock SJ. 548

AOV1
Hark! the herald angels sing. F. Mendelssohn. 704
May God bless and keep you. C. Walker. 177
O holy Mary. O. Alstott. 141
What child is this? W. Dix. 165 (Verses 1 and 2)

AOVNG
Among all. Chris de Silva. 8

CWB
Hail Queen of Heaven, the ocean star. John Lingard. 702
Holy Virgin, by God's decree. Jean-Paul Lécot, tr. W. R. Lawrence. 714
Immaculate Mary, we praise God in you. Brian Foley. 723
O Mary of Graces and Mother of God. Tr. Douglas Hyde. 769
Salve, Regina. Hermanus Contractus. 801
Sing of Mary, pure and lowly. Roland Ford Palmer SSJE. 808

CWBII
Salve Regina, Mater misericordiae. Hermanus Contractus. 406
Hail, Queen of heav'n, the ocean star. John Lingard. 408
Hail, holy Queen enthroned above. Hermanus Contractus et al. 409
Holy Virgin, by God's decree. Jean-Paul Lécot, tr. W. R. Lawrence. 410
Mary, Mother of Good Counsel. Murray J. Kroetsch. 411
Servant of the Word. Edward M. Grosz. 414
Immaculate Mary, we praise God in you. Brian Foley. 416
There is nothing told. Didier Rimaud SJ, tr. Christopher Willcock SJ. 418

S&S2
Hail Mary: gentle woman. Carey Landry. 336

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 66: May God bless us in his mercy.
Psalm 66: Robert J. Batastini/Joseph Gelineau SJ. CWB 195
May God bless us in his mercy. LPSF Tony Alonso. pg.18

Music selections by Michael Mangan

There is a child (TT/SYJ) based on Is 9:1-7 [Gathering]
Song of Blessing (SHOF) based on Numbers 6:22-27) [Gifts]
Glory to God (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
My Spirit Sings (FWS/SYJ/CWB II) Magnificat [Gathering, Recessional]
Introduction
Epiphany means a materialisation or manifestation of an otherwise invisible power. Today’s solemnity is so named as it marks the announcement to the world of God’s manifestation in Christ. Though Christmas day is the more prominent celebration in the modern world, traditionally it is the feast of the Epiphany that was the highpoint of the Christmas season – the day where the whole world, symbolised by the wise men from Gentile lands, come and discover the Messiah, the new ‘king of the Jews’.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you are the Incarnation of God.
Lord, have mercy.

You guide us to the Father.
Christ, have mercy.

You are God-among-us.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect
O God, who on this day
revealed your Only Begotten Son to the nations
by the guidance of a star,
grant in your mercy
that we, who know you already by faith,
may be brought to behold the beauty of your sublime glory.

The collect celebrating the revelation of the divine child to the magi is embossed with the great themes of the Christmas season. The infant is the Only Begotten Son, the word made flesh. The scope of the revelation is boundless. Christ as revealed to the ‘nations’ further impresses upon us that God brings about the salvation of all humanity and all creation. This breadth is enhanced in the image of ‘guidance by a star’, which reminds us that all creation is open towards God. Yet the prayer itself concentrates less on the sense of guidance than on the star as a source of light. This image evokes Christ as the light of the world and calls to mind the relationship between the power of light to reveal and the event of coming to faith as an act of ‘seeing’. Further the star is a light that shines in the darkness. The petition of the prayer seeks the fulfilment of what the star has illuminated: the gift of seeing the beauty of God and experiencing the splendour of the divine glory.
First Reading
Isaiah 60:1-6
Isaiah speaks of a light that rises above the people of God, an intense light that marks God’s special visitation and a guiding beacon drawing the whole world to the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 71(72):1–2, 7–8, 10–11, 12–13
Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.
Following the first reading and the gospel, the psalm looks to the coming of the one who will raise up the poor, the needy and the weak.

Second Reading
Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6
People once outside of the Lord’s special revelation, through the good news of Christ, are invited to share in the graciousness of God, to be considered coheirs and members of the same body.

Gospel Reading
Matthew 2:1-12
Matthew speaks of visitors from foreign lands whose attentiveness to God’s revelation has them seeking and finding the new ‘king of the Jews’. The actions and attitude of the wise men contrast the existent king of the day, Herod, who misses and even attempts to thwart the very act of God’s salvation.

Reflection
The wise men of the east and their journey to find the new king of the Jews is an iconic part of the Christmas story that rounds out the Christmas narrative we have heard in recent weeks. Though the phrasing ‘wise men’ is commonly held, the transliterated ‘magi’ is often used in modern translations. Magi were Gentile (likely Persian) priest diviners that used events in the night sky to discern the activities of God. In this story, they have identified a new star and this leads them to journey from their distant lands to the region of Judah. Their careful attention to the celestial movements has drawn them to find a new king. It was a common understanding of the ancient world that a new star appeared at the birth of a new ruler.

Whatever we may think of this ancient custom, the beauty and power of the night sky was far more obvious to people of the ancient world. Millenia before the invention of technology that allowed for bright illumination of our inhabited environs, the sky would have been alive to many in a way that can be easily missed in our modern world.

Contrasting the ancient world, the artificial light of our own developed cities causes so much ambient light that we cannot see the full majesty of the night sky. With its infinite stars, the hazy band of light that is the Milky Way and the occasional burst of excitement at a shooting star, most of these are veiled by the bright lights of our towns and cities. Of course, many of us are fortunate enough that we can travel to less developed areas and catch this beautiful sight. Others do live in country regions far from more heavily built-up areas and would be more readily aware of what most of us otherwise miss. However, the vast majority of people in the developed and even developing world do not, at least all that often, have access to the full majesty of the stars at night.
Of course, the stars and other celestial entities are still there. They do not go away but are lost in the fog of our achievements. It takes an effort to step out of our own glow to take in the majesty of an illuminated sky that is always there for us.

Returning to our Gospel story, Herod is, similarly missing the glow of God’s special visitation due to the fog of his own self-interest. Though undoubtedly and justifiably cast as a villain in the infancy narrative found in Matthew, Herod was in some respects a successful ruler, certainly by many measures of the day. One of his more significant legacies was a substantial building program, the most important piece being the renovation and massive expansion of the Second Temple. When completed it was one of the largest structures of the era and a beacon of the Jewish faith. He also created a functional civil system effectively from scratch and governed a volatile region of the Roman Empire with success. Of course, most historians recognise that King Herod, a client king of Rome, was a tyrant and was not well loved even by his own people. Nevertheless, Herod is titled ‘King’ by Matthew as indeed he was. He no doubt saw himself as the legitimate ruler of the chosen people of God and a proud one at that.

When the Magi come with their observations of a star and its meaning, Herod is “greatly troubled” (Matt 2:3). Much speculation is placed on why Herod would be so troubled, it is beyond the space here to ponder it too much. However, if we go to what appears at face value, perhaps it is simply power – there can only be one king of the Jews. If a new star is rising for one, then Herod’s is surely falling. All his power and might, all his access to the ‘brightest and best’ of Jewish religious authority (his calling of the “chief priests and scribes of the people” (2:4) for their informed opinions attests to this) is futile on many levels. He is simply unable to see the special thing God is doing through his own self-created and self-centred fog.

Yes, it is a new king that has been born but, as we know, this is not a king that Herod needed to worry about, at least not in the way Herod was most likely concerned. This king was to be a king of an order that went beyond the power that Herod was concerned with. Blinded by his own machinations, he was unable to engage and join the Magi in their joyous discovery of the Christ, the Messiah, that had come into the world.

What special visitations of God do we miss due to our self-centred focus? Where do we marvel in our own glow, in our self-made accomplishments to such an extent that we fail to see the greater beauty and illumination that God would have for us? Where do we act out of fear, focussing on what we might lose instead of drawing our attention to the gift that God’s presence might be in our lives?

None of us are going to be of the tyrannical mind that Herod was, and very few of us will have anything resembling his relative power and station in society either. Nevertheless, these are all questions that come to mind as we look at Herod’s rather sad response to the visit of the Magi and the news of the ‘new king’ being born.

In contrast to Herod, the Magi provide us with a vision of how we can avoid Herod’s self-defeating approach. They are attentive to what God is doing, they listen with the means they have to God’s activity and seek to find out more. They don’t claim to know it all, but they are open. They listen to the prompting of the Spirit and respond to it. When they do come into Jesus’ presence, there is no reference to any self-aggrandising accomplishment on their behalf. Rather, they ‘bend their knee’ (2:11) in humble offering of what they have.

The two contrasting emotional words to describe Herod and the Magi ultimately captures where the relative approaches leave them. Whereas Herod is described as ‘perturbed’ or ‘troubled’ (the Greek tarassō is more accurately and more commonly translated to the latter), the Magi are said to experience ‘great Joy’ or ‘delight’. We have heard several times in recent weeks the ‘great joy’ that God gives us. It is always there, ever present and graciously offered. We pray today that we avoid becoming so enamoured and captured with our own
glow that we fail to see the metaphorical stars that lead us to find the great joy of Jesus in our own lives.

The glory of God shines upon you.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
As the magi came to honour the new born Jesus with the sure hope that he was their Messiah, we offer all our needs with the same hope.

Petitions
We pray for all Church leaders that they may strengthen and confirm the truth, heal their divisions, and unite in Your love.

(Pause) Lord hear us   OR   We pray to the Lord.

We pray for Pope Francis and all the bishops as they prepare for the Synod of 2023. May the work of the Plenary Council benefit this important Synod.

(Pause) Lord hear us   OR   We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of all nations, that they can bridge cultural and intellectual differences to pursue peace for all peoples of the world and ensure that there is equitable vaccine to help all nations recover from the pandemic.

(Pause) Lord hear us   OR   We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who do not know your truth, and have not heard of Jesus Christ, that they will become enlightened just like the Magi in Bethlehem, by the messengers who proclaim Your Word.

(Pause) Lord hear us   OR   We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those in our care; the young and the vulnerable, the elderly and those in aged care, that they are treated with compassion and dignity, and that those who care for them are filled with Your love. We pray for frontline health workers that they will be supported in their wonderful efforts through the pandemic.

(Pause) Lord hear us   OR   We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our community, that we can live in harmony, and as we leave here having shared in the Eucharist, may we offer our unconditional friendship to everyone we meet in our daily lives.

(Pause) Lord hear us   OR   We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
We offer all these petitions and those unspoken in our hearts with confidence that God will provide all our needs. We make our prayer through the power of the Spirit and in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
All the ends of the earth. B. Dufford SJ. 420
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 295
O come, all ye faithful. J. Wade. 287 (Verses 1-3)
Song for Epiphany. B. Moore/ C. Willcock SJ. 300
The first Nowell. English Carol. 298 (especially verses 3 and 5)
We three kings of Orient are. J. Hopkins. 299

AOV1
All the ends of the earth. B. Dufford SJ. 420
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 170
O come, all ye faithful. J. Wade. 167
The first Nowell. English Carol. 169 (especially verses 3 and 5)
What child is this? W. Dix. 165

CWB
All the Earth proclaim the Lord. Lucien Deiss. 611
Earth has many a noble city. Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, tr. Edward Caswall. 669
Let all the peoples praise you, O Lord. Christopher Willcock SJ. 599
The first Nowell. Anon. 822

CWBII
Earth has many a noble city. Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, tr. Edward Caswall. 276
Song for Epiphany. Brian Moore SJ. 278
The first Nowell. English Carol. 280
We three kings of Orient are. John H. Hopkins, Jr. 281
All the earth proclaim the Lord. Lucien Deiss. 447
City of God. Daniel L. Schutte. 453
Let all the peoples. Christopher Willcock SJ. 532
Christ, be our light. Bernadette Farrell. 540

S&S1
Lord, every nation. Jesse Manibusan. 70
Christ, be our light. Bernadette Farrell. 105
City of God. Dan Schutte. 106

S&S2
Lord, every nation. Joshua Blakesley. 262
Your light will come, Jerusalem. Bob Hurd. 295

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy
Psalm 71: Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.
Psalm 71: Christopher Willcock SJ. CWB 196
Psalm 72 (71): Jenny O’Brien. JOBC pg. 22
Lord, every nation on earth: Paul Mason. PM pg. 56
Lord every nation on earth will adore you. LPC Marty Haugen pg.24

Music selections by Michael Mangan
Follow the Christmas star (TT/SYJ) [CHILDREN Gathering, Recessional]
Song of Light (SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection]
We come to worship him (STAR)
Sing new songs of joy (FWS/CWB II) based on Ps 97 (98) [Gathering, Recessional]
Introduction
As we transition from the Season of Christmas to the Season of Ordinary Time, today’s feast reminds us of the importance our own baptism – we are not called to be mere spectators of the life in the Church. Rather, we too, are called to be God’s beloved daughters and sons.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you were baptised by John in the Jordan to show us the way to repentance. Lord, have mercy.
You are God’s chosen one. Christ, have mercy.
You are the source of life. Lord, have mercy.

First Reading
Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11
From the prophet Isaiah, today’s first reading has echoes of our Advent readings which proclaim the coming of the Lord announced by the Lord’s messenger. We have long identified this reading with John the Baptist and his call to prepare for the coming of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm
Ps 103:1-2. 3-4. 24-25. 27-30. ℃ v. 1
Today’s psalm is a hymn of praise to God who is depicted as a mighty cosmic warrior who is the giver of all life and whose very spirit renews the face of the earth.

Second Reading
Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7
In his letter to the leader of the Christian Community in Crete, Paul outlines the reason why we should live good lives – it is our hope for the blessing which will come with the appearing of our saviour, Jesus Christ.

Gospel Reading
In today’s Gospel Reading, John the Baptist downplays his role while at the same time pointing to the greatness of the One who is to come.
Reflection

Today’s Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the first Sunday of Ordinary Time, brings us to a new season. This feast commemorates the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan by John the Baptist. In the Gospels, the baptism of Jesus is an unusual event. Unusual because it is mentioned by all four of the Gospel Writers.

But even though the baptism of Jesus is mentioned in all four of the Gospels, details differ between the accounts. But all four accounts agree that the baptism of Jesus is a theophany. A theophany or manifestation of the glory of God to the world. For when Jesus is baptised, the Spirit descends on him in the form of a dove.

And as it is recorded in Luke’s Gospel, a voice is heard from heaven: “You are my Son, the beloved; my favour rests on you.” So following the manifestation of God in the new-born Christ in the stable at Bethlehem, following the manifestation of God to the wise men who visited form the East, we conclude our celebration of Christmas with this manifestation of the Lord at Jesus’ baptism.

We know that, in the early Church, as our Gospels were being formed, the baptism of Jesus caused some embarrassment. For, of course, why did Jesus need to be baptised? John the Baptist, earlier in Luke’s Gospel, says that his baptism is “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” If Jesus was without sin, why then should he baptised? The fact that this supposedly embarrassing baptism is recorded in all four of the Gospels, seems to indicate that it is a real historical event. Jesus was baptised. But why? Why was Jesus, the manifestation of God-among-us, baptised? And what does it mean for us that he was baptised? Is this something, that like the early Church, we should be embarrassed about, and simply just forget?

Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist might seem like a strange thing to celebrate. But celebrate it we do, for it tells us something about our own baptism. We cannot simply separate the baptism of Jesus from the baptism which Jesus instituted for us, for those who believe in him. Jesus was without sin, so he did not need to be baptised. Jesus Christ undergoes baptism not that he may be sanctified by the waters, but that he may sanctify the waters of our baptism.

So that, when we are baptised, we are made clean, we are sanctified in the waters sanctified by Jesus himself. Just as the baptism of Jesus was a manifestation of God’s glory, so too, our own baptism is a manifestation of God’s glory. Just as the Father claims Jesus as his son at his baptism, so too, are we claimed as sons and daughters of God when we are baptised. As the Father says to Jesus, so the Father says to us: You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you. Just as Jesus begins his public ministry at his baptism, so too, we begin our life as Christians at our baptism.

Like all our celebrations in this season of Christmas, our celebration of the Baptism of Jesus is not an event of long ago which we merely commemorate today. Rather, it is an event of now. The baptism of Jesus did happen once. But, it transcends the time to which it belongs. For it is an event which belongs to all time. The power of this event, the grace it brings, is present to us today, now, as we speak. It makes present for us the saving plan of God. And we are saved by becoming God’s sons and daughters through baptism. And God always wants to save us. Not just yesterday, but today, and forever.
I have seen and given witness that this is the Christ.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
The psalmist cries out ‘bless the Lord, my soul’ because we celebrate a wonderful Baptism that inspires us, through the Spirit, to offer our needs to God.

Petitions

Petitions
We pray for the leaders of our Church that they will base their ministry always on the ministry of Jesus and recognise the priesthood of all the faithful who have been baptised.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of the nations that surround the Jordan River where Jesus was baptised. May they learn to lead their people in peace.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are suffering from oppression and injustice. May the ministry of Jesus become evident through the loving hands of those who reach out to help, particularly those who work for international service groups helping those who are still struggling with the pandemic.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our own community that we will, through the way we live, show to those around us that Jesus matters.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who are currently on holidays celebrating the return to safe travel during these difficult times. May they return home safe and well.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who build churches and places of baptism that they will, through their art, lift us in the Spirit to live our beliefs.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
Loving Father, we know that you sent your Son to be our guide to eternal life and so in his name and in the power of the Spirit we confidently offer you our needs.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Baptised in water. M. Saward/ Gaelic melody. 179
Christ is made the sure foundation. J. M. Neale et. al./ H. Purcell.
Come to the feast. M. Haugen. 400
Come to the water. J. Foley SJ. 403
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 295
Love divine, all loves excelling. C. Wesley/ R. Pritchard. 463
O Christ the great foundation. S. S. Wesley. 483
Praise to you, O Christ our saviour. B. Farrell. 407
Prepare the way. B. Boniwell. 284
Send down the fire. M. Haugen. 475
Song over the waters. M. Haugen. 435
There is one Lord. Taize. 346
The Spirit of God. L. Deiss. 185
The voice of God. P. Icarus/ W. Greatorex. 476

AOV1
Come to the feast. M. Haugen. 151
Come to the water. F. Andersen MSC. 74
Joy to the world. I. Watts/ G. F. Handel. 170
Praise to you, O Christ our saviour. B. Farrell. 28

AOV2
Send down the fire. M. Haugen. 164
There is one Lord. O. Alstott. 148

AOV4Kids
We are children of the living God. K. Sherman CSJ. 15

CWB
Seek, O seek the Lord. James Phillip McAuley. 802
When Jesus comes to be baptised. Stanbrook Abbey. 858

CWBII
Baptised in water. Michael Saward. 99
When Jesus comes to be baptised. Stanbrook Abbey. 282
When John baptised by Jordan’s river. Timothy Dudley-Smith. 284
Come to the water. Frank Andersen MSC. 473
Like a shepherd. Bob Dufford SJ. 538
Seek, O seek the Lord. James Phillip McAuley. 595

S&S2
Cry out with joy. Joshua Blakesley. 289

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy
Psalm 103: O bless the Lord, my soul!
Psalm 103: Percy Jones. CWB 199
Psalm 104 (103): Jenny O’Brien. JOBC pg. 24
The Lord will bless his people with peace. LPC Marty Haugen pg.27

Music selections by Michael Mangan
Fill every valley (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
Holy Spirit, come (TCS) [Gifts, Reflection]
Holy Spirit of fire (SHOF) [Gifts, Reflection]
Hearts on fire (SHOF/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
Introduction
The readings of this Sunday continue from last week’s celebration of the Baptism of the Lord. Together, they express the start of Jesus’ public ministry, the work of revealing God who comes to serve and save all.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you show us the power of your love so that we can trust you.
Lord, have mercy.

You came to show us your love and supply all our needs.
Christ, have mercy.

You have shown us your glory so that we can believe.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect
Almighty ever-living God,
who govern all things,
both in heaven and on earth,
mercifully hear the pleading of your people
and bestow your peace on our times.

The community invokes God in light of its faith that everything in heaven, and at the same time everything on earth, falls under the divine. The sense of ‘govern’ includes the harmony that comes from God ruling all things within their own rhythm and measure. It also carries the understanding that God’s rulership is grounded in the love and fidelity that the creator has towards creation itself. It resonates with the conviction that through Christ all things were made, named as good, restored and are continually guarded. This pairing of ‘heaven’ and ‘earth’ also connotes God’s use of the celestial and the earthly for the sake of salvation. From all this emerges the community’s confidence that we will hear and respond with that self-same mercy.

The second petition is for peace in the present. The invocation of divine mercy sets this peace within the context of the peace that Christ has wrought. More particularly, on earth the prayer tradition links this with inner peace, freedom from sin, righteous living, and the absence of civil strife. It is a foretaste of eternal life, which itself is marked by light, truth and communion with the saints. This is a great prayer with which to begin the new year.
First Reading
God will not keep silent and will not rest until God’s saving activity is complete. The Lord will crown the people with all of God’s joy and blessings.

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 95:1–3, 7–10
Proclaim his marvellous deeds to all the nations.
This psalm is one of great praise. God has done wonderful things for all of creation and so all creatures return the divine love with exuberant praise.

Second Reading
1 Corinthians 12:4–11
God blesses universally, but not identically. All are called to bring their particular giftedness to manifest the Spirit of God for a common good.

Gospel Reading
John 2:1–11
The miracle at the wedding of Cana marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. It is a vivid image of the abundance that Christ has to offer and the first of several signs that will show God’s blessedness.

Reflection
This time of year is an interesting experience relative to the liturgical calendar. With the main feasts and celebrations of Christmas done, the festive hustle and bustle leading up to and during that period passes and for many these early weeks of January feel like a time to exhale and to get back into a more regular rhythm with more familiar patterns of life re-emerging.
Religiously, Christmas is often a time where our attention to God’s revelation in history is brought to the fore in more significant ways. We can become more aware of God’s saving nature and God’s will and action to bring peace, hope and joy to all as we go through Christmas. However, by this time of year, that sentiment can already begin to fade as those more familiar patterns of life return.
This is especially so for those who might not be so regularly engaged with their Christian faith. Life goes on and we might return to the story of God at Easter, maybe next Christmas, but, otherwise, it can all become a bit ‘out of sight and out of mind’. This is not to criticise the secular world we live in. Even those of us who are more overtly connected to our Christian faith can get caught in the ‘humdrum’ of life and simply ‘go through the motions’ of regular religious activity. However, even if we might move away from focussing on God’s activity in the world as our lives get back to ‘normal, that does not mean God has stopped moving in and through creation, continuing God’s saving activity. The first reading provides a neat reflection on this.
It is an interesting feature of the Year C cycle which we are in that the first reading for today is identical to the first reading of the Christmas Vigil Mass. The reading from Isaiah speaks of a God who “will not be silent” and “will not grow weary” (62:1). The Hebrew word ḥāšā translated as ‘silent’ in the Lectionary not only means quiet but also inactive or calm. Isaiah’s choice of words implies a restlessness that needs to be satiated with voice and action. The second clause of ‘not growing weary’, featuring the Hebrew šeqef, is probably better...
translated as at rest, calm or at peace. The notion is that God is agitated and cannot but be active until all that God seeks to accomplish is complete.

And what does God seek to accomplish? To remove desolation from God’s people, to bring life and peace to us and to creation. The reading from Isaiah opens the Christmas Day liturgies because the birth of Jesus is the evidence of this ‘restlessness’ of God bursting forth in God’s presence among us. However, this is not a one-off event that happened a long time ago and is done. It is aptly used again today to remind us that God is still ‘restless’ and keenly unpeaceful because God’s saving work is not yet complete. We still are on the journey to the fullness of salvation that Jesus has made possible, and, as long as that journey continues, God will be about working for, with and through us such that we find complete joy. God will not rest until the whole story is done.

This language of urgency that opens the first reading contrasts, in certain sense at least, the lack of urgency we see in Jesus in the Gospel reading. When Jesus is made aware of the issue at the feast, Jesus appears to dismiss it. As with much of John’s dialogue, the back and forth in the story is highly symbolic and much of the interaction between Jesus and his mother is something of a literary device to highlight a theological point. It is well held that, in this case, how Jesus responds indicates that to engage in what the situation calls for is to begin the full revelation of Jesus’ nature and mission. That is what is meant when Jesus responds with “my hour has not come yet” (2:4). ‘The hour’ in the New Testament and especially in John refers to the central moment and mission of Jesus’ life centred on the events of Easter. To engage in what appears to be asked of Jesus is to bring that moment into view and begin the process of this saving act.

Leaving the finer detail of the theological imagery aside, what is well noted is that Jesus’ apparent reluctance is met with a decided faith on behalf of his mother and this faith is rewarded with the abundant blessing of the ‘finest wine’. This anticipates many features of John’s teaching; the reward of engaged and trusting belief, the incredibly abundant blessing of Jesus, and the foretelling of the ‘great banquet’ that all are called to.

We, like the guests and Jesus’ mother in the Gospel story, sit between the revelation of God in the person of Jesus and the fullness of blessing that is to be found at the end of our individual and collective lives. We sit in a place where God has blessed, but where the blessing is still coming.

Whatever we’re experiencing now, this is not as good as it gets. As witnessed in the wedding at Cana, our Lord never rests and is ever at work turning our difficult situations into abundant blessings. Like the guests, we too can look forward to a place where we find the ‘good wine’ ahead of, rather than behind us, where most might expect it to have been.

We are encouraged today to not feel that God’s actions are all done, a thing of the past, of some better and more holy day. Living lives of hope and faith, we recognise that God has not finished with us, and our Lord will not rest or remain silent until all that God desires for us is complete.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
Isaiah tells us that God takes delight in Zion, and we know that God takes delight in us so we offer to God our needs.

Petitions
We pray for the leaders of our Church, particularly Pope Francis, that they will remain strong in faith and spirit as they lead us to be a delight to God. May the Synod of Bishops for 2023 be a time of growth and renewal for the Church.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for leaders of the world that they will allow all people of religious belief to proclaim in freedom the marvellous deeds of God. May they lead their people in justice and compassion as all nations continue to struggle through COVID-19.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for people of all gifts that they will use their gifts in the service of the community as described by St Paul. May we recognise the gifts of those in our community who are differently abled and share their delight in God.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who are married or about to be married that they will have both Mary and Jesus spiritually present at their wedding as in Cana.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who are suffering in our community that we can in generosity reach out to help them and bring them to the knowledge of God’s marvellous deeds.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those suffering because of the pandemic. We pray that the frontline workers will be kept safe and well and continue to have the strength to help all in need. We pray also for those who grieve for family members who have died in isolation, that they will find peace.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
Father, we know that you listen to our petitions and that we will be transformed by your love and so we bring these prayers to you through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, the Lord.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Baptised in water. M. Saward/ Gaelic melody. 179
Gift of finest wheat. O. Westendorf/ R. Kreutz. 191
God in the planning. J. L. Bell/Irish Traditional Melody. 220
Lord, you give the great commission. J. Rowthorn/C. V. Taylor. 313
O Christ the great foundation. S. S. Wesley. 483
Shepherd me, O God. M. Haugen. 24
There is one Lord. J. Berthier. 346
This day God gives me. J. Quinn SJ/ Gaelic Melody. 840
The Church’s one foundation. S. S. Wesley. 484
We are many parts. M. Haugen. 523

AOV1
Shepherd me, O God. M. Haugen. 33
We are many parts. M. Haugen. 86

AOV2
Bridegroom and bride. J. L. Bell/Irish Traditional Melody. 42
Praise to the Lord, the almighty. C. Winkworth/ German Chorale. 132
There is one Lord. O. Alstott. 148

AOV4Kids
We live and love your word. K. Bates SM. 118

CWB
All you nations, sing out your joy. Lucien Deiss. 616
Filled with the Spirit’s power, with one accord. John Raphael Peacey. 676

CWBII
Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
The gift of the Holy Spirit. Kathleen T. Boschetti. 112
Gifts of the Spirit. John L. Bell and Graham Maule. 113
Songs of thankfulness and praise. Christopher Wordsworth. 279
All you nations, sing out your joy to the Lord. Lucien Deiss, CSSp. 347
Jesus, come! for we invite you. Christopher Idle. 527
Additional selections by Chris deSilva
Gifts of the Spirit. Christopher Willcock SJ. 383
Filled with the Spirit’s power. John R. Peacey. 385

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy
Psalm 95: Proclaim his marvellous deeds to all the nations.
Psalm 95: Robert Twynam/A. Gregory Murray OSB. CWB 354
Psalm 96 (95): Jenny O’Brien. JOBC pg. 56
Proclaim his marvellous deeds. LPC Marty Haugen pg. 84

Music selections by Michael Mangan
Sing out with joy (FWS) based on Ps 65(66) [Gathering]
Sing new songs of joy (FWS/CWB II) based on Ps 97 (98) [Gathering, Recessional]
Holy Spirit, come (TCS) [Gifts, Reflection]
Come, O come, Holy Spirit (TWB)
Hearts on fire (SHOF/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
Introduction
As we move further into Ordinary Time, so too, this Sunday, do we begin our journey with Luke’s Gospel in Year C. As the Word of God in Luke’s Gospel is broken open this year, will our response allow others to know that the promise of Jesus is fulfilled in their hearing?

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came to bring good news to the poor.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you came to proclaim liberty to captives.
Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you came to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect
Almighty ever-living God,
direct our actions according to your good pleasure,
that in the name of your beloved Son
we may abound in good works.

It is no accident that this oration is prayed in the first month of the year. Its seventh century origins lay in sets of Mass prayers for the days after Christmas, and especially those around the incoming of the new year. The Christmas context heightened the sense of God’s ‘good pleasure’ in the incarnation as a central act in the mystery of the divine saving will. Further, the new year conjured up associations with the pagan god Janus and the influence of old divinities and spirits. It was these, in particular, that the collect unequivocally placed under the power of the ‘name’ of the beloved Son. The petition that the faithful abound in good works was the church’s response to the licentious cavorting that marked the Janus festivities.

Yet the prayer has another layer of meaning. The Latin text corresponds in structure, content and vocabulary the Vulgate Latin translation of Ephesians 1:3-2:10. It speaks of the free and bounteous grace of God. It denotes the fullness of blessings that come in Christ, and the continuing power of Christ’s name over every situation and evil. In this it calls the faithful to abound in good works, works which correspond to the blessings of God, are worthy of the name of the beloved Son, and so pleasing to God. On reflection this prayer provides a good test of those easily forgotten new year resolutions!

First Reading
Nehemiah 8:2-6, 8-10
Today’s First Reading tells the story of the proclamation of the Word of God after the exiles had returned home. The physical walls of Jerusalem have been rebuilt to keep the returning exiles safe; the ‘spiritual walls’ of the Law are read, also to keep the returning exiles safe.

**Responsorial Psalm**

Ps 18:8-10. 15. R Jn 6:63  
*Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.*  
A natural counterpart to today’s First Reading, this section of Psalm 18 is a song in praise of the great value of the Law and the blessings which the Law brings to those who remain faithful to it.

**Second Reading**

1 Corinthians 12:12-30  
We continue our reading of this last section of Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians which we began last week. Paul uses the analogy of the body to explore the theme of unity in diversity and diversity in unity, especially in the community of believers.

**Gospel Reading**

Luke 1:1-4; 4:14-21  
This Sunday, we begin our reading of Luke’s Gospel. Luke opens with the reason he is putting pen to paper, and then takes us to the synagogue in Nazara (Nazareth). In a majestic scene, Jesus reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, and then proclaims that this prophecy has been fulfilled even as they listen.
Reflection

We have just listened to the Word of God proclaimed. And this is something which has been done all throughout the history of our salvation. When Christians gather for prayer; when the Jewish people – our ancestors-in-the-faith – gather for prayer, we listen to the Word of God. Our First Reading tells us so.

When the Israelites returned to their land after the Exile in Babylon – about five hundred years before the time of Jesus – the land was in a pretty sorry state. One of their first tasks was to re-build the walls of the city. Now we who do not live in walled cities may miss the significance of this act. For if the city had strong walls, then it was safe and secure. And so once Nehemiah the Governor had completed this task of securing the city, they do something else to keep them safe. Something far more important, actually. They gather and listen to the Word of God. And they listened to this Word proclaimed for some time. Ezra, priest and scribe, read from the Book of the Law from “early morning till noon” and “all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.”

What the Israelites did two and a half thousand years ago, we still do: “All the people: men, women, and children old enough to understand” gather; so do we. The Book of the Law was solemnly enthroned: we do the same. “Then Ezra” blesses “the Lord, the Great God, and all the people raise their hands and answer, ‘Amen! Amen!’” and the people kneel and prostrate themselves before God; so do we. Ezra the priest reads and gives the sense so that the people understand what is read; so do we. Finally, the assembly is dismissed in joy and thanksgiving; and so are we.

These elements would go on to form the liturgy of the synagogue where the Word of God was proclaimed. And the Word of God which was read to the gathered Israelites, which was read in the synagogue liturgy, is, as the Psalms tells us, perfect and refreshing to the soul. It is trustworthy and is wisdom for the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, gladdening the heart and enlightening the eye. God’s word is holy and lasts forever; for the Word of God is true and just.

It was this same synagogue liturgy in which Jesus took part on the Sabbath Day in Nazara in Galilee, where he had been brought up. Men and women and children old enough to understand had gathered. The scroll of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah is handed to Jesus. Jesus unrolls the scroll and begins to read:

> The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord’s year of favour.

And then Jesus says the most astounding thing: “This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.”

What the Israelites did after they had returned from Exile; what Jesus did in the synagogue in Nazara, we do today. We gather and listen to the Word of God. We honour the book in which the pages of the Word of God are written. We bless God for his presence in what we hear. The Word of God is given sense for us by another. These elements form our own Liturgy of the Word.

But when we read from the Word of God, we are not reading a story from long ago. We are not reading something which is dead. Our reading of the Word of God is not leisure time. Rather, we read something which is alive. Whatever we read from the Word of God, we read the mighty acts of God here and now.
Just as when we celebrate the sacraments we do not merely re-enact some past event. Rather, we are caught up in the action of God in the world now. Our celebration of any liturgy, our reading of the Word of God proclaims what happens today. This is why Jesus can say in the synagogue at Nazara but also to us here and now as we gather: “This text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.”

The Spirit sent me to free the oppressed. {Lk 4:18}
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
As we gather in joyful hope, singing a new song to all the earth, let us offer our prayers to our Father, who restores and revives all faithful hearts who seek grace and blessing.

Petitions
We pray for Pope Francis and all Bishops as they prepare for the Synod in 2023. May they always be true to their calling, fruitful in the work of leading the faithful and draw all they meet to embrace the Gospel message.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the Church of Australia and the work of the Plenary Council. May the preparations for the second assembly in July in Sydney be fruitful and true to the direction of the Holy Spirit.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for world leaders that they may be fully conscious of the need to be just towards all their people and to work towards the health of our earth’s climate and the support of our damaged environment.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for growth toward Christian unity, that the Spirit of God will help us recognise all that we hold in common as members of the Body of Christ and help us to cooperate in confronting the issues of poverty, violence and neglect.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those suffering from COVID-19 through ill health, loss of employment, stress of frontline health work or loss of family members in isolation. May they be strengthened through the love and support of those around them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those suffering in the world, that Christians will proclaim liberty to captives, give blind people new sight, set the downtrodden free and proclaim the Lord’s year of favour.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
Father, you hear the prayers of your people and grant us the strength and courage to be faithful to the mission you have called us to live. Therefore, we make these and all our prayers through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ, your son, Our Lord.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Always on this first of days. D. Dufner/R. Bonighton. 532
As the grains of wheat. M. Haugen. 194
Christ is made the sure foundation. J. M. Neale et. al./ H. Purcell. 482
I am the bread of life. S. Toolan RSM. 204
Lord, you give the great commission. J. Rowthorn/ C. Taylor. 313
O Christ the great foundation. S. S. Wesley. 483
One bread, one body. J. Foley SJ. 193
Praise to you, O Christ our saviour. B. Farrell. 407
There is one Lord. J. Berthier. 346
The Spirit of God. L. Deiss. 185
The voice of God. P. Icarus/ W. Greatorex. 476
Ubi caritas/ Where true love and charity are found. Gregorian Chant. 319
Ubi caritas. Taize Chant. 324
We are many parts. M. Haugen. 523
Where there is charity and love. R. Connolly. 323

AOV1
I am the bread of life. S. Toolan RSM. 49
Gather us together. O. Alstott. 111
One bread, one body. J. Foley SJ. 129
Praise to you, O Christ our saviour. B. Farrell. 28
We are many parts. M. Haugen. 86

AOV2
As grains of wheat. L. Rosania. 153
Sing a new song to the Lord. T. Dudley-Smith/ D. Wilson. 76

AOV4Kids
For the journey. G. Homes. 128
Take and eat. M. Russell. 114
The table of God. F. P. O’Brien. 8
We are children of the living God. K. Sherman CSJ. 15

CWB
Go now, you are sent forth. Leo Watt OFM. 690
The Spirit of God. Lucien Deiss. 832

CWBII
Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
Gather your people, O Lord. Bob Hurd. 490
One bread, one body. John Foley SJ. 579
See us, Lord, about your altar. John Greally. 593
The voice of God. Luke Connaughton. 621

Additional selections by Chris deSilva
Forth in the peace of Christ we go. James Quinn SJ. 489
God has chosen me. Bernadette Farrell. 495
Take the word of God with you. James Harrison. 607

S&S2
Your words, Lord, are spirit and life. Bob Hurd. 248
God has chosen me. Bernadette Farrell. 345
Isaiah 61. Matt Maher. 348
Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy
Psalms 18: Your words, Lord, are spirit and life.
Psalms 18: Graham Cox, CWB 329
Psalms 19 (18): Jenny O’Brien, JOBC pg. 58
Lord you have the words: Paul Mason, PM pg. 6 (Alternative Response)
Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life. LPC Tony Alonso p.88

Music selections by Michael Mangan
Sing new songs of joy (FWS/CWB II) based on Ps 97 (98) [Gathering, Recessional]
Your words (FWS) based on Ps 18(19) [Gifts]
One body in Christ (TWB) [Communion]
Live in the light (TWB) [Gifts, Communion]
The light of my life (TCS) [Gifts, Reflection]

The laws of God gladden the heart.
Ps 19:8
Introduction
Australia Day continues to be a fraught time for many Australians, particularly our Indigenous sisters and brothers. The readings help us to view these difficulties with a much deeper perspective than a solely political stance or viewed through notions of power.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you showed us how to be poor in spirit.
Lord, have mercy.
You show us how to welcome God into our lives.
Christ, have mercy.
You bring peace to all who are tormented.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect
Grant we pray, O Lord our God,
that as the cross shines in our southern skies,
so may Christ bring light to our nation,
to its people old and new and by saving grace, transform our lives.

First Reading
Isaiah 32:15-18
In this chapter of Isaiah, the prophet speaks of the when the cosmic covenant is restored and the whole of creation is transformed by justice and righteousness.

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 84(85)
The Lord speaks of peace to his people.
The response to the psalm holds together the first reading and the gospel. What attitudes can we choose that bring peace into our own part of the world? The prophet Isaiah imagines the possibilities when the Spirit restores the whole of creation and Jesus imagines a society that will be based on love and justice if everyone follows his guiding words in the ‘beatitudes’.

Second Reading
1 Corinthians 12:4-11 or Romans 12:9-13
The Corinthians pericope is perhaps very well known to many of us. There are many gifts but only the one Spirit from whom they all come. In Australia today we need to pray that all the gifts of those who have been here for over 60,000 years and those who have been here for only just over 200 years can recognise each other’s gifts and be grateful.
The reading from Romans gives very good advice to us all. Do not let love be a pretence, make it real. Respect, hard work, hope and hospitality are the key ingredients.

**Gospel Reading**

**Matthew 5:1-12a or Luke 12:22-32**

Matthew’s gospel centres around the choices in life that make our experience one of love and happiness. Luke’s gospel encourages us to understand that God cares for us in every possible way. We must set our hearts on the kingdom and then everything else will fall into place.

**Reflection**

The celebration of Australia Day on 26 January continues to bring disharmony and to many people it is a confronting ‘celebration’ of invasion and dispossession. The readings for today’s liturgy offer us ways in which to live in this world that will replace the loss with hope. The Collect refers to the cross that shines in our southern skies. This has been a marker for the First Nations people for over 60,000 years and was also a marker for the first settlers who came to Australia by ship. As Christians, it reminds us that our salvation comes through the cross and resurrection of Christ and he is indeed the light that shines on us all. In the light of salvation there is no difference between us, we are all loved by God. The Collect concludes that to Australia’s ‘people old and new’ this saving grace can transform our lives. In the controversial third verse of our national anthem, Christ is recognised as our ‘head and cornerstone’. His way and truth will guide our path and our lives of sacrifice and love will reflect our ‘Master’s care’. It is appropriate on this day to use all three verses, perhaps as a recessional song. We can pray that it becomes a reality and that our nation will welcome many from ‘across the seas’ as we have ‘boundless plains to share’.

Transformation only comes when the desire and the openness to change allows it to happen. God works within us when we allow divine love to be shown in our lives. In the first reading from Isaiah, the prophet imagines what it will be like when ‘justice will come to live and integrity in the fertile land; integrity will bring peace, justice give lasting security’. Isaiah’s audience had suffered the consequences of invasion after the rulers of Jerusalem had broken the covenant with God. But when the Spirit is poured out all of creation will be transformed. Today we can pray that such peace and justice will come for all people who live in Australia and for those who seek safety with us as refugees and asylum seekers.

The psalm also speaks of peace for the people when mercy and faithfulness have met, when ‘justice shall march before him, and peace shall follow his steps’. This is achievable if we are open to transformation. Imagine if our conversations revolved around justice for all, respect and hospitality for all! Paul tells the Corinthians that the variety of gifts all come from the same Spirit and therefore respect is required for them all. The Corinthians were a very diverse people with people from many ethnicities as it was a busy port in the ancient world and suffered from conflicts of interest as we do. Imagine if our respect for the gifts of all First Nations people and those who seek shelter in our vast land as well as those who have been born here was true and evident in our politics, our workplaces, places of learning, our homes and places of rest and recreation. Paul’s letter to the Romans, an alternate reading, also talks of respect and authentic love; let love ‘not be a pretence’ and that hospitality should be our ‘special care’. Imagine if there were no doors shut in people’s faces and efforts made to ensure that we work with a hope that makes us all cheerful.

The two gospels offered for today’s liturgy show us Jesus’ teaching about bringing to life the kingdom of heaven. The Jewish wisdom in the sayings that we refer to as ‘beatitudes’ in Matthew 5 begin and end with ‘for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’ and focus on the spiritual attitudes that we need to live our Christian lives as witnesses. Luke’s account centres on Jesus teaching his disciples not to be worried about the little things because ‘it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom’. Do not worry about what you wear, eat or drive, God will give us all that we need. It is very clear how we are to live so that the kingdom can be
here on earth, here and now in Australia, not in some imagined time in the future. Salvation is real, it is for all of us, and we will experience what that means if we are willing to be transformed.

The prayer over the offerings asks that the fruits of the earth, tended by our hands, will bring ‘a blessing on our land and peace to all who dwell here’. Let us offer ourselves in this celebration of the Eucharist as a community who will work towards peace in Australia for all people.

**Prayer of the Faithful**

**Introduction**
The readings today have all offered us ways to bring peace into our world. Let us pray for peace in this Australian context.

**Petitions**
We pray for the Church in Australia that the work of the Plenary Council will continue strongly and come to fruition at the second assembly in July this year.  
*(Pause)* Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the world and political leaders of every nation, that they can be conscious of and care for the underprivileged and the stranger, especially those present in our own communities.  
*(Pause)* Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray especially for the leaders of Australia that they be effective and just leaders for all Australians within this ever-changing society. May they always act with integrity.  
*(Pause)* Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those seeking refuge because of political crisis and war. May they be treated with justice and hospitality and so be made welcome in their search for a new life and homeland.  
*(Pause)* Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all the First Nations people of Australia. May they be comforted by the love and efforts for peace from within the wider Australian community.  
*(Pause)* Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all the members of our Parish who are away or travelling during this time, may they have a peaceful rest with family and friends and be brought safely back to us.  
*(Pause)* Lord hear us  OR  We pray to the Lord.

**Conclusion**
We offer these petitions with the hope and confidence that they will be heard and granted according to God’s will, through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ our Lord.  
Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come. R. Maurus, et al./ Thomas Tallis. 376
For the healing of the nations. F. Kaan. 513
God of peace. A. Kelly CSsR/ C. Willcock SJ. 553
Lord of earth and all creation. M. R. Thwaites/ H. M. Thwaites. 554
The Beatitudes. P. Kearney. 489

AOV2
God of peace. A. Kelly CSsR/ C. Willcock SJ. 138

AOVNG
Gift of grace. Gina Ogilvie. 49

CWB
Christ, our Lord, the Prince of ages. Anon. 644
Help of Christians, guard this land. Richard Connolly. 711

CWBII
Christ, our Lord, the Prince of ages. Anon. 399
Help of Christians, guard this land. James Phillip McAuley. 429
For Australia. Michael Raynor Thwaites and Honor Thwaites. 545
God of peace. Anthony Kelly CSsR. 546
A blessing hymn for Australia. Michael Herry FMS. 655

S&S1
Lord, let us see your kindness. Paul Hillebrand. 71

S&S2
Lord, show us your mercy and love. Janét Sullivan Walker. 265

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 84: The Lord speaks of peace to his people.
Psalm 84: Brian Fitzgerald. CWB 483

Music selections by Michael Mangan
Hearts on fire (SHOF/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
One body in Christ (TWB) [Communion]
Introduction

“For every action there is an equal and opposite reaction”. Today’s Gospel is not actually a lesson in Newton’s third law. Following the proclamation of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazara, we too, are called to make a response. Equal and opposite? Or something else?

Penitential Act

Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came so that we can know God.
Lord, have mercy.
You were not accepted in your own country but still loved God.
Christ, have mercy.
You show us the way to live the Gospel.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect

Grant us, Lord our God,
that we may honor you with all our mind,
and love everyone in truth of heart.

The fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time has us praying one of the most interesting collects in the entire missal. It also defies translators’ attempts to capture the original intention of the text and the audacity of its execution. The oration is a play on the Gospel imperative to love God and neighbour and retains most of the vocabulary of the text in its Vulgate Latin translation. Yet this clear reference is deliberately transformed into a prayer that petitions for us to ‘honour’ God with all our heart, soul and mind, and love all human beings with the warming love of the Holy Spirit.

The oration is from the pen of Gelasius I and was first prayed in the papal mass of Sunday January 29, 495. The pope was leading the people to reject the celebration of the ancient and traditional Roman pagan festival of Lupercalia. The festivities were marked by seduction, drunkenness and defamation. Hence the admonition to love all with true Christian love. The petition to honour, with a strong sense of worship, well reflects the need to assert that the only source of grace is Christ. Authentic love of God requires true worship. And the reference to love that is ‘true of heart’ is a subtle reminder, lost in any translation, that the new Rome is founded on Peter and Paul who have displaced the mythical twins Romulus and Remus.

In effect the prayer teaches the key to inculturation: every action must be judged by its compatibility with authentic worship and by the unboundedness of its love. All commandments follow from this.
First Reading

Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19

Today’s First Reading tells the story of the call of Jeremiah. Before Jeremiah ever was, God loved him and consecrated him to be a prophet.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 70:1-6. 15. 17. R. v. 15

I will sing of your salvation.

This psalm starts as a prayer for deliverance and resolves into a prayer of trust in God’s steadfast and faithful love, of which the Psalmist will sing.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

Today’s Second Reading is perhaps one of the most well-known sections in all of the Pauline corpus. But let not familiarity breed contempt! Let us hear with fresh ears that gifts without love are of no account, and that at the end, it is love which abides.

Gospel Reading


Following last week’s majestic proclamation by Jesus of the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy, this week we see how that fulfilment is received: with astonishment, with disbelief, with rage. How do we hear Jesus’ proclamation today? With these same responses?

Reflection

If you have been to a wedding at all, chances are you have heard today’s Second Reading as one of the readings during the liturgy. Certainly, this has been one of the readings at just on sixty per cent of the weddings I have celebrated over my nineteen years as a deacon and priest celebrating weddings. I counted them up on Friday! But I suspect one of the reasons that this reading is so popular is because of its mention of “love”. Couples chose this reading because they think it is about the love which they think they share. Actually, it’s not.

The love which St Paul is talking about in the Letter to the Corinthians is not the love of husband and wife. This love which St Paul is talking about – rendered by the word agape in Greek – is the love of God for us, his holy people. This love is the love in which Jesus died for us and was risen from the dead.

Now, before you misunderstand me, let me make a few things clear. I do believe that all of the couples that I have married are very much in love with each other. But, in most cases, it is very young love. Those of you who are married and have been married for many years know that your relationship with your spouse has changed over the years.

You know the hard work and dedication that has gone into making your relationship what it is. The first flushes of attraction and lust give way to the commitment to sharing life with children, and eventually comes to the contentment and intimacy of an old age shared together. Some years ago, I was privileged to be asked to bless a couple who were celebrating their sixtieth wedding anniversary.

I think it is in older married couples that we come closer to seeing agape love. And the husband said to me that he thought one of the reasons they had lasted so long together was
because they had had to face problems, and this had brought them closer together and strengthened their love. Young couples – very much in love – often have not had the grace of years together to know what love is really all about.

As Christians, we believe that all other expressions of love in the Christian life find their source in this love of God for us in Jesus Christ. As St Paul says about these other sorts of love: “Now we are seeing a dim reflection in a mirror” (1 Cor 13:12). But the love of God is the love we will experience when we shall be seeing God face to face.

When we do indeed see God face to face, we will understand what agape love is all about. Because when we see God face to face, we will be invited into the love which is the life of the Trinity. Father, Son and Spirit who dance together the eternal dance of God’s love.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
The psalmist sings praise to God and calls on God to ‘pay heed to me and save me’. We know that God will pay heed and so we bring our needs before our loving God.

Petitions
We pray for Pope Francis and the bishops as they prepare for the Synod in 2023. May they renew themselves in the way of journeying together towards a better future for the whole Church.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the members of the Plenary Council that they will continue to work hard in preparing the documents for the second assembly in Sydney in July.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of our world that they will work hard on climate change issues and be just in their support of all those who suffer from floods, sea levels rising and bushfires.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those returning from holidays to work and study. May they be renewed and energised to be fruitful this year and do everything in love as Paul exhorts us to do.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who suffer from domestic violence. May they find support through agencies and family that can bring them to safety and peace.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those suffering in mind, body and spirit. May those who care for them bring them to a place of healing.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
We offer these needs to our loving God in the sure hope and knowledge that they will be answered through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Centre of my life. P. Inwood. 444
Christ is made the sure foundation. J. M. Neale et. al./ H. Purcell. 482
In faith and hope and love. J. McAuley/ R. Connolly. 442
Lord, you give the great commission. J. Rowthorn/ C. Taylor. 313
Love divine, all loves excelling. C. Wesley/ R. Pritchard. 463
No greater love. M. Joncas. 460
Now thank we all our God. C. Winkworth/ J. Cruger. 425
O God, our help in ages past. I. Watts/ W. Croft. 459
Take the word of God with you. J. Harrison/C. Walker. 494
The servant song. R. Gillard. 487
The voice of God. P. Icarus/ W. Greatorex. 476
Ubi caritas/ Where true love and charity are found. Gregorian Chant. 319
Ubi caritas. Taize Chant. 324
Where there is charity and love. R. Connolly. 323

AOV1
Gather us together. O. Alstott. 111
Now thank we all our God. C. Winkworth/ J. Cruger. 189
O God, our help in ages past. I. Watts/ W. Croft. 175
You are near. D. Schutte. 112

AOV2
Centre of my life. P. Inwood. 170
The servant song. R. Gillard. 169

AOV4Kids
To live like Jesus. D. Pudney. 160

CWB
Go now, you are sent forth. Leo Watt OFM. 690
The Beatitudes. Peter Kearney. 817
The Spirit of God. Lucien Deiss. 832

CWBII
Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
God has spoken by his prophets. George William Briggs. 497
In faith and hope and love. James Phillip McAuley. 520
All are welcome. Marty Haugen. 535
Where there is charity and love. Richard Connolly. 638
Where true charity is dwelling. Trans. ICEL. 639
Additional selections by Chris deSilva
The Beatitudes. Peter Kearney. 456
Forth in the peace of Christ we go. James Quinn SJ. 489
God has chosen me. Bernadette Farrell. 495
Take the word of God with you. James Harrison. 607

S&S2
God has chosen me. Bernadette Farrell. 345

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy
Psalm 70: I will sing of your salvation.
Psalm 70: J. Robert Carroll/Joseph Gelineau SJ. CWB 360
Psalm 71 (70): Jenny O’Brien. JOBC pg. 60
I will sing of your salvation. Tony Alonso LPC pg. 90

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Music selections by Michael Mangan
The love song (SHOF) based on 1 Cor 12 [Gifts, Reflection]
One body in Christ (TWB) [Communion]
Heaven shall be yours (TCS) Beatitudes [Communion]

Gather us together
that we may proclaim
your holy name.
6 February 2022
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Anthony Doran

Introduction
The call of God in our lives comes when we least expect it. Just ask Isaiah and Simon Peter. We read the story of both of their calls in this Sunday’s readings. God seems never to be much interested in how worthy we are (or feel we are) or how ready we are (or feel we are). God is interested in how we respond.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you forgive us and bring us a new life.
Lord, have mercy.

You came to give salvation to all humankind.
Christ, have mercy.

You are the new Temple of God.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect
Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, they may be defended always by your protection.

The heart of this Sunday’s collect is the petition that God, in devoted loving kindness, continually guard, protect and strengthen the community. The request is made out of the belief that the faithful are members of God’s family. In this we belong to the divine household both as adopted children and as servants, implying a deep intimacy with God and a willingness to serve. The divine guardianship is an expression of God’s intimate devotion to us as the head of the household and, as such, carries the expectation that God will protect us.

The ancient manuscripts show the prayer was used early in the year, either in proximity to Lent or as a Lenten collect. This association highlights the helplessness the prayer expresses in face of sin. The only sure hope is reliance on heavenly grace.

The combination of God’s ‘care’, custodianship and protection point to the intimacy with which God relates to the faithful. Further these are associated in the prayer tradition with God’s guarding, protecting, cherishing, ruling, defending and strengthening. The collect is insistent that the family of God need these gifts continually.

First Reading
Isaiah 6:1-8
At a critical turning point in the history of Judah, Isaiah is called to be a prophet. Isaiah protests his unworthiness for this new ministry, but his protestations are as nothing when the
seraph cleanses him with the live coal from the altar. Isaiah can then respond, “Here I am, send me.”

**Responsorial Psalm**

*Psalm 137:1-5. 7-8.*

**℟ v. 1**

In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.

In this psalm, the Psalmist is moved to praise and thanksgiving because God has responded to a desperate plea for help.

**Second Reading**

*1 Corinthians 15:1-11*

In this last major ‘teaching’ section of the First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul restates and defends the Christian teaching of the resurrection of the dead. It is not something which Paul has ‘invented’ but which he was taught himself when he came to belief in Christ.

**Gospel Reading**

*Luke 5:1-11*

Our Gospel Reading today tells the story of the call of Peter and James and John, following the miraculous catch of fish. Like Isaiah, Simon Peter protests his unworthiness. Jesus is not concerned with our worthiness, but rather with our readiness to respond with love.

**Reflection**

Today’s first reading tells the story of the calling of the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah has a vision of the Lord in the sanctuary of the Temple. And the Lord’s voice shakes the foundations of the Temple when he speaks. Isaiah protests that he is a “man of unclean lips”. So an angel brings a live coal and places it in Isaiah’s mouth. Then Isaiah hears the voice of the Lord asking “Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?” And Isaiah can answer: Here I am, send me!

Our Gospel Reading today also tells the story of a calling. Of the calling of Simon Peter and James and John. In many ways, it is similar to the calling of Isaiah. Just as Isaiah does, Peter, too, protests that he is not worthy. But Jesus is not to be deterred. He does not accept Peter’s protests, but simply answers: “Do not be afraid.” Perhaps the most gentle “No” in all of Scripture.

For all of us who have ever felt unworthy or inadequate in answering Jesus’ call to discipleship, St Augustine has the answer for us:

If Christ had first chosen a man skilled in public speaking, such a man might have said, ‘I have been chosen because of my eloquence.’ Had he chosen a senator, the senator might have said, ‘I have been chosen because of my rank’. If his first choice had been an emperor, the emperor might have said, ‘I have been chosen for the sake of the power I have at my disposal’. But Christ says, ‘Give me this fisherman, this man without education or experience, this man to whom no senator would deign to speak, not even if he were buying fish! Yes, give me him! Once I have taken possession of him, it will be obvious that it is I who am at work in him. Although I mean to include senators, orators and emperors among my recruits, even when I have won over the senator I shall still be surer of this fisherman. The senator can always take pride in what he is; so can the orator and emperor, but the fisherman can glory in nothing except Christ alone. Any of these others may come and take lessons from me in the importance of humility for salvation, but let the
fisherman come first. He is the best person to win over an emperor (Augustine, Sermon 43, 5-7).

Thus Peter dares leaves his past for a future with Jesus. Thus Peter, dealing with sinners, never forgot that he was a sinner too.
And so, what of us?

When Jesus calls us, what will our answer be? Are we prepared to be challenged by the call of God, and find the foundations of our life shaken when God calls, as Isaiah found the foundations of the Temple shaken when God called him?
Can we be like Simon Peter? Despite our own unworthiness, can we let Jesus take away our fear and take possession of us? Can we let Jesus work in us and through us?

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

In today’s Gospel, the Apostles left everything and followed Jesus. In prayer we likewise lay everything in God’s care, knowing that our needs will be granted.

Petitions

Let us pray for Pope Francis and our bishops that through the power of God they do not falter in their calling. May they work diligently in guiding the people of God to eternal life through the pilgrim journey of the Synod process.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for the leaders of all nations, that they be open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit so that they can promote justice and peace and supply COVID-19 vaccine equitably to all in need.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray that since we are all called to be missionaries and preachers through our Baptism that, when we hear the voice of God, we do not harden our hearts but respond with joy.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray that all Australia people open their hearts to the Holy Spirit as we journey towards the conclusion of the Plenary Council in July this year.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for all those who are suffering from COVID-19, domestic violence and other illnesses of mind, body and spirit. May they find support through our frontline health workers, agencies and family members to give them strength and the will to get well.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray that as a parish community we may be missionaries in our families and local community by living exemplary lives.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.
Conclusion
With confidence in the knowledge that God will hear our petitions and answer according to the divine will, we pray through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Be not afraid. B. Dufford SJ. 449
Christ is made the sure foundation. J. M. Neale et. al./ H. Purcell. 482
Come down, O love divine. R. F. Littledale/ R. V. Williams. 375
Do not be afraid. C. Willcock SJ. 28
Forth in the peace of Christ we go. J. Quinn SJ/O. Gibbons. 495
Here I am, Lord. D. Schutte. 496
Holy God, we praise your name. C. A. Walworth et. al/ Grosser Gott. 411
I have loved you. M. Joncas. 402
Let all mortal flesh keep silence. Liturgy of St James/ French Carol Melody. 190
Lord, you give the great commission. J. Rowthorn/ C. Taylor. 313
The summons. J. Bell. 502

AOV1
Be not afraid. B. Dufford SJ. 114
Come down, O love divine. R. F. Littledale/ R. V. Williams. 118
Here I am, Lord. D. Schutte. 90
I have loved you. M. Joncas. 126
Praise, my soul, the King of heaven H. Lyte/ J. Goss. 78

AOV2
Do not be afraid. C. Willcock SJ. 73
Holy God, we praise your name. C. A. Walworth et. al/ Grosser Gott. 129
Praise to the Lord, the almighty. C. Winkworth/ German Chorale. 132

AOVNG
Will you come and follow me/The Summons. Graham Maule and John L. Bell. 149

CWB
Go now, you are sent forth. Leo Watt OFM. 690
The Spirit of God. Lucien Deiss. 832

CWBII
Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
O come and sing to God, the Lord. Trans. The Psalter. 175
Holy God we praise thy name. Ignaz Franz, tr. Clarence Alphonsus Walworth. 504
Here I am, Lord. Dan Schutte. 518
Let all mortal flesh keep silence. Trans. Gerald Moultrie. 533
Be not afraid. Bob Dufford SJ. 652
Additional selections by Chris deSilva
Go, make of all disciples. Leon M. Adkins. 493
Go now, you are sent forth. Leo R. Watt. 494
God has chosen me. Bernadette Farrell. 495
Go to the world! Sylvia G. Dunstan. 496
Take the word of God with you. James Harrison. 607
The Summons. John L. Bell and Graham Maule. 645
You walk along our shoreline. Sylvia Dunstan. 653

S&S1
The Summons. John L. Bell. 137
Here I am, Lord. Dan Schutte. 152
S&S2
Fish with me. Ken Canedo. 342
God has chosen me. Bernadette Farrell. 345

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 137: *In the sight of the angels I will sing your praises, Lord.*
Psalm 137: David C. Isele. CWB 363
Psalm 138 (137): Jenny O’Brien. JOBC pg. 62
In the sight of the angels. LPC Tony Alonso pg.94

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Heaven shall be yours (TCS) *Beatitudes* [Communion]
Introduction
Easy or hard. Light or dark. Good or bad. There are always two ways. Do we follow the harder path of righteousness? Or the seemingly easier path of wickedness? Today’s readings offer us meditations on the blessing of following the path of righteousness.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came to draw us into the life of God.
Lord, have mercy.

You came so that we can all be truly happy.
Christ, have mercy.

You bring us to new life.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect
O God, who teach us that you abide in hearts that are just and true,
grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace
as to become a dwelling pleasing to you.

It is not too surprising to find that our prayer first served as a collect for the feast of the Ascension. This original setting brings to the fore the deep biblical resonances that are at the core of the oration. The use of ‘abide’ is a clear reference back to the Gospel of John (Jn 6:57, Jn 15:5-7), and expresses God’s promise to remain in the heart of believers. Abiding in God’s love involves keeping the commandments, inclusive of sharing with the poor: ‘but if anyone has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need, how does God’s love abide in that person’ (1 Jn 3:17). The language of God’s indwelling is taken from St Paul. It designates Christ’s presence by faith (Eph 3:17), the presence of the Spirit (Rom 8:8-9), the presence of Christ’s word (Col 3:11) and power (2 Cor 12:9). By contrast, without Christ, sin dwells in the inner depths of the human person (Rom 7:17-19). Rather, the people in whom God abides are characterised by hearts that are just and true. Yet their right deeds are only in harmony with God’s will on account of the fashioning of divine grace. The prayer exemplifies the community’s faith in the power of God’s word, which teaches that God will abide and brings this about.

First Reading
Jeremiah 17:5-8
Today’s first reading sounds as if it should come from the Book of Wisdom or the Book of Proverbs. It is a collection of sayings which seeks to contrast the fate of those who trust in the Lord with those who trust in human beings or their wealth.
Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 1:1-4 & Ps 39:5
Happy are they who hope in the Lord.
Picking up on the themes of today's First Reading, the very first psalm also contrasts the two ways: the way of the Lord and the way of sinners.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20
Today's reading continues Paul's meditation on the reality of the resurrection of the dead. If Christ has been raised – and he has – then we too can be assured of our own resurrection.

Gospel Reading

Luke 6:17, 20-26
Much less famous than Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (and much less quoted) is Luke's Sermon on the Plain which we hear the opening verses of in today's Gospel. For each of the beatitude sayings, there is a corresponding 'cursitude'.

Reflection

Of all those European writers who have written about Australia and its landscape, it is hard to escape the profound influence which I think Dorothea Mackellar has had on the national psyche with her poem My Country, especially its mention in the same line, in apparent contradistinction 'droughts and flooding rains'. It seems that, at times, we see and experience drought at the same time as flood. Our news can be full of bushfire in the southern part of Australia, while our Northern sisters and brothers live through torrential rain and flood, destroying livestock and farming land.

And yet, while some have had to deal with torrential floods, much of Australia has had the contrast of living through several years of drought.

There has not been enough rain to fill our reservoirs, or sustain many of our gardens. In search of water, trees have been sending their roots down further and further into the earth. And as these trees send their roots further and further in search of water, they have damaged the earth around them. Footpaths are lifted-up and cracked. Foundations are destroyed. And, if you are a gardener, you will know how difficult it has been to try to nurse a favourite plant through drought. How a frequent, shallow, surface watering is just no good. What is necessary is the occasional deep, deep soaking. Allowing water to penetrate the parched earth and get to those thirsty roots.

These images, so familiar to us from our drought, are used by Jeremiah in today's first reading. And Jeremiah uses them as a metaphor to contrast the one who puts their trust in human things, and the one who puts their trust in the Lord. For Jeremiah, the one who relies on things of flesh, whose heart is turned from the Lord is like the dry scrub in the wastelands. The person who relies on human things becomes no better than the parched places of the wilderness, a salt land, uninhabited. There is no life in the wilderness. It is empty, lifeless, desolate.

In contrast is the one who puts his trust in the Lord. For to live, trusting in the Lord, is to be 'like the tree by the waterside that thrusts its roots to the stream.’ In the heat of the day, this tree is safe. It has green leaves, and 'never ceases to bear fruit.’ It is full, alive, fruitful.
Full and alive is the Christ preached by St Paul in the second reading. In this part of the First Letter to the Corinthians, St Paul is answering questions that seem to have arisen in the Church community at Corinth. As we can gather from our reading today, some had doubted the resurrection of the dead. No one doubted that Jesus Christ was risen from the dead. Only, it seems, did some of them doubt that the resurrection of Jesus means that we, too, are raised from the dead. Paul is quite consistent and constant in his preaching. As St Paul told us in last week's second reading: 'I taught you what I had been taught myself, namely that Christ died for our sins, in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried; and that he was raised to life on the third day.' (1 Cor 15:3-4). There is no doubt that Christ has been raised from the dead. And if he has been raised from the dead, then all of us are raised from the dead, because Christ is ‘the first fruits of all who have fallen asleep.’ In some ways, the contrast from the first reading is continued. 'Happy is the one who believes in the resurrection of Christ from the dead…cursed is the one who does not believe.'

Today’s Gospel Reading continues the series of contrasts in our readings for this Sunday. And this series of contrasts is continued in Luke’s version of the Beatitudes. We are much more familiar with the version of the Beatitudes in Matthew’s Gospel. Luke’s version is not only shorter, but also, for the four Beatitudes, there are four Woes. For the four phrases which begin ‘How happy are you…’ there are four phrases which begin ‘Alas for you…’ or ‘Woe to you…’

The word ‘Happy’ in this Reading needs a bit of explaining. ‘Happy’ is used here not in the sense of moral happiness. In other words, the person who is meant to be happy because they are hungry is not happy in the ordinary sense of the word. After all, who could be happy when they are hungry? Or poor? Or weeping? Rather, they are happy or blessed because of the coming action of God. And the coming action of God is to bring life from death in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. And so, the one who is poor, or hungry, or who weeps, or who is hated is happy or blessed because of what God is about to show in their life. In this sense, these Beatitudes are highly provocative. For, holding together two contrasting ideas, they proclaim that true happiness or blessedness in the Kingdom of God lies in God turning the world upside down. For those who are rich now, those who are satisfied now, those who are laughing now, those who are liked by the world now will not be the winners in the Kingdom.

In the coming Kingdom of God, the wisdom of the world is turned upside down. In the coming Kingdom of God, the vision of Jesus Christ is different to the vision of this world. And this is one of the constant themes of Luke’s Gospel which we will read in the course of this liturgical year. We see it in the Magnificat of Mary where the mighty are cast from their thrones and the hungry are fed with good things. We see this in the synagogue of Nazareth when Jesus proclaims good news for the poor, and liberty for captives, and new sight for the blind.

What these Beatitudes depict is a situation of extreme vulnerability. According to what the world values – those situations which the Woes address – it makes little sense to be this vulnerable. Yet, in light of what God is about to do, it makes very good sense indeed. Because to be vulnerable gives scope and space to God’s power. To be full of what the world values is to leave little space for God to fill. To be small in this world gives space for the power and glory of God to shine out. To hang on the Cross, dying the death of a criminal, is for us, life and indeed, the ultimate glory of God. A vulnerable community becomes the place where God is made welcome, and where others see that God is present. And so, blessed are we when we put our trust in the Lord, and send our roots not into the parched earth of this world, but rather into the stream of God’s power and grace and glory.
Jer 17:6

Those whose hearts turn from God are like a shrub in the desert.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
In today’s psalm we are called to be happy and hope in the Lord. Therefore, as one people of a loving God who sent his Son for us, we offer the needs of our community.

Petitions
We pray for Pope Francis and the leaders in our Church that they may be worthy instruments in your hands to lead your people on the journey to the Synod of 2023. (Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all political and religious leaders that they may be single-minded in working for the greater good of the people they serve as we cope with climate change and the pandemic. (Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the homeless and abandoned people in our world, that they may know God’s healing through those who care them. (Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have lost faith in God and humanity, that they may be touched by your healing grace. (Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all our family members and parishioners who grieve for loved ones who have died in other countries from COVID-19. May they be comforted through the care of those around them. (Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the community gathered here to become the Body of Christ. May we go forth today renewed so that we can witness to all we meet that Christ is the centre of our existence. (Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
There are many needs in our world today and we know that God will grant these our petitions and the unspoken ones in our hearts, which we make in the name of Jesus your Son, through the power of the Spirit.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
Amazing grace. J. Newton. 437
Eye has not seen. M. Haugen. 466
Forth in the peace of Christ we go. J. Quinn SJ/O. Gibbons. 495
O breathe on me, O breath of God. E. Hatch/Traditional Irish Melody. 432
O God, our help in ages past. I. Watts/W. Croft. 459
Seed, scattered and sown. D. Feiten. 195
Seek, O seek the Lord. J. P. McAuley/R. Connolly. 211
The Beatitudes. P. Kearney. 489

AOV 1
Amazing grace. J. Newton. 29
Be thou my vision. E. Hull/Traditional Irish Melody. 9
Eye has not seen. M. Haugen. 146
O God, our help in ages past. I. Watts/W. Croft. 175

AOVK
A child's prayer. D. Halloran. 111
We are children of the living God. K. Sherman CSJ. 15

CWB
The Beatitudes. Peter Kearney. 817

CWBII
Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
We know that Christ is raised. John Brownlow Geyer. 343
Firmly I believe and truly. John Henry Newman. 486
Seek, O seek the Lord. James Phillip McAuley. 595
You walk along our shoreline. Sylvia Dunstan. 653
Additional selection by Chris deSilva
The Beatitudes. Peter Kearney. 456

S&S1
Lead me, Lord. John D. Becker. 107
We are the light of the world. Jean Anthony Greif. 143

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy
Psalm 1: Happy are they who hope in the Lord.
Psalm 1: Robert J. Thompson/Joseph Gelineau SJ. CWB 366
Psalm 1: Jenny O'Brien. JOBC pg. 64
Blessed are they who hope in the Lord. LPC Tony Alonso pg. 98

Music selections by Michael Mangan
Heaven shall be yours (TCS) Beatitudes [Communion]
Introduction
In our readings this week there is an interesting match between our first reading from 1 Samuel and Luke’s continuation of the sermon on the plain, both reflect on the nature of mercy and compassion. The Pauline second reading is not so closely aligned and allows for a reflection on the nature of the incarnation.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you show us the mercy of the Father.
Lord, have mercy.

You teach us to love our enemies.
Christ, have mercy.

You are compassionate as your Father is compassionate.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect
Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that, always pondering spiritual things,
we may carry out in both word and deed
that which is pleasing to you.

The collect for the 7th Sunday has been long cherished and utilised in a variety of contexts across a wide range of missals. The first appearance of the oration is for when there is dissention and dispute in a monastery. The text is also closely related to the prayer for the 4th Sunday, and perhaps reaches back to the contentious situations addressed in the Mass prayers composed by Pope Gelasius (d.496).

The content of the prayer has remarkable simplicity and richness. The oration petitions God for the grace to meditate always on spiritual things. The collect for the 4th Sunday expresses this same thought when it refers to love that is ‘true of heart’. These opening lines reflect a dynamic of continuous, unceasing prayer and reflection upon the divine mandates, a practice extolled in the psalms. From this point the prayer moves to the qualities of our speech and our deeds.

The meaning of the prayer is that the whole life of the community, built on contemplative reflection and prayer first, but communication and action as well, be taken up in what is pleasing to God. It is concerned with the integrity of the faith, deeds and worship of the Christian community before God. The context of dissension in a monastic community highlights that the presence of disharmony serves notice to the community that they have
acted and spoken in ways that are not pleasing to God and consequently have undermined the integrity of their faith, worship and love of neighbour.

First Reading
1 Samuel 26: 2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23
Saul the King is delivered into the hands of David his enemy; however, the young fighter calls up a revised sense of mercy and an understanding of the rule of God.

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13
The Lord is kind and merciful
The psalm echoes David’s sentiment in the first reading where he would not raise his hand against the Lord’s anointed. We are urged not to forget the blessings of the Lord and to keep in mind God’s compassion. This links to the gospel where we are urged to love our enemies and be compassionate as the Father is compassionate.

Second Reading
1 Corinthians 15:45-49
Just as the divine one took on human flesh, the earthly Adam, so we who are the offspring of Adam are lifted to the level of the divine and bear the image of Christ.

Gospel Reading
The centre piece of our reading is to be merciful as God is merciful, and from this all else follows.

Reflection
In our readings this week there is an interesting match between our first reading from 1 Samuel and Luke’s continuation of the sermon on the plain, both reflections on the nature of mercy. The Pauline second reading is not so closely aligned and allows for a reflection on the nature of the incarnation.

The extract from the Book of Samuel has a number of surprises. Our young warrior David is a wily soldier and a good theologian: he has wisdom beyond his years. One of the most valuable weapons of guerrilla warfare is fear. David knows this. His decision to leave Saul alive, yet to show him and his men how vulnerable he is – despite his army camped around him – is a masterstroke. David shows Saul that he is an enemy to be reckoned with, a good soldier, a wise leader and not simply bloodthirsty. Saul’s kingship is no match for this, and the king’s soldiers will revisit their unwavering fealty to him. David has sown doubt amongst Saul’s soldiers and exposed Saul as a poor general, while allowing all to see his own qualities as a fearless and strategic leader.

If that is the wily military leader, where is the theologian? David recognises that he is in a dilemma. Saul is his enemy, and by all accounts God has put the doomed king at his mercy. But the son of Jesse sees the conundrum that this theological opinion places him in: God has delivered the anointed king to David for killing, yet to kill an anointed one of God is to disobey God. There are two parts to this particular episode, and David meets them both with
wisdom. Firstly, he does not kill the anointed one of God, he does not disobey the rule of God, yet he does not spurn God’s gift of delivering his enemy, Saul. Secondly, he upholds the supreme rule of divine protection – not killing God’s anointed – because he himself aims to be king and needs to be a king under divine protection. If he kills Saul and abolishes the divine protective mandate, he will later be under threat of insurrection and death without that layer of security.

At this young age we see David, the daring and clear-headed soldier, the wily emerging leader, and the insightful theologian.

Our extract from Paul carries a different theme as it continues our series of texts from the Corinthian correspondence. Behind this theological play on the sense of ‘Adam’ is a profound sense of the incarnation and its meaning. Just as the divine one took on human flesh, the earthly Adam, so we who are so human are lifted to the level of the divine and bear the image of Christ.

The Gospel is so familiar to us that it does not bear too much commentary, however when set against the reading from the adventures of David the future king there are some important contrasts to bring out.

First up, the sermon is a continuation of the beatitudes. While we often grapple with the Sermon on the Plain as a set piece, it rolls on into this series of sayings. Like the Lucan beatitudes it is addressed to the assembled crowd, but it is worth keeping to the fore that this is the first address of Jesus to his chosen twelve. The entire Christian community falls under this set of admonitions together. It is a leadership code as well as a discipleship code. The teachings are unexpected and contrary to both religious and social practice. We saw above in the narrative of David sparing Saul that there was a sense of wisdom, cunning and theological correctness to the young warrior’s actions. David acted to a high standard and pushed against blood vengeance and violence for its own effect. There was also a degree of calculation about it, again a mixture of humanity, cunning and wisdom, all aligned to good effect.

The sayings of Jesus move the discussion to a different level. The centre piece is to be merciful as God is compassionate, and from this all else follows. There is no calculus to engage with, and no political points to be scored. The standard for Christians is to look at the world as God does, love all as God does, and from this it flows to be merciful as God is. Yes, gifts will be given, but these are not rewards or bribes or favours. Rather, to be in the heart and mind of God is to take pleasure in all as God does. This love is its own reward. The question for us is not which of these many points we take up, but rather the larger question. Do we recognise our church here? Do we recognise ourselves here!
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
Trusting in the loving mercy and kindness of God, we present our petitions.

Petitions
We pray for Pope Francis and his brother Bishops that they will show the face of God to the world through their example as they journey together towards the Synod in 2023.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our civic leaders, that they will govern with mercy and compassion particularly as we all struggle with the problems of climate change and the pandemic, along with bushfires, floods and drought.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those burdened by unforgiveness, that God may open their hearts and grant them healing from their pain so that they will reunite with their families and loved ones.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our own community, that through God’s grace we will be abundantly forgiving, loving and generous and be compassionate as our Father is compassionate.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who are suffering illness, loneliness, shame and despair. May their needs be recognised by those around them, and compassion be shown to them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all of us gathered here. May we continue to pray and work towards being a Christ-centred and missionary Church and make a difference in our world.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
Loving Father, we know that you hear the needs of the community gathered before you, and so graciously grant us all that we ask. Through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
A new commandment. Anon. 318
A trusting psalm. K. Bates SM. 455
Christians, let us love one another. Fr A. Nigro and Sr M. Claudia Folz/ French Carol Melody. 206
Jesus, in your heart we find. J. P. McAuley/R. Connolly. 464
Love is his word. L. Connaughton/A. Milner. 462
No greater love. M. Joncas. 460
The servant song. R. Gillard. 487
This is my will my one command. J. Quinn SJ/ Gregorian Chant. 465

AOV1
A trusting psalm. K. Bates SM. 115
Praise, my soul, the king of heaven. H. Lyte/ J. Goss. 78
Strong and constant. F. Andersen MSC. 110

AOV2
The servant song. R. Gillard. 169

AOVK
A child’s prayer. D. Halloran. 111
We are children of the living God. K. Sherman CSJ. 15

CWB
A new commandment I give unto you. John 13: 34, 35. 615
Forgive our sins as we forgive. Rosamond E. Herklots. 680
Jesus, in your heart we find. James Phillip McAuley. 724

CWBII
Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
Forgive our sins as we forgive. Rosamond E. Herklots. 120
Jesus, in your heart we find. James Phillip McAuley. 397
A new commandment. John 13: 34, 35. 443
Lord of all nations, grant me grace. Olive W. Spannaus. 542
Where there is charity and love. Richard Connolly. 638
Additional selections by Chris deSilva
Return to God. Marty Haugen. 298
There’s a wideness in God’s mercy. Frederick William Faber. 624
What does the Lord require. Albert Frederick Bayly. 642

S&S2
Break my heart. Jennifer Martin. 380

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy
Psalm 102: The Lord is kind and merciful.
Psalm 103: The Lord is kind and merciful: Christopher Willcock. GA 61
Psalm 103 (102): Jenny O’Brien. JOBC pg. 30
The Lord is kind and merciful: Paul Mason. PM pg. 78
The Lord is kind and merciful. LPC Marty Haugen pg. 101

Music selections by Michael Mangan
A life of love (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Gifts]
Introduction
Our readings are wisdom texts, collections of wise sayings that are short, to the point and meant to be pondered. They are also meant to match life experience and shape future behaviour. We are challenged by their sagacity, yet also intrigued as to whether these same things are all that would be said to us today.

Penitential Act
Use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you conquered death and so it has no more sting.
Lord, have mercy.

You are the light of the world.
Christ, have mercy.

You teach us to speak truly of God.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect
Grant to us, O Lord, we pray,
that the course of our world
may be directed by your peaceful rule
and that your church may rejoice,
untroubled in her devotion.

Behind this prayer is quite a story. The ancient collect was written by Pope Vigilius (pope 537-555) for the papal Mass of Sunday 14 February 538. The siege of Rome by Witiges, king of the Arian Ostrogoths, was continuing, and an uneasy truce had been broken three times in the previous month. Not only was the siege threatening the city, but it also was disrupting the Lenten fast and the preparation of the community for the celebration of Easter. In its original setting the sense is that the Church's worship and devotion is tranquil and untroubled when the world is at peace, established in righteousness, and freed from sin and death. Civil unrest disturbs worship and devotion and interrupts the Church's praise. The Church is able to rejoice in worship that mirrors God's own creative and restorative tranquility and rejoicing when there is peace in the course of worldly events. While including righteousness, the Missal tradition also understands this peace in terms of Christ's mercy, his salvation for all in need, and in terms of justice.

First Reading
Sirach 27:4-7
Sirach provides a series of wisdom sayings as markers for measuring reliability and resilience.
Responsorial Psalm
Ps 92:2-3; 13-14; 15-16

Lord, it is good to give thanks to you
The psalmist calls us to give thanks as it is a good thing to do. While uttering thanks and praise to God our mind and heart can only be in one place. This reflects both the wisdom of the Ecclesiasticus reading and the call in the gospel to be true to your own heart and keep it pure.

Second Reading
1 Cor 15:54-58
Paul’s meditation on the incarnation helps us comprehend that death itself is defeated.

Gospel Reading
Lk 6:39-45
This set of wisdom sayings from Jesus remind that our deeds and actions betray the state of our heart.

Reflection
In a way there may not be a lot of commentary to offer this week. That does not mean that the readings have little to say. Rather, the first and the Gospel are wisdom texts, collections of wise sayings that are short, to the point and meant to be pondered. They are also meant to match life experience and shape future behaviour.

The sage in our passage today offers a set of wise sayings that allow us to gain a sense of reliable and resilient behaviour. Do they work today? Well, pretty well. They make sense, invite us into experience and enable us to recognise that strength comes from trial.

There is an interesting witness to the importance of language. The first lesson is at a level of moral behaviour: What we say speaks of who we are. I am not sure whether a 21st century sage would stop there, but rather feel compelled to say more. The value and role of language in our brain development is only now being studied at depth, and even that is at initial stages. As we discuss God and the Church and the life of faith, it is clear that what we say also works to open us to the mystery of God or to narrow us from the breadth of divine revelation. We are discovering that words matter, and that they shape us before we are even speaking them. Perhaps the real strength of this reading, and of the wisdom tradition texts, is both in what they say, and then in what they make us think would be said if addressed to us today, if we were the audience in our own context. We know that our speech shows the bent of our mind. We also know now that our mind is bent into shape through the speech that forms it.

The passage from Paul is a continuation of his first missive to the Corinthians. It is a meditation on the incarnation, and how by taking flesh Christ overcomes death, the enemy of flesh. Paul helps us comprehend that death itself is defeated, not so much that the body rules, but that we as fully human are now opened to the mystery of divinization: we enter into the mystery of God. The theology of divinisation is a rich tradition of the Eastern church, and a reminder that our life in God is transformative.

Luke concludes his great set piece of the preaching of Jesus with a set of wisdom sayings from the master. Jesus reminds that our deeds betray the state of our heart. While the aphorisms are salutary, they are not quite transformative! As wisdom sayings, they do not imply that we are always doomed to be the same as our actions show. The life and sacrifice
of Jesus are opposite to this. But the points Jesus makes serve the community members to examine their actions, understand their consequences, and reset their lives in light of ongoing conversion. I am reminded of Pope Francis here, and his call to conversion in *Laudato Si*.

The orchard is judged on the quality of its fruit.

Ecc 27:6
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
The Gospel today asks us to examine our own life, rather than judge others; and as God knows what truly fills our heart and guides us to the Truth, let us bring these prayers in faith.

Petitions
We pray for Pope Francis as he leads his bishops towards the Synod of 2023. May he remain strong in mind and body to bring about God’s will for the Church.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the Church that the forgiveness and healing power of your love will strengthen its values and produce good fruit. May healing come to those who have been hurt by the Church and sadly carry their woundedness.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all nations of the world, that conflict and disharmony can be dissolved through compassion and goodwill. May the needs of people suffering from COVID-19 and from climate change be addressed with care and compassion.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those in the Defence and Police Forces, that they are protected in their duties and respected by our community, as they work to maintain law and order in our lives.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those in the Fire and Emergency Services in this bushfire season. May they be kept safe and unharmed in unpredictable situations, as they safeguard and protect our lives and property.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who enlighten our lives in the creative arts, that they receive recognition for their contribution to our culture and society, as their work broadens our outlook and develops our understanding of each other.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our community as we share in the Eucharist, and acknowledge those from other cultures, backgrounds and abilities, that we can live together in an ever-growing friendship.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
In gratitude for all that we have been given and in the knowledge that our prayer will be answered, we make our prayer through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.
Music
By Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

GA
All creatures of our God and king. W. H. Draper et. al/ Geistliche Kirchengesang. 395 (Recessional)
Alleluia! sing to Jesus. W. C. Dix/ R. H. Pritchard. 371
Centre of my life. P. Inwood. 444
Make me a channel of your peace. Saint Francis of Assis/S. Temple. 490
Now thank we all our God. C. Winkworth/ J. Cruger. 425
O God, our help in ages past. I. Watts/ W. Croft. 459
Praise the Lord, you heav'n, adore him. Psalm 148 and E. Osler/Beethoven. 409
Seek ye first the kingdom of God. K. Lafferty. 456

AOV1
Alleluia! sing to Jesus. W. C. Dix/ R. H. Pritchard. 191
Be thou my vision. E. Hull/Traditional Irish Melody. 9
O God, our help in ages past. I. Watts/ W. Croft. 175
Praise, my soul, the king of heaven H. Lyte/ J. Goss. 78
Seek ye first the kingdom of God. K. Lafferty. 48

AOV2
Centre of my life. P. Inwood. 170
Make me a channel of your peace. Saint Francis of Assis/S. Temple. 126
Praise to the Lord, the almighty. C. Winkworth/ German Chorale. 132

AOVK
Sing alleluia. M. Brown. 74

CWB
Keep in mind that Jesus Christ has died for us. Lucien Deiss. 730
Psalm 138 (139) The Hound of Heaven. Christopher Willcock SJ. 795

CWBII
Sunday by Sunday hymn suggestions
By your kingly power, O risen Lord. James Phillip McAuley. 352
As we gather at your table. Carl P. Daw. 451
Deliver us, O Lord of Truth. Herman G. Stuempfle Jr. 480
O God, refine our faith. Michael Forster. 569
Additional selections by Chris deSilva
The Hound of Heaven. Christopher Willcock SJ. 505
Keep in mind. Lucien Deiss CSSp. 530
O God, you search me and you know me. Bernadette Farrell. 572

S&S2
Purify my heart. Brian Doerksen. 307

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy
Psalm 91: Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.
Psalm 91: Kathleen Boschetti MSC. CWB 372
Psalm 92. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you: Rosalie Bonighton. GA 54
Psalm 92 (91): Jenny O’Brien. JOBC pg. 66
Lord, it is good. LPC Tony Alonso pg. 104
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