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From the editor

By Angela McCarthy

Welcome to Year A!

This issue brings with it good news and bad news. The good news is that in this issue there is very good material that challenges us to consider the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council and how it has been implemented so far. The bad news is that this might be the last issue of Pastoral Liturgy. The good news though, is that we are negotiating a new home for this journal as it has held its place as a valued resource for the liturgical needs of Australia. Let us pray that we find a new home that will support our work. The first issue of this journal was produced in 1970 to assist parishes with the resources needed for the Mass in English and the new participatory way in which the liturgy functioned following the promulgation of the new Missal. It has been an uninterrupted source of material until this issue. We are grateful to the University of Notre Dame Australia who have sponsored this journal since 2014 and previously supported the founding editor, Rev Dr Russell Hardiman.

In these uncertain times we were graced with certainty at the end of the long reign of Queen Elizabeth II and the beginning of the reign of King Charles III. Queen Elizabeth was mourned deeply by millions of people because she was a strong symbol of certainty in uncertain times. The celebration of her life, faith and death was wreathed in symbols that were rich and ancient. Symbols that brought us to connect with a reality that is much deeper than the ordinariness of the present. There was no uncertainty about who would grace the throne as the accession was immediate. Such certainty provides strength in a time that is fraught with political and economic change, war, famine and pandemics.

On 11 October 1962 the Second Vatican Council was opened by Pope John XXIII. The Council heralded in changes that made things uncertain and painful for some Catholics while others rejoiced in the way in which the Church embraced the signs of the times and threw open the windows so that we could see out and the rest of the world could see in (to paraphrase Pope John XXIII).

We have a lengthy article from Professor Emeritus Thomas O'Loughlin celebrating and challenging the way in which we have received Vatican II and what we are called to do now, in the present, to bring the implementation of the vision of the Council as a ‘whole Church fulfilling its vocation of being the community that is called into existence “to offer worship in Spirit and truth” to the Father through the Christ (O'Loughlin). To have our Church community evolve to see the full implementation of the vision laid down in 1962 means that we have continue the renewal with strength and hope.

As a way of reflecting on Vatican II, Chris Kan chose three books from his bookshelf that speak about liturgical renewal from different decades. Bernard Botte OSB (1988), Dennis Smolarski (1995) and Kevin Irwin (2013) are the authors that he chose and they become the vehicle for his reflections on his hopes and dreams of liturgical renewal. Those who were not liturgically functioning before and after Vatican II would not remember the delight that came from the new Lectionary where such a rich variety of texts were now made available for a three year cycle of biblical richness. The newness, the energy, the excitement was life giving. Nearly a decade later the excitement had waned and the energy needed to be
directed into doing the new rites well and bringing communities to life and participation in the fullest sense. The way in which we celebrate liturgy has changed over time and will continue to do so but the heart of what we celebrate remains the same: the Paschal Mystery.

The third book Chris chose was from Kevin Irwin in 2013 and was looking at the reform of the reform. In Benedict XVI’s papacy, the Tridentine Mass and new English Missal emerged and became a reform of the reform. Now we are questioning it all again but the questions we ask are important and the effect of the participation in the rites must be seen in the life we live.

Gerard Moore offers further reflection on what has happened since Vatican II. His first section about voice is very interesting. All of the rites are formed from the experience of people in the past. As a liturgical historian, Moore is asking whose voice is it that becomes our voice in liturgy. As he recalls, we still pray Collects that were written fifteen centuries ago. The experts who guided the conciliar reform were all experts in ancient texts. Moore insists that the only texts that should remain unchanged are the scriptures. All the other rites and rituals ‘have no particular right to remain in use or unmodified’. This is a challenging and interesting point of view. Some have held texts other than scripture to be so sacred that they cannot be changed but this is not the reality. The sacredness does not come from a particular way of translating Latin. The sacredness is God’s work. Moore also calls to mind that all of these texts were written by male clerics and almost always led by male clerics. This is not sufficient in this time for the People of God. Moore goes on to question many other aspects of our rich liturgical history. The original editor of this journal, Rev Dr Russell Hardiman, would always turn his students (me included) to history when difficulties arose in the present. If we know where it came from, we can think more intelligently about it in the present.

Mary-Anne Lumley offers further consideration of Vatican II and quotes Lawrence Shehan who refers to the saying ‘The king is dead; long live the King’. After the change of monarch in the United Kingdom in recent months that is fresh in our minds. Shehan says we could say ‘The Council is over; the Council has just begun’. The last 60 years have seen such wondrous developments but we have to keep working so that the rites continue to nurture us and enable us to bring Christ to the world.

Lumley also refers to a millennial’s question: Vatican II was 60 years ago, why are you still talking about it? A very interesting question to reflect upon. Was Vatican II just a thing of the past or was it just the ‘beginning of the beginning’ as Karl Rahner was recorded as saying? Aggiornamento is still real and alive when we allow the Spirit to work in us.

The article by Michael Mangan is very practical about the way in which pastoral musicians need to understand their role during the Communion hymn. He gives a very good account of the symbolic relationship that the Communion hymn has between the priest’s communion and that of the gathered assembly. He uses the analogy of musicians at a wedding – do they eat first? In my experience there are very few parishes who do what is asked by the Roman Missal rubrics, that the musicians receive Communion last. When we get the symbols right then we can live with them in a much deeper sense and the symbols themselves lead us to a much richer understanding of what we are doing.

In Pope Francis Apostolic letter from last June, Desiderio Desideravi, he talks about the Last Supper. ‘No one had earned a place at that Supper. All had been invited’ (DD, 4). That same Supper is made present every time we celebrate it and will continue until he comes again. If we really understand the importance of what we are doing, being formed as the Body of Christ through the action of the Eucharist, we will not be worried about our place or who we
are but we will be much more engaged in the reality of what we participate in. This is where we encounter Christ in what we eat and drink, in what we say and hear, and in what we become alongside each other. This Apostolic letter deserves a great deal of attention by all who are involved in pastoral liturgy.

There are two offerings about the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia. The first is the diary that I wrote each day of the Council. My intention was to have a fresh and heartfelt account of the experience. If left to write a reflection after I returned home it would not have the same effect and the memories of the first day would be coloured by the events of the week. It was a strong experience of synodality, unlike anything I have experienced before. Having worked in different capacities in the Church for all my adult life this was the pinnacle of my experience of being Church, the People of God. The second offering is a report on the action of the Council and particularly the decree on Liturgy. My experience has left me full of hope for the future.

There are three books reviewed, a new book by Fr Tom Ryan SM who is a regular contributor to this journal, on conscience reviewed by moral theologian, Fr Peter Black. Black offers a very good overview not just of conscience but how we have explained and approached an understanding of conscience in the past. This new book takes seriously the call of Vatican II to make sacred Scripture the heart and soul of moral theology and hence our understanding of the role and development of conscience. Black notes that Pope Francis comes from a Catholic moral tradition of patience and mercy. This approach to conscience has not always been prominent in our history. Conscience is about our struggle but at the heart of it is a person made in the image of God who is called to be responsible.

Joe Grayland’s book about the COVID-19 experience of liturgical lockdown in New Zealand is very challenging and is well balanced and based on research carried out during and after the lockdown. There are many things that were rushed into the digital world that should not have happened and Grayland examines these issues very carefully.

The edited book, *The Synodal Pathway*, comes out of Ireland and is well worth reading. Pope Francis is pulling us along through this synodal experience and what I experienced at the second assembly of the Plenary Council taught me what synodality looks like, tastes likes, sounds like, prays like, and feels like. It is good. The contributors to this exploration of synodality are esteemed writers and liturgists.

This issue offers Advent resources and I pray that the new liturgical year will bring fresh energy to bring the vision of Vatican II closer to our reality. We have a new writer contributing the Advent readings, Angela Marquis, and her reflections are well worth reading. The Christmas and Ordinary Time resources are all there for you to use to the betterment of your liturgical experience.

Much prayer is needed as we continue the Plenary Council process and the journey of the Synod on Synodality. Let us pray for our whole Church that we may come closer to the full realisation of the vision of the Second Vatican Council that began 60 years ago.

Peace to you all

Dr Angela McCarthy
Owning the Liturgy:
The foundation for any ecclesiology of worship

By Thomas O'Loughlin
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It is now sixty years since the opening of the Second Vatican Council on 11 October 1962. While this is the benchmark against which the study of liturgy – from whatever quarter – within the Catholic Church takes place, it is also to be noted that some of the basic ambitions contained in Sacrosanctum Concilium have had but very limited effect within the understanding of worshippers. The reforms instituted were not viewed as fundamental, nor the actual changes in practice seen touching the very depths of what we do when we gather as the People of God. Rather, they were perceived as simply another moment in the constant rubrical evolution of ‘what was there’ albeit far more involved than the steady drip of rubrical change that had been experienced since 1950. The result of this rubrical incremental approach has not only been the failure to grasp the potential within Vatican II, but the notion – inherent in what the present pope terms ‘restorationism’ – that it was just one more practical step that can be viewed as a fixed ‘change’ and which can be simply reversed or viewed as optional.¹

Rather than dwell on the historical problem of why the reception of Vatican II was so limited, if not superficial, it is the task of liturgical theology to re-examine some of the basic issues that animated the framers of the liturgy constitution as still pressing theological concerns for us today. We must revisit the issues as live issues, not merely analyse them as part of the recent history of liturgy. None of those issues is more fundamental than the issue of alienation in the liturgy, both at a pastoral level of the experience of individual members of the People of God and at the level of the whole Church fulfilling its vocation of being the community that is called into existence ‘to offer worship in Spirit and truth’² to the Father through the Christ.

A problem solved?

In 1972 Cyrille Vogel wrote:

Liturgy, which ought not to be anything other than the authentic expression of the community (lest it deny its very nature), has gradually been detached from the community throughout the centuries.³

When Vogel uttered these words, he had high hopes that our public action as the People of God would soon, once again, become an expression of who we are in all the variety and depths of our humanity. This state of affairs was in contrast to liturgy he met day after day that was not an expression of who he was, and who his community was, as the People of God. Liturgy, or performing the liturgy, was rather an imposed task of worship carried out from a sense of duty, devotion, or piety using a medium – the rites – that were just imposed

² See Jn 4:23-4.
by law from without. The notion that the liturgy was a profoundly human expression of
ourselves as the creation of a loving Creator was a theological abstraction – true but remote
from experience. Equally, at the time, the liturgy was seen as imposed by ‘the tradition’ in the
sense of something from the past that was simply there to be accepted today in the same
manner one might accept the imposed parameters of a language’s grammar. After four
centuries of stagnation with a rite that was never really fit for purpose as a liturgy for
communities, as distinct from a rite intended for the personal piety of monks and friars (and,
accidentally, clergy more generally). Vogel saw the reforms of Vatican II as the beginnings
of a new era of liturgical creativity. Our skills, our creativity, our fears and needs, as human
beings and as Christians, would become part of the new liturgy when we sought to
encounter the Paschal Mystery. The community would pray in its own language, sing its own
music, bring its needs and hopes as a priestly people before the Father in the Prayer of the
Faithful, and then join in the supper of the Lord, knowing that sharing his food and drink as
our ‘bread of life’ and ‘cup of salvation’ entailed a commitment towards sharing all the goods
of creation with all in need.

Vogel could just glimpse a sunrise – an authentic liturgy in the sense of it being our
celebration as the People of God – and hoped that we would press further down the road
towards a time when the baptised would want to join in the liturgy out of an awareness that it
was part and parcel of their lives as disciples and human beings. It would not simply be the
means of allowing people ‘to get Mass,’ or of their fulfilling their ‘obligations’ by being present
as if God was an accountant collecting spiritual revenues from reluctant tenants. Moreover,
the liturgy would be the action of the people, their expression of who they were in the
Anointed One; it would not be attendance at something done on their behalf by an
intermediary (tacitly confusing the Christian presbyter with an Old Covenant priest).
Likewise, it would be a refreshment in the Spirit through our being with one another and the
Lord, and would not be confused with somehow benefiting from the action of the ritual expert
whose powers of intercession could be disposed towards them. It is easy for those with
short memories to romanticise the period before the Second Vatican Council. Indeed it has
gained in popularity among younger clergy as a vision bolstering their own fragile sense of
identity, so the comments of those who remember it more clearly can serve as a reality
check. For instance, Bishop Maurice Taylor in 2009 reminded us:

I recall also the bizarre teaching, before the Council, that, to avoid the mortal sin of
missing Mass on Sundays, one need only be present for the offertory, the
consecration and the priest’s communion.

Living and acting in a manner where one principal driver (but not necessarily the only driver)
is the threat of punishment is almost a definition of ‘alienation.’ This is not ‘my’ thing, but
simply something external to me with which I must engage because ‘they’ say so. ‘They
make me do it.’ And every word in that simple sentence is about as far as one can be from

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4 It was Anton Baumstark who identified the period between Trent and the early twentieth century as
exceptional in the history of liturgy (On the Historical Development of the Liturgy, (Collegeville, MN
2011): ET by F. West of Vom geschichtlichenWerden der Liturgie(Freiburg, 1923)). Karl Rahner and
Angelus Häussling (The Celebration of the Eucharist (New York, NY, 1968)) studied that liturgy’s
character as an event in clerical spirituality. See also my ‘Treating the ‘Private Mass’ as Normal:
Some Unnoticed Evidence from Adomnán’s De locis sanitis,’ Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft
51(2009)334-44 on some of its problematic theological assumptions.

5 See the General Instruction on the Roman Missal [2011], n. 69.

6 See Rahner and Häussling, 1968, on these problems of the Eucharist being viewed as a spiritual
quantum which could be disposed of by the will of the priest – this is the underlying ‘theology’ behind
Mass stipends.

7 M. Taylor, It’s the Eucharist, Thank God (Brandon 2009), 31.
the spirit of Christian liturgy which we affirm theologically. Moreover, one does not have to be a theologian to appreciate that any system that can act and present itself in this way is hardly an expression of a religion that must give love a higher standing than even its own religious observances.

**Our liturgy**

But what does the ‘liturgy as an expression of who we are’ mean? At one level, any liturgy could be seen – simply because it takes place with our participation, however minimally – as an expression of who we are. However, such a passive notion of ‘expression’ does not do justice to the dynamic nature of any genuine expression of human identity. Simply to take ‘what is there’ or ‘what happens’ as expressing ‘who I am’ or ‘who we are’ is to colonise me/us, reducing me/us to the status of an object. But because, as a human being, I am an agent who seeks to express who I am as an instance of my inherent freedom and dignity, then that expression must be mine, owned, and be an ‘owned’ statement of who I am and who we are. I must take part in the expression because this tells the world, in which I exist, about me and about the group within which I exist as a member of a community. Authentic self-expression is, in practice, inseparable from a sense of freedom, personal dignity, and an accepting ownership of my actions as my choices. This might seem a very far-fetched notion of identity: but this is what is happening in any gathering of the fans of a particular football team. The individual is expressed in the community by common attire, common anthems and sentiments, in common purpose, at a significant event, at a specific cultic location. Whether it is a local football team in a rural setting or a TV-mediated event of a global soccer brand, here we have authentic public expressions of identity in ritualised forms. Moreover, the challenge of taking inculturation into the very heart of our worship is still not on the agenda of most who have a directing function in liturgy.⁸

But the challenge of creating a liturgy that is an authentic expression of a community is not the work of a moment, nor can it be accomplished by the act of promulgating a set of liturgical books which may themselves be seen as impositions from an authority that is not ’owned.’⁹ Rather, this task is an on-going commitment that we become a people who desire to stand before God, and in union with the Christ, bless the Father for his goodness and ask him for our needs. So, are there any obvious steps that we, as real local communities, can take towards a liturgy that expresses us, as the actual people who are authentically enlivened by the Spirit?

**Declare who we actually are!**

One of the characteristics of political utterances is that they do not tell it as it is, but as the speakers believe it should be, ought to be, or ‘really is deep down.’ Here the fractured nature of humanity, society, or some system (it might just be the state of the local roads) is not openly acknowledged, but we are invited to imagine that the problems are just a bit of grit in the system or that ‘the fix’ has already been applied and will soon take effect. Only the ‘opposition’ think otherwise, and they are ‘invited’ not to present that view to outsiders: we⁸

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⁹ Here lies the real problem of the 2011 translation of the Roman liturgy, quite apart from its linguistic failings: it has created a sense that the liturgy is something ‘out there’ which comes from elsewhere, and so has heightened the sense of liturgical alienation.
must all ‘keep up a good front.’ This means that many statements about ‘the community’ belong to the world of spin, persuasion, and illusion linked with power. We all collude with this sort of deception partly because we are so familiar with political rhetoric, partly because we like to ‘look on the bright side,’ and partly because we like to hope that others will only see what is best about us. These same attitudes and forces that operate within the Church are made clear through the seemingly endless series of reports into child-abuse and cover-ups of child abuse. These scandals should remind us that the holiness of the Church – upon which we ask the Christ to look during the liturgy\(^\text{10}\) – is not an existential quality of the Church but a reference to its eschatological potential.

But this phenomenon of presenting only ‘our good side’ means that we can easily create the impression that liturgy is not really engaged with the real us but is part of the world of spin and illusion. This is no small matter for if we are ever to be real, to flee sham, then it must be when we are in the presence of God. To acknowledge that God sees us through and through (Mt 6:4, 6, and 18), and then to play games is to negate the whole purpose of not only the liturgy, but of the Church as a witness to the truth revealed in Jesus (Jn 18:37). So, if liturgy, as our public expression does not have a profound authenticity, it would be better that we left it alone. Again, this may seem little more than a theological abstraction, but it is something that can be grasped in an instant. After seeing sham ‘candles’ in use in the liturgy, a woman who was not familiar with the long-standing dodges of sacristans for whom liturgy is a job, remarked to me; ‘you would not use this sort of stuff if you were having anyone really important around!’ Here was a statement that what we use ‘for best’ would always be ‘the real thing’ – our basic sense of the real – but when she saw the liturgical use of sham, she jumped to the immediate inference: it is a matter of smoke and mirrors rather than a significant encounter with the fundamentals of life and living.

But liturgy can have a different quality and it can be an expression of ourselves, who we are, what we are about, before God. The task is to see the liturgy as that which emerges from within us, rather than as a package we simply adopt off the shelf. At this point, many voices will be raised in horror: but the liturgy, the Roman Rite, is a \textit{datum}, a \textit{datum} that comes with the authority of the Church and it is to be accepted as such! This view cannot be argued with from within its own assumption: it is the shrill absolute voice of those who imagine that humanity runs along pre-programmed lines or else simply breaks down. Reality is otherwise! In effect, that which does not emerge out of a community’s own self-perception is – in a world where faith itself is seen as an option – simply ignored. One can argue that the Roman Rite is ‘a given’; but one should observe the vast numbers of redundant church buildings, the empty pews, the grey congregations, and the popularity of alternative liturgies, and then conclude that the given is not taken!

But before we lose heart we should note that \textit{the} fundamental element of our liturgy, our gathering for the Eucharist, is rooted in a community meal at which, in the Christ, we bless the Father. Shorn of its trappings, our fundamental liturgical action is rooted in a basic element of our humanity – our desire to share food and celebrate meals together\(^\text{11}\) - and this basic element of humanity is as strong as ever. One can see this at every level of our society – a group of teenagers sharing pizza, meals to mark events, or in this, deeply ironic situation: the Alpha Course (which originates from within the Evangelical wing of Anglicanism) has no fixed element of eucharistic doctrine (they just by-pass it) yet eating together (so that they have a real sense of belonging and community) is \textit{not} optional. Having

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\(^{10}\) See the president’s prayer, addressed to the Christ, at the Eucharist just before the Kiss of Peace in the Roman Rite.

\(^{11}\) See M. Jones, \textit{Feast: Why Humans Share Food} (Oxford 2007).
ignored the historic edifice of the theology of the Eucharist, they have discovered the basic human reality of community being formed around sharing meals that is at the Eucharist’s heart (but probably the weight of memory prevents them from recognising this). If some of the Alpha Course people could reflect theologically about why meals are important to them (as they were to Jesus\textsuperscript{12}), and some of the Roman advocates of the Eucharist as ‘a given’ could reflect that its form is what is left when a real meal was abandoned due to social difficulties in a stratified society,\textsuperscript{13} we might be on course for a real ecumenical encounter.

**Engaging local talent**

A liturgy that is authentically owned by the community is not one with ‘a job for everyone,’ but rather where the needs of the liturgy are, to the maximum extent, supplied from within the resources of the group and which gives expression to the gifts that are inherent in the group. So, for example, if there are skills in music in the community, then these should be utilised in the liturgy. Likewise, if the community has a rich tradition of language and poetry that expresses who that group is, then this should have a place in that community’s actions before God. This is not just ‘local colour’ that might give or attract some additional local interest – that is an idea that smacks of the liturgy as a product being marketed – but because all inspiration to beauty, wisdom and creativity is from above (Sir 1:1 and Jas 3:15), and for us as Christians is a manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who inspires us when we are creative, and part of the priestly work of the Christ is to gather that creativity and present it to the Father. But that assumes that it has a place in our liturgical gatherings.

Think of the creativity that is inherent in all cooking – and cooking is an essential preparation for meals at which we affirm our human identity – and cooking is basic to the Eucharist: no loaf, no Eucharist. Yet when does all the creativity, skill, and human building-up that cooking facilitates get expressed in the liturgy? Is there not something bizarre that ‘altar bread’ is mass-produced, while in every community there are skilled bakers? Is it not perverse that elegant restaurants boast special hand-made bread, yet the skills of the community are not celebrated by being used to provide the common loaf? Is it not a pity to hear someone who does not have the gift of teaching struggling through a homily (making all the basic mistakes in communication week-in and week-out) when there may be excellent communicators in the community who have never brought this talent – a word derived from Mt 25 – to the service of the community?

There is an assumption running through Christian theology which is rarely articulated that the Spirit is providing all we need, but the question is whether or not we are making use of those gifts. The list of the skills in any community is endless, if these are brought into the liturgy they are being ordered towards their true finality.

**Linking words and deeds**

Nothing is more alienating than the persistent undercurrent that words really do not mean what they say. We get this hint all the time in marketing and in politics. We may not live in the world of George Orwell where ‘peace’ means war – but we hear enough of this sort of thing to live our lives with the suspicion we are being deceived. By contrast, there is

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something refreshing when someone calls a spade, ‘a spade.’ This was brought home to me recently when a good priest I know told me that when his superior says to him that ‘he is saying something for his [the priest’s] own good,’ he knows he should reach for a flak-jacket! Likewise, someone went to see the act of washing the feet in a cathedral on Holy Thursday and when he saw the token amount of water and the assistant giving the bishop a towel each time and bowing as he took it, while other minions took away the basin and jug while the president sat down, he felt cheated: the whole thing was just a sham.14

But with talk about ‘gathering around the table’ – yet we do not do so, people sit in pews as if at a performance put on for them. We talk about sharing a broken loaf – but we have hundreds of pre-cut round wavers, the very opposite of a shared, broken, real loaf. We invite all present to take and drink, yet few places do anything of the sort. We use words, words, and more words, but the actions tell a different story. It was possible to get away with this breakdown between words and actions when the liturgy was in Latin, in silence, and in the distance. Now, people see and hear for themselves, and they all too easily conclude that words here are false friends.15 From this point to the sense that they are being deceived is but a short step – and mid-way between these points is alienation.

Making basic symbols clear

It is the nature of human communication that we add layers to layers to layers of meaning in all interactions. It even happens in the most simple of linguistic communication when a word spreads out to have more and more meanings – all less clear and less precise. It is known as Zipf’s Law. So, for example, the Eucharist has so many layers of inherited meaning that many leave theology courses without a clear grasp of how all the ‘bits’ can be reconciled. Yet when we take part in any activity we take meanings one at a time. The result in some cases is that those who take part in liturgy cannot see the wood for the trees – and when we feel overloaded with information we tend to shut down. This too is a form of alienation.

So, is it clear that we have just one loaf, one cup, one table, and that we are gathering in the presence of the Risen One to offer thanks to the Father? For many, this is just so simple that it appears meaningless under all the layers – but if this is not the core of our celebration (as we see by looking at any Eucharistic Prayer), then we have a case of the tail [all the added layers] wagging the dog. Making this basic activity – and celebrating Eucharist is the activity of thanking the Father – is a challenge facing every president.

Express particularities

One of the features of human communities is that they all have their unique particularities: this group is different to that group; this community is ‘shaped’ in a way that is not the same at the other group. These differences do not mean that distinctive groups cannot share in a greater unity, but it does mean that the individuality of human beings, what makes them ‘them,’ finds full expression. If you want to see this sense of particularity within a greater unity one has only to observe the way that two religious orders, for example the Dominicans and the Jesuits, are so completely distinct in identity – though to an outsider they would appear to be just different names on the same product! Particularity and variety is a hallmark of creation, and can be seen in human affairs as the work of the Spirit bringing the gifts of each out in specific ways. By contrast, human organisation likes uniformity and

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standardisation. Let any manager free with human beings, and they will see particularity as a problem and standardisation – fitting individuals into systems – as the solution. We have had this management approach to liturgy since the Council of Trent – the greater the uniformity the better – and it is a controlling instinct that is by no means extinct among those who believe they ‘control’ and ‘manage’ the liturgy. The effect is a liturgy that suits their particular needs being imposed on the wider church – and it just does not meet the needs of people. The officers in a Roman dicastery may think they are managing the liturgy, but, in fact, people simply vote with their feet and produce worship that expresses who they are. The sadness is that these spontaneous expressions are often very poorly thought through in terms of their implicit theological expressions while they bear very little relationship to the riches of Christian tradition.

Uniformity in practice is not a desirable aim in worship. Rather, we should strive to be united in a desire to serve God in the tradition of Jesus, and then recognise the variety that this produces in practice, acknowledge each other, and be willing to learn from each other. This may seem utopian, but the alternative is to assume that there is nothing we can do but be resigned to continual fracturing and constant inter-Christian bickering. It is always worth recalling that there never was a golden age of uniformity in liturgy from which variety was a decline. All the evidence – even our meagre evidence from the first century – points to variety as different churches expressed the basic practices in their particular ways, and the unity was created by the links between these groups\textsuperscript{16} and their willingness to accept these differences.\textsuperscript{17} It is the cult of ritual uniformity that is the newcomer to our tradition,\textsuperscript{18} and one that has not served the churches well.

When we see a thousand different liturgical flowers, we need to be rejoicing and thankful for the infinite creativity of the Spirit forming praise out of the mind-boggling variety of humanity – a scene encapsulated in Acts 2:1-11.\textsuperscript{19} Regrettably, we are so dazzled by ordered uniformity that we are apt to dismiss the Spirit’s garden of many colours as a jungle. But when the particularities of human beings do not find an outlet in the Church’s liturgy, they still find an outlet, and the ‘official’ liturgy becomes alien to them.

Avoiding a ‘fast food’ culture

If one wants to find the exact opposite of genuine deep involvement in human ritual, then the ‘fast food’ industry supplies it. Here that most characteristically human aspect of any culture, its habits for sharing meals, is reduced to products and patterns to which we are then asked to conform. We become another moment in a factory process – and we are transiently satisfied by the experience through sensory manipulation that we go along with it! The fast food industry is not there to serve our needs, or us, but to transform those needs into an opportunity for them to provide a product that can have maximum value to them as the producers, and not to us as the consumers. The fast food industry is, in effect, a factory production line and we are expected to slot into it – and if we express our uniqueness in that process we will be ejected as defective elements. Once one reflects on this, one becomes alienated from it – I might trade off my individuality for a milkshake right now, but in the

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\textsuperscript{17} See my ‘The ecumenical meal of mission: a re-reading of Acts 10:11-18,’ The Japan Mission Journal 67/2(2013)118-127 – this demonstrates that the regulations of the Didache were an assumed background for Luke when he wrote.

\textsuperscript{18} This was one of the key conclusions of Baumstark’s 1923 book, cited above.

larger picture of my life I want something more human, more respectful of me as an individual, and, ideally, I want my exchanges to be interactions between human beings. I may never get to this level of human interchange – and human economic oppression is part of the sin of the world we as Christians need to challenge; but in the liturgy we should be modelling an ideal of human relationships because we are doing our modelling in the heavenly courtyard (Heb 9:24).

But consider the Sunday eucharistic liturgy: there is a system which produces a liturgy in a fixed amount of time; there is an act of eating, but it is a pre-packaged product designed for high speed distribution, and there is a sameness such that any deviation is indicative of a problem with the consumer of the liturgy – an individual human being loved by God – rather than the system that can generate the liturgy to be consumed. So, if anyone has a personal history relating to the identity, relationships, or faith journey that does not fit the system, they can be set aside as a problem. Moreover, it is them who have the problem, not the liturgy. But perhaps the table to which we are invited in the eucharistic banquet is not like the gaudy tables in a fast food outlet, designed so that you do not linger and talk, but rather is an open, more welcoming table that anticipates people coming ‘from east and west, and from north and south, [to] sit at table in the kingdom of God (Lk 13:29).20 We experience both tables in life, which do we take as the model for our eucharistic table?

The poor

If we are concerned that the liturgy should be an authentic expression of who we are as redeemed creatures, then the liturgy must have a real engagement with those who are alienated in our society in one way or another: the poor. ‘The poor’ are not just those who are suffering economic hardship, but all those who for a variety of reasons are marginalised, suffering, and not enjoying the gifts that God wills all of us to share. And a concern with the poor has been an important part of our liturgy from the beginning when Christian gatherings cut right across the social stratification of Greco-Roman society. However, it was one thing to share religious ideas with one’s slaves, it was quite another to share one’s food and one’s table. It is this concern with the poor that lies behind Paul’s critique of what is happening at the eucharistic meals of the Corinthians: if they want to have a true act of thanksgiving, then the rich must wait on the poor (1 Cor 11:33).21 Similarly, the powerful must not be seeking the places of honour, as if the Christian gathering retained the social stratification of the larger society – something that is highlighted in both the gospels (Lk 14:10)22 and in the letter of James.23 And this concern takes a visibly practical form in the collection for the poor which was a fixed part of the liturgy as recounted by Justin around 150 A.D.. And we should note that this was a collection for the poor and not for the maintenance of the structures or the ordained ministers and appeals to Justin to validate the modern practice of collections are wide of the mark.

So, an authentic liturgy within a community demands that the community take positive steps to do two things. First, it must reflect on its own community practice: are there sub-groups within the community that are marginalised in terms of their participation in the liturgy? Are there, for example, groups in a community that are not represented among the pool of

20 See J.D. Crossan, The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant (Edinburgh, 1991), passim, who presents commensality as one of the characteristic and distinguishing features of Jesus’ ministry.
readers or the pool of eucharistic ministers? If that is the case it is, in Paul’s terms, a blemish on the gathering which must be addressed. Second, the liturgical gathering is a rejoicing in the goodness of God who offers us from his infinite bounty, and in response we offer thanks in union with the Christ. But if we are rejoicing in God’s sharing with us, we must be taking practical, concrete steps for sharing our bounty with the poor. That must be no mere token matter, but material assistance to those who are deprived through collections, collaborating in food banks, and facilitating those suffering alongside us. We have a long history of arguing over what in ritual terms constitutes a ‘valid’ liturgy, it is time that we spend, at least, equal effort seeing what constitutes an authentic liturgy: and a *sine qua non* of such authenticity is that all who celebrate together have a commitment, not just as individuals but as a Church, to working with the poor.

**The future**

Vogel back in 1972 pointed out the problem of the unreformed liturgy: it tended to deny its own nature as authentic human action. Today, his observation is as relevant as it was then. In the interim there has grown up an uncritical romanticism about the unreformed rites as if it is simply an alternative – and there are some who even think it superior to the rite of 1969. That in the last two years, Pope Francis has become far more vocal in his criticisms of this group – and those who use liturgy as a basis for a more widespread rejection of Vatican II – is indicative that the renewal envisaged by the Council is still far from being realised. But even for those who have embraced the reforms of the Second Vatican Council as the work of the Spirit, there is far more to a true reform of our worship than simply the adoption of new ritual texts.

A true renewal of the liturgy only takes place when a community has evolved a manner of being and celebrating that is an authentic expression of who they are as a human community, who they see themselves as being in union with the Father’s Anointed One, and how they see themselves as acting within the larger human society.
Hopes and Dreams of Liturgical Renewal: 3 books from my shelf

By Chris Kan

Out of all my weaknesses, buying books - especially old ones - ranks high on the list! In this 60th year since Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC) was promulgated, I have browsed some of the liturgical ones, wondering what the authors, in their unique time and place, thought of the reform, particularly its progression and implementation and, perhaps more importantly, their hopes for the future.

Bernard Botte OSB was an important voice towards the end of the first Liturgical Movement and in the immediate post-conciliar period. His 1973 book 'From Silence to Participation: An insider’s view of liturgical renewal' tells his story: from Benedictine Monk in Belgium to Rome at the Council, and finally his work in the Pastoral Liturgy Centres of Paris. His reflections in the final chapter ‘Taking Stock’ were written a decade after the conciliar reform began, yet still reflect those first heady days of new rites, vernacular language and a wider selection of biblical texts.

Before considering his hopes for the future, Botte lays out his manifesto for liturgical renewal: ‘to create living assemblies and communities who participate to the fullest in the prayer and life of the Church’ (p.165). He would have liked to see the continuation of Latin as the prime liturgical language yet saw the importance of the vernacular. This was brought home to him when he visited what he terms ‘ordinary parishes’ throughout Europe, noting congregations responding and listening carefully, many receiving communion. Very different, Botte notes, to his youthful experiences in which people ‘kept busy as best they could . . . waiting for Mass to be over’ (p. 166). He goes on to praise the renewed Liturgy of the Word, the variety of Eucharistic prayers, and concelebration.

Looking forward, Botte remained optimistic. He saw SC and the following documents as a ‘plan for the future’ (p.186) yet acknowledged that seeing immediate or sensational results was both unlikely and unwanted. These sorts of results were, to Botte’s mind, risky, and spoke to a shallow understanding of what the reform was really all about: thus, increased numbers of participants - ‘success’ - did not equal a liturgy that reflected Vatican II’s renewed understanding of the Church and the faith. Botte’s hope was that moving forward, the liturgical flexibility encouraged by the Council Fathers (where Episcopal conferences would make decisions on appropriate liturgical adaption) would embrace the Vatican II priority of renewal in catechesis and preaching.

Some twenty one years later, Jesuit Dennis Smolarski, in his book ‘Sacred Mysteries: Sacramental Principles and Liturgical Practice', reflected on not dissimilar issues. However, the world changed through the 1970’s and 80’s. A new Pope had been elected. Liberation theology became the issue de jour, and the role of women in the church had begun to be debated more freely. Written twenty years after SC, Smolarski’s text is a response to Kathleen Hughes’ thoughts that what is ‘now needed is less catechesis and preaching.


more mystagogia . . . doing the rites well’ (p.15). He casts a wide net: from considering the nature of liturgical practice - particularly where it was not life-giving - to the role of space, music and the role of the assembly.

The chapter title - ‘Obfuscating the Mystery’ - gives some hints about his thoughts. For Smolarski, Liturgies are ‘times of ritual interaction by Christians eager to celebrate Christ . . . to be nourished . . . in order to live in this confusing and contradictory world’ (p161.) He sees how easy it is for well-meaning and enthusiastic reform to prevent this from happening, echoing Botte’s warning of pursuing the novel or ‘mountain top’ experience.

One example of his thinking is the ‘Non-integration of Various Ministers’. Smolarski discusses the move from the Tridentine Liturgy, in which the Eucharist could be celebrated publicly by a priest and server alone, to the one envisioned by SC and the important role that all of the Baptised play, whether that be as celebrant, reader, altar server, musician and so forth. Liturgy should never be a one-man or woman show or else the gathered community is denied expression of the richness of gifts that God has given them. As he says, ‘God has given … various gifts and talents, and they should not be overlooked . . . (but) cultivated for the benefit of the community’ (p.169).

He ends his book with a very pertinent comment: liturgy will continue to evolve as the world and those who live in it change, but the reality we celebrate remains the same (p.179).

My most recent text on the reform is Kevin Irwin’s ‘What We Have Done, What We Have Failed to Do: Assessing the Liturgical Reforms of Vatican II’. Writing in 2014, the papacy of Benedict XVI had relaxed some prohibitions regarding the celebration of the Tridentine Mass and a new English Missal was published, with controversy over issues of translation and language. Within his United States context, what became known as ‘the reform of the reform’ had gained some traction. This effort to ‘re-sacralise’ the Vatican II liturgy in various ways included a return to ad orientem celebration and the wider use of Latin and Gregorian Chant. Whilst acknowledging his context, Irwin notes that he is committed to ‘the ongoing implementation of the liturgy as reformed through the church’s wisdom after Vatican II.’

A few brief paragraphs cannot do justice to the detail and breadth of his relaxed analysis, but two ideas - one from each end of the book - are worth noting. In the introduction, Irwin writes that it is the questions we ask, rather than the answers we find, that are key. Within a liturgical context, each new generation of worshippers, scholars, and leaders, whilst ‘standing on the shoulders’ of those who came before them, again asks questions about how we should pray communally and what this reveals about ourselves and the God to whom we are praying. To do this, Irwin examines ten areas of liturgical practice: from participation to translation, and the role of the arts in popular devotions.

The conclusion is where he draws his thoughts into four short ideas, two of which are worth recounting. Firstly, Irwin notes that a lot of time is spent in planning and conducting our liturgical life, and this is necessary as it is in that very space that our Christian lives are formed. Secondly, and to my mind echoing some of the thoughts of Vigil Michel from the pre-conciliar liturgical movement, liturgy must be more than just the correct observation of rites; it should change and influence our lives outside of the liturgy, so that we become people of the

beatitudes. ‘What we learn in those buildings (sacred space) should lead us to more committed lives outside the buildings’.

What can we learn from the thoughts of these three writers? There is certainly a movement in thought: from initial hopes fulfilled in Botte, to more mature reflections on practice in Smolarski, and an even wider view of the place of liturgy in communal life, inside and outside the Church, in Irwin. Yet time marches on, and the last of these reflections will soon be out of date. Yet, if you are reading this, there are many who are still concerned about communal prayer and how we provide spaces and opportunities that allow people to enter into dialogue with the divine.

What might a book written in 2025 about the reforms contain? The recent Plenary Council’s call for both ‘fully conscious and active participation in the Church’s liturgy and sacraments’, and more liturgical catechesis and formation, echo those of SC 60 years ago. These remain important, but there are wider issues than these. You will have your own concerns and thoughts, but for me, I wonder: How do we embrace Aboriginal Spirituality liturgically? What of the role of women in our churches – are we ready to move beyond tokenism into the realms of homiletics or ordained ministry? How do we move forward collaboratively - the ordained and lay working together - to build lifegiving liturgical communities outside of the usual labelling of conservative/progressive?

Whatever the future may be, reflection on liturgical practice, and liturgy’s connection to the lives of those who come to pray, will continue. As we live out our own story in the light of the larger story of faith that we celebrate and proclaim, whether we write a book or not, we are a part of the ongoing unfolding of the conciliar liturgical vision.

Make straight the paths of the Lord.
There is no need to warn against predicting the future. We are all too well aware that the future is an unknown land, and any prior mapping of the terrain a trifle premature. Yet, there are inklings in the present, and indeed in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, that do allow for prophecy. The future may be different, but there are forces in the present shaping it. What follows is a forecasting of where those forces can lead!

**Voice: whose voice?**

The move to the vernacular, the resultant worship in our own language, and even the ructions around translation and its processes all open onto the question of ‘voice’. We are now praying in our own language, experiencing the rites as comprehensible, vocalising the responses, hearing commentary and engaging with the ritual forms. The scriptures are proclaimed in our tongue and the psalms sung in our language. This remarkable turn of events, overturning over a millennium of poor practice, has transformed us and our baptismal belonging. However, it is but a beginning.

What begins to emerge from a critical review of the scholarship that led to the reformed rites is the question of whose voices are we hearing in the texts and the rituals. It is not an obvious question but let me put it this way. Each rite, each prayer, each chant, each rubric has behind it author/s, editor/s, a receptive community and a smoothness polished from use. The Kyrie, the introit, the collect, processions, the Roman Canon, unleavened bread all emerge from particular circumstances and are a response to communal requirements. They are a snapshot of a past community, and traces of that origin are embedded within them. In a way this should not be surprising as all texts and documents have this characteristic: it is the way of being in language and history.

It is precisely here that our reform needs to take a deep breath. The liturgy that was reformed had remained outside the norms of vernacular development. The prayers, rites and ministerial roles were somewhat ‘static’. We still pray orations written fifteen centuries in the past. The experts guiding the conciliar reform of the liturgy, all specialists in ancient texts, held to the importance of bringing these ancient, indeed venerable, voices and forms and roles into the present. In part this was an accident of their scholarship: they were asked to lead the reform because they knew the recently discovered ancient sources so well. Further, the Church leaders and their experts saw the path forward to a renewed liturgy through the lens of ‘organic development’ so that the new prayers were a continuation of the ancient liturgy, yet now translated. Newly minted prayers tended to be retrieved from ancient sources or prayers combined from parts of ancient prayers or inspired by the documents of Vatican II. The initial Vatican II inspired creation of new liturgical books was a bold
and innovative adventure, however if the process is maintained beyond its current sixty years it will begin to appear timid and too backward looking. We are now facing the question of voice!

Before we go further it is important to set one theological truth in place. There is only one text that remains unchanged across time and geography and culture, and that text is the scriptures. All other writings and rituals are passing and have no particular right to remain in use or unmodified.

Whose voice then are we using when we pray? The Roman Canon and its multiple prefaces, the Roman collects, the Roman processions, the Roman chant reflect the theological, cultural and aesthetic practices of the later phases of the Roman empire. There are some variations between Rome and Milan, and still further stylistic differences between the prayers from Gaul and those of Roman origin. Many of the prayers are responses to particular historical situations, whether the siege of Rome, a fracas in a monastery, the celebration of a pagan festival, the devotion to a particular saint. Moreover, these prayers all have particular linguistic features characteristic of Roman tastes. The Roman Canon, the prefaces and the collects all reflect different literary forms and musical modes. Now that we are hearing these prayers in translation as our own prayers, can we not ask: if the Romans could create prayers in their language can’t we create prayers and prayer forms that match the genius of our language, and reflect the particular circumstances of our history? Where is our voice? Why is the Roman voice a privileged one?

There is also another level of ‘voice’. The ancient Roman prayers we continue to pray were most certainly written by male clerics and so reflect only one aspect of the experience of the events and needs of Rome and its citizens. This was further reinforced in that the ritual forms were almost always led by male clerics. This is no longer sufficient for the community of the baptised.

This discovery that there is ‘voice’ behind our prayers, that they are not timeless classics but classical exemplars of a particular place and time and culture, opens up the challenge of the future. Whose voices will inform our prayers. Will we create orations that reflect the thought patterns and experiences of women, migrants, differently gendered, non-clerical males, emerging adults? To do this is to create a living liturgy, one which closely identifies with the dynamics of ancient Roman prayer-making, though differs in content and context.

**Culture: whose culture?**

Voice is embedded in culture. There is a working supposition in the reformed liturgy that the primary exemplar for worship is found in the culture of the city of Rome, perhaps across the third to the seventh centuries. This accounts for many features to which we are accustomed, such as the style of the Roman Canon, the genre of the collect, the shape and use of processions, the preference for chant. It also reflects why some aspects of worship are curtailed or discouraged, such as dance, song singing, bodily movement. Many of these aspects reappear in devotions, so they are not entirely lost to us. However, the point here is that there is nothing sacrosanct...
about the culture of the city of Rome. It is not a biblically prescribed requirement for faith or worship.

There is much of Western culture and history that is at home with the Roman substrate, but there is little to recommend it as essential to the faith to the churches of Asia, Africa, South America and the South Pacific. Nor is there necessarily value in the ways of a particular ancient city being imposed on indigenous peoples world-wide.

The reforms of Vatican II uncovered that the ‘norms of the fathers’ (or variously ‘the vigour of the fathers’) were responsive the cultural and historical circumstances of those patristic times. The next stage of the reform is to bring this radical cultural openness to the cultures and languages of the people of faith. One example perhaps may suffice. The Roman collects are renowned for their brevity and succinct form and lauded as good examples of prayer. Yet in cultures where there is a strong emphasis on oratory such as in the South Pacific cultures, the collect does not pass the test as a true prayer. It is too short, with too little involvement of the people, and too little virtuosity. As beautiful an oration as they are, the prayer is not a universal form.

Why on this night of nights do we …?

Once the imperatives of voice, culture, history and body have been given space for discussion we are left with the type of questioning we see in the interrogation of the youngest around the Jewish Passover meal: why on this night of nights do we …?

The ongoing reform of the liturgy means that while these questions may remain suppressed, they are common to many of the faithful and the formulaic responses no longer hold. Why is leadership understood only within an ancient Roman model of power? How do the voices and experiences of women, different language groups, racial communities become manifest in worship so that its incarnational groundings are respected, explored and celebrated? How is the leadership of men more conducive to participation in the divine? Where does the exuberance of the Spirit find its place in our worship? Why are there so few musical forms in the liturgical books? If the Roman liturgy emerged out of a rich appropriation of pagan prayer forms, why do we think this creativity ought to remain frozen in the seventh century? Why do we imagine that the communion wafers have any relationship to bread? Why is the cup so guarded from the faithful? What are suitable cultural forms of leadership, and how are they able to be reflected in worship?

To date the reform of the liturgy has concentrated on what can be learnt from the riches of the Latin liturgy of the city of Rome. This learning has enabled a revision of prayers, a decluttering of unnecessary accretions, a greater appreciation of symbol and rite as engaging and transforming, and an opportunity to worship in the vernacular. Yet what remained unexplored is that the Roman rite itself emerged through a highly creative process that reassessed the Greek language liturgy of the earliest Christian communities in the city, reimagined the liturgy in the more vernacular Latin, and then set about worshipping and evangelising through that
medium. Our reform has accepted the riches of Rome, but not yet embraced the
dynamic of cultural transformation that gave rise to those very riches.

**Beyond the future as based in the past**

To a degree the above reflections represent a sally forth into the future by revisiting
the past. While much more could be said, there is also the question of the future
marked by present advances unknown in earlier times.

The primary one is the death of the ‘book’ as we know it. Let me start with an
example. As you read this, a library of 20,000 theological books is being transported
from Sydney to Borneo. It will form the basis of a resource for a new Catholic
Seminary and proposed Catholic University: we are mightily chuffed that our books
and periodicals are going to such good use. However, on a larger frame, it is one
more signal of the end of the book as such. It is not the end of reading, of writing, of
scholarship or research. Rather the artifact we are so comfortable with and so
comforted by has no longer the currency that it formerly had. Academic resources
have moved online, and our students will now have access to tens of thousands
more books and journal articles than previously. And yes, there is some grieving in
this (and you may well be experiencing some shock yourself), however the
technology has changed us, and there is no turning back.

Firstly, the new environment is a reminder that we thought the printing press and its
mass product, the accessible book, were a permanent part of the cultural landscape.
Now that that idea no longer holds, we can ask about how the artifact we call a book
has shaped our liturgical imagination.

For technological, ecological, economic and practical reasons, the ongoing
production of official liturgical books will be truncated and may cease entirely. We will
access rituals online, using tablets, phones and unknown technologies. The
scriptures will be proclaimed and the rites led from online versions. This will be a
different experience, but as unusual it may be for Western communities, it may not
be so different for worshippers in poor countries where technology is becoming
available under different models of use and ownership.

There are at least three sets of implications. The first is around use and control.
Once we enter the online environment, we enter a world of choice and self-
authorising. We will be able to ‘swipe left or right’ around liturgical choices. There is a
sense in which authorised rituals will no longer be such controlling texts. We will be
able to access liturgical forms from other churches, some inimical to Catholic
worship. We will save our ‘favourites’. The members of the congregations will have
their own devices on hand. This is only the beginning of the questions that will
emerge.

The second implication is around our valorisation of ‘liturgical books’ in themselves.
The revision of the liturgy has been built around the revision of the Roman Missal, its
Lectionaries, the Book of the Gospel, the Ritual texts. This in turn was built upon the
consequences of the somewhat accidental decision of the Council of Trent to allow
the Roman curia to act as a control point for sanctioned liturgical texts, a role which
was expanded to become the sole point of control. This was only possible because

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of the technology that printed books. One of the many effects of a book is that it is able to ‘capture’ knowledge and ‘present’ it. Hymn books are a good example of this, as are books of blessings and sets of intercessions. Knowledge stored in the iCloud is no longer able to be ‘captured’ in the same way, nor accepted so passively. Soon the educated and uneducated faithful alike will have a different relationship to books and might not even own any. This is not quite the place to explore these shifts, nor to offer a stronger critique of the way that ‘books’ have defined Western civilisation and played their part in the colonisation of oral cultures. It is more than likely, however, that a text such as the Book of the Gospels, so prominent in rites of procession and proclamation, is fated to become another venerable piece of inherited tradition rather than a dynamic liturgical presence.

The third implication is around the way the baptised of the future will receive teaching and worship. As participants they will not necessarily be readers! They will be learners, however, taking in a vast array of facts, experiences, concepts, thought pieces and the like through multiple media. And they will come to expect a worship service that reflects and takes up multiple media. Children raised on iPhones and tablets already have a brain wiring slightly different to prior generations, and this is just the beginning of a new trajectory for brain development, just as the printing press was many generations back. These ‘new’ content receivers will also be active content creators. We will compile liturgical texts differently in the future, just as we have compiled them differently prior to the printing press and then through the printing press.

**Drawing uncertain conclusions**

The future will be different. The scholarship that underpinned the reforms of the liturgy allowed for a revised worship and a retrieval of the tradition. The stage is now set for a deeper dive into the tradition, and a reappropriation of the dynamics and creativity that gave rise to ancient liturgies and their forms. This dynamic involved history, context and ‘voice’, offering us a way to bring voice, culture and context to our worship.

This creativity and attention to culture comes at a junction in the development of humanity itself, and in particular our access to information and ‘mastery’ of knowledge as well as our ‘mastery’ by knowledge. The revolution we are part of is far broader than that brought in by the printing press, and we live between both worlds. That straddling of eras will pass soon enough, and The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy will be called upon to guide the Church into a different horizon. The future coming of the Lord will be him riding on the iCloud!
Vatican II – 60 Years Young!

By Mary-Anne Lumley

Events & anniversaries

This year commemorates the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council by Pope Saint John XXIII on October 11, 1962.27 This year also commemorates the 70th anniversary of the coronation of the late Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain. In his introduction to The Documents of Vatican II edited by Walter Abbott SJ, Lawrence Shehan writes:

‘a sense of continuity … inspired the saying, ‘The king is dead; long live the king.’ A similar sense would justify the statement, ‘The Council is over; the Council has just begun’.28

It is likely that in 1966, Shehan’s use of the word ‘continuity’ was uncontroversial. Some sixty years hence, in the context of Vatican II, the word is likely to connote a stance on the Council’s impact.

This paper is a reflection on how Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC), the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, is core to the whole project of Vatican II. The hermeneutical lens of micro-rupture, as explicated by Ormond Rush, is adopted in the exploration of specific aspects of the Council. Attention is given to the wisdom expressed by the Council Fathers. There is a call to a continuity that is future-oriented: how can the aggiornamento of 1962 continue through 2022 and beyond? Another way of asking the question might be: how can we be contemporary and truly Catholic?29

Ceremony, continuity & innovation

A major event of 2022 was the death of Queen Elizabeth II. The ensuing ceremonies of the accession of the King and the royal funeral were steeped in tradition and ceremonial words, actions and gestures: the slow procession bearing the coffin on a gun carriage; the royal standard draped over the casket; the arrangement of the crown, orb and sceptre; seating arrangements in Westminster Abbey and the Archbishop of Canterbury as presider. Notable were several innovations: the liturgy in Westminster Abbey was filmed and broadcast; the service was ecumenical; while the Archbishop of Canterbury presided, he was assisted by several ministers of other denominations, including women, as well as the Roman Catholic cardinal, Vincent...

27 From here on it will be called Vatican II.
29 Vatican II took place while the author was too young to have any memory. During the years after the Council, the author does remember the flush of excitement and renewal as changes were implemented. Resurrection joy in proclaiming the gospel must have infused the liturgy as the author remembers a grandmother’s contemptuous dismissal of ‘all this alleluia business’. Also remembered is the grandmother’s angst at not being able to pray her rosaries, because the Mass in English was too distracting!
Nichols. Such innovations reflect the culture and sensibilities of this time but would have been unthinkable in previous generations. That Vatican II has had far-reaching effects on Christians other than Roman Catholics has frequently been acknowledged. Robert Gribben, long-time leader and one of the founding fathers of the Uniting Church in Australia remarks, with reference to Sacrosanctum Concilium, that ‘there can hardly be a more important liturgical document in our time’. D’Arcy Wood, former chair of the Uniting Church’s Commission on Liturgy reflects that ‘the impact of Vatican II on other Churches, directly on lectionaries and texts, and less directly on the atmospherics of liturgical thinking has been profound’.

Interpretation

In the context of Vatican II, continuity and discontinuity/rupture may be used as interpretive lenses and scholarly works on this topic abound. Although the broader topic of interpretation is beyond the scope of this article, it is helpful to draw on the hermeneutical insights of Ormond Rush who offers the useful terms of micro-rupture and macro-rupture. According to Rush, it was never the intention of the Council to ‘sever itself’ from ecclesial tradition in a macro-rupture. However, various innovations and discontinuities, which Rush calls micro-ruptures, renewed and ‘rejuvenated’ the tradition while upholding its integrity. Rush draws on the scholarship of eminent Vatican II historian, the late John O’Malley SJ, who says:

… always keeping in mind the fundamental continuity in the great tradition of the Church, interpreters must also take due account of how the Council is discontinuous with previous practices and teaching traditions.

Rush is adamant that while some minor breaks with a particular style or period (micro-ruptures) are likely to have been intentional, it may never be claimed that ‘the spirit of the Council [can] be conceived as a desire for a macro-rupture within the tradition’. Rush’s concept of micro- and macro-rupture is a useful hermeneutical backdrop for examining aspects of Vatican II and, in particular, Sacrosanctum Concilium.

Sacrosanctum Concilium

The first of the four constitutions to be promulgated was, of course Sacrosanctum Concilium, otherwise known as the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. It has been argued that this constitution had a significant impact on the ensuing progress of the Council. Shaun Blanchard, drawing on the work of Massimo Faggioli, contends that

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33 Rush, Still Interpreting Vatican II, 7.
the liturgical reform is key to understanding the vision of Vatican II. Referring to SC Blanchard states that it ‘reflects the centrality of liturgical reform to Vatican II’s project of ecclesial renewal’. Ormond Rush argues that one of the teachings that was core to the direction of the Council, and how the Council would bear fruit, is recorded in paragraph 14 of SC:38

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people’ (1 Pet. 2:9), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism.39 To this frequently quoted paragraph, Rush proposes a renewed imperative. He argues that the faithful’s ‘fully conscious and active participation’ is foundational for later teaching on the People of God, on their mission in the world and their appropriate participation ‘in the teaching, sanctifying and governing of church life.’ Moreover, Rush believes that ‘fully conscious, and active participation’ is at the nexus of the spirit and the letter of the Council, and he proffers a paraphrase of the above quote from SC, 14:

The full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit.41

There is an unequivocal expectation for full, conscious and active ecclesial participation by the People of God. The ‘right and duty’ of the People of God is the promise and call of their baptism. It has been noted by Rita Ferrone that the ‘right and duty’ of participation by the faithful had been taught by Pope Pius XII. However, Ferrone shows that Sacrosanctum Concilium emphasises the dignity of Baptism ‘at the very outset of liturgical promotion and participation’. Referring to paragraph 6, Ferrone highlights that the faithful are ‘plunged into the paschal mystery of Christ’ through their baptism. Moore emphasises that among all members of the Church there is ‘no dignity or gift greater than Baptism’. The hope that the People of God would be ‘led to that fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations’, enables them to more

36 Shaun Blanchard, ‘This Sacred Council’ – Vatican II at 60,’ The Tablet, October 20, 2022, https://www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/22431/-this-sacred-council-vatican-ii-at-60.
37 Blanchard, ‘This Sacred Council’.
38 Rush, Still Interpreting Vatican II, 81.
40 Rush, Still Interpreting Vatican II, 82-83.
41 Rush, Still Interpreting Vatican II, 81.
43 SC, 6.
deeply understand and participate in the mystery of the Church into which they are baptised.

The bold statements in paragraph 14 of SC capture the bold four-fold vision articulated in paragraph 1 of the same document:

... to impart an ever increasing [vigour] to the Christian life of the faithful; to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions which are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever can help to call the whole of [hu]mankind into the household of the Church.45

According to Ferrone, this four-fold aim actually restates Pope John XXIII’s own intentions in convoking Vatican II and demonstrates how the reform of the liturgy is aligned to the actual purpose of the Council.46 Blanchard respectively identifies these four aims as inner renewal, *aggiornamento*, ecumenism and evangelisation.47 Ferrone celebrates their outward focus, asserting that the goal of liturgy reform is embraced by a Church who ‘reach[es] beyond itself’.48

**Aggiornamento**

*Aggiornamento* is the term most frequently associated with Vatican II. The word itself is Italian and an internet search will reveal its meaning as ‘bringing up to date’ or ‘updating’. By definition, then, *Aggiornamento* might indicate renewal and dynamism. Karl Rahner observed that Vatican II was ‘the beginning of a beginning’.49 The sentiment is mirrored by Pope Paul VI: ‘*aggiornamento* will mean for us an enlightened insight into the Council’s spirit and a faithful application of the norms it has set forth’.50 The Pope was addressing the Council in November 1965 as it looked ahead to the ongoing work of the Council, beyond the final meetings. This attention to the future is included in what has been called the reception of the Council.51 As described by Rush, the reception and interpretation of the Council is dynamic and ongoing. Rush cites Walter Kasper’s remark that the impact of the Council ‘will depend on the people who translate it into real life’. Similarly, Joseph Ratzinger had indicated that ‘the whole Church participates in the Council’.52 This places responsibility on the entire People of God, both lay and clergy; both now and into the future. The ongoing need for a new reception of the fruits of the Council requires ongoing renewal of the faithful’s full, conscience and active participation in all aspects of church life.

45 SC, 1.
47 Blanchard, ‘This Sacred Council’.
51 Rush’s scholarship here is informed by a ‘hermeneutic of reception’ that considers three aspects of a communication event: author, text and addressee. In discussion of Vatican II, these terms respectively refer to the Fathers of the Council and what they wished to communicate; the documents themselves; and those who receive and interpret the Council and its effects.
Signs of the times

Vatican II sought to interpret and respond to the signs of the times in order to proclaim the gospel. Attentive listening and open dialogue were to characterise relations within the Church as well as those beyond the Church. The call to look into the signs of the times was originally a challenge to discernment from Jesus: ‘you know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times’ (Matt 16:3). Jesus gives the challenge of discerning the signs of the times to his followers then and now. Signs of the times may appear to be positive or negative. A positive sign of the times, according to Rush, is recognised as something new that is ‘of God’; conversely, a negative sign of the times is ‘an indicator of the things that are impeding the reign of God’. Clearly the task for a community of ‘creative receivers’ is to be lovingly attentive to signs of the times that are negative as well as positive. A compelling perspective is offered by Giuseppe Ruggieri, that attending to the signs of the times makes it ‘possible to rediscover the youth of the gospel’. The youth of the gospel! What fruits! Of course, this is the work of the Holy Spirit who ‘makes the Church keep the freshness of youth’ and continually ‘renews it’.

Ruggieri names as locus theologicus human experiences throughout history, but especially of whatever is of the present time. Eloquently expressed in Gaudium et Spes, the attentiveness to human experience becomes, in the Eucharistic Prayer for use in Masses for Various Needs III, an explicit intercession to God:

Keep us attentive to the needs of all
that, sharing their grief and pain,
their joy and hope,
we may faithfully bring them the good news of salvation
and go forward with them
along the way of your Kingdom.

These words are preceded by another petition for those present to maintain their commitment to proclaiming the gospel:

Grant that all the faithful of the Church,
looking into the signs of the times by the light of faith,
may constantly devote themselves
to the service of the Gospel.

54 Rush, Still Interpreting Vatican II, 80.
59 The Roman Missal, 2010.
That believers are actually empowered to pray these intercessions through and with Christ in the liturgy reflects the profundity and graced dignity of their baptismal right and duty, as articulated in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

**Vatican II was 60 years ago. Why are you still talking about it?**

This question, from a millennial, is as challenging as it is provocative. On the one hand, perhaps the question could be interpreted as: why the talk, rather than action? The question also implies a singular event of the past. Further, any ‘updating’ from the sixties and seventies is already history! Lucien Deiss observed some thirty years ago that young people ‘did not know the liturgy before the Council’ therefore the reform of the liturgy is of no interest. Of greater relevance to young people is the form of the liturgy of their time: is the spirit of *aggiornamento* at work? Also important to young people is their awareness of social justice, and many are quick to point to any lack of congruence between words and actions. Such sentiments may be expressed through memes, a current sign of these times. If the Eucharist celebrates the life, death and resurrection of Christ through bread broken and wine poured out, there is still some work to be done to ensure the liturgy is not isolated from life and from the needs of the world. According to Ferrone, the ‘call to *aggiornamento*’ came from the urgent ‘moral imperative’ to proclaim the good news in the real world, and to truly love others as neighbours, and is only authentic when celebrated for and with the life of the world. Young people reveal many signs of the current times, and the task of discernment is as critical as it is urgent. Much more could and needs to be said in other forums about catechesis for young people and the educators and leaders who work with the young.

**In my language**

One of the most immediate and obvious changes in the reformed liturgy was the use of the ‘mother tongue’. The purpose was to ensure that:

… the intrinsic nature and purpose of [the liturgy’s] several parts … may be more clearly manifested, and that devout and active participation by the faithful may be more easily achieved.

Four decades on from the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, and amid the revised translation of the Roman Missal according to *Liturgiam authenticam*, Gerard Moore observed that:

… the test of our translations is their acceptance by the worshipping community as worthy of prayer, beautiful and facilitative of full, conscious and active participation.

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60 Lucien Deiss, *Celebration of the Word* (Collegeville, Minn.:Liturgical Press, 1993), 144.

61 Deiss, *Celebration of the Word*, 144


63 *SC*, 54

64 *SC*, 49

65 Moore, ‘Are We There Yet,’ 6.
Gerald O’Collins argues that the revised translation with which English-speaking Catholics ‘were saddled’ lacks beauty and hospitality. O’Collins provides examples of what he calls transpositions that use unnecessarily outmoded English words, for example: instead of repentance, compunction is used; instead of praise, laud; and instead of prayer, supplication. This would seem to be at odds with the aggiornamento spirit of the Council. O’Collins refers to the ‘so-called English’ of the texts and yearns for liturgical texts in the mother tongue of good English. He refers to a letter written to Pope Urban IV by Thomas Aquinas which advises against word-for-word translation in which ‘perplexity concerning the meaning of the original sometimes occurs’. While there are great differences in the cultural and religious contexts of the worlds of Aquinas and that of today, Aquinas’ words have a contemporary ring. In Australia today young people – and not so young people – have access to a world of knowledge. However, in an increasingly secular and fast-paced society, their vocabulary most likely does not extend to archaic words or metaphors, and their use in the liturgy is likely to cause perplexity.

Pope Francis’ 2017 Motu proprio, Magnum Principium, emphasises the aspect of mystery inherent in the sacred rites, requiring translations that ‘must be congruent with sound doctrine’. Concomitantly, Francis seeks hospitality in the texts, stating that ‘without doubt, attention must be paid to the benefit and good of the faithful’. In making some modifications to canon 838 of the Code of Canon, Law Francis emphasises the necessity of:

... vigilant and creative collaboration full of reciprocal trust between the Episcopal Conferences and the Apostolic See [in] the task of promoting the Sacred Liturgy.

In this 60th Anniversary year of the opening of Vatican II, it is very encouraging that the Australian Church’s Plenary Council has given voice to the yearnings of the faithful, noting the power and importance of language in the liturgy. The Plenary Council requested that:

... the Bishops Commission for Liturgy ... prepare a new English translation of the Roman Missal that is both faithful to the original text and sensitive to the call for language that communicates clearly and includes all in the assembly.

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67 O’Collins, Lost in Translation, vii.
68 O’Collins, Lost in Translation, viii.
69 O’Collins, Lost in Translation, 115.
71 Francis, Magnam Principium.
72 Francis, Magnam Principium.
The Plenary Council has been a journey, over more than four years, of praying, listening and discerning what the Spirit is saying to the People of God in Australia, and surely can be seen as an example of ongoing aggiornamento.\(^{74}\)

**Holy Spirit whisperer**

Pope Francis and others have said that it takes a century for the work of a council to become grounded and that Vatican II is still very much a work in progress. Referring to the Council, Rush argues for a ‘constant re-reception, effected in the Spirit’, as the responsibility of the entire People of God.\(^{75}\) Rush states that:

… [a]ccording to a hermeneutics of reception, a text is dead until it is read. Vatican II is not achieved until it is received.\(^{76}\)

For Rush the dynamism of reception draws on the Spirit of God who ‘hovered over the chaos’; who inspired the prophets of old; who came upon Jesus and, later, the apostles ‘to guide them in their adaptation of the Gospel’; and who came upon Christians as they gathered throughout history.\(^{77}\) Rush proposes that the Holy Spirit brings the baptised together in dialogue, guiding and ‘urging’ and ‘whispering into our ecclesial ear’, whether at the level of parish or ecumenical council.\(^{78}\) Once again, in responsiveness to the whispering of the Spirit, is the call to the People of God to be fully conscious and active. Rush does not shy from the great responsibility, as well as the privilege, of this call: to ‘[be] active, creative, imaginative receivers of revelation – for God’s sake’.\(^{79}\)

Such responsibility also requires being informed and it is encouraging to see Pope Francis promoting the re-reception of Vatican II. News sources including Crux and Catholic News Service have reported that, in preparation for the Holy Year of 2025, Francis is encouraging Catholics to engage with the texts, particularly the four constitutions. It is also heartening to hear that ‘user-friendly’ study resources will be prepared. Although many Catholics are aware of some of the teachings of Vatican II, it is frequently more by osmosis than direct engagement with the texts themselves and the intentions behind the texts. Referring, again, to the hermeneutic of reception elucidated by Rush, it is crucial for the People of God to engage with the texts in order for the Spirit of Vatican II to be received and breathed. And if it is the ‘right and duty’ of people to be informed, it is also incumbent on their leaders to promote, facilitate and encourage the activity of gathering and formation. It is hoped that materials produced will indeed be user-friendly and clear and that groups of Christians around this nation will gather, prompted by the whisperings of Holy Spirit.

Two decades ago, Rush proclaimed that Vatican II was, and is, the ‘light on the hill’, and that ‘the wind of the Spirit of the Council will not allow its own beacon to be extinguished’.\(^{80}\) **Aggiornamento**, of its nature, calls for dynamic renewal. Prior to each Council meeting, the Fathers prayed together and, according to Abbott, the

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\(^{74}\) See Angela McCarthy’s report in this edition of Pastoral Liturgy.

\(^{75}\) Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, 75-76.

\(^{76}\) Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, 55.

\(^{77}\) Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, 77.

\(^{78}\) Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, 77.


prayer text was derived from an ancient prayer of St Isidore of Seville. Part of the prayer reads:

We are here before you, O Holy Spirit …
Come and abide with us … penetrate our hearts.
Be the guide of our actions, indicate the path we should take …
May you be our only inspiration and overseer of our intentions.
May you, who are infinite justice, never permit that we be disturbers of justice …
[May we] be one in you … and in nothing depart from the truth …
So that our judgements may not be alien to you.\(^{81}\)

In 2022 and beyond the People of God might continue to pray this prayer, so that the ‘breeze’ of the Spirit ‘continues to flicker the flame and make it alive’, and they can say with conviction: ‘the Holy Spirit was with them; the same Holy Spirit is with us’.\(^{82}\)

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\(^{81}\) ‘Prayer of the Council Fathers’ in *The Documents of Vatican II*, xii.

\(^{82}\) Rush, *Still Interpreting Vatican II*, 85.
The Communion Song:
When to Sing and What to Sing

By Michael Mangan

(Previous versions of this article were published in the Australian Pastoral Musicians Network Newsletter (11/2), GIA Quarterly (33/1) and Liturgy News (51/3).

The string quartet has been engaged to provide music for the convention's annual gala dinner. Once set up they quickly seat themselves at the head table and tuck into the beautifully presented appetisers as other guests are gradually served. All eat in silence until the musicians return to their instruments to provide the dinner music for which they had been contracted. A liturgical version of this unlikely scenario is enacted in many churches each weekend.

As a liturgical music clinician, I find that few topics are as contentious as the Communion song. And the issues aren't Latin versus vernacular, traditional or contemporary, organ or a capella. Nope. The hot topic is, 'When do the musicians receive Communion?' Many music ministers are committed to being first in the Communion procession. I have sat in cathedrals and parish churches where the organist will play a quiet instrumental as choir members process to receive Communion. And sometimes, like the gala dinner, the Communion procession begins in complete silence as all the music ministers rush to be first in line.

The stated concerns are always the same. 'We might miss out on receiving from the chalice if we don’t go first!' 'They might be running low on hosts and we will only get a small piece!' 'We can’t exactly time the ending of the Communion song if we don’t go first!' 'There will be an awkward silence before the start of the post-Communion song.' That’s when I suggest that we step back, look at the liturgy, delve into the documents, and revisit the point and purpose of the Communion song, and for that matter, of music ministry.

Firstly, like all liturgical ministers, music ministers are called to be servants. The very word 'ministry' comes from the Latin ministerium, meaning 'service.' Music ministers are called to serve the needs of the liturgy and serve the liturgical 'work,' the full, conscious and active participation, of the assembly. Servants don't load up their plates first in case the food runs out. The needs of the guests, and of the occasion, are always prioritised. In the liturgy, these needs are very clear. The Communion song helps unify the entire ritual action of the Communion procession; a single action which begins with the presider's Communion and continues until all have received. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), the user manual for liturgy, spells out the purpose, place and procedure for the Communion song.

'While the priest is receiving the Sacrament, the Communion chant (song) is begun' (GIRM, 86). Not after the priest has received. Not after the Communion antiphon has been recited. Not after a long instrumental introduction to enable the choir to receive Communion first. The Communion procession begins with the priest's Communion and the song should accompany the entire procession. But does it really matter?

It matters. The purpose of the Communion song 'is to express the communicants' union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices, to show joy of heart, and to highlight more clearly the 'communitarian' nature of the procession to receive Communion' (GIRM, 86). The Communion procession is never the place for silent, private prayer and reflection. Rather, it
is a time of heightened unity in sacrament and community. Singing together enables the assembly to experience and express this unity as all process to be sacramentally unified in the eucharistic meal.

Theologically and liturgically, the Communion rite is about unity in, and through the body of Christ. ‘Many’ become ‘one’ through shared ritual action as the assembly sings, processes, eats and drinks together. And the ‘glue’ that holds this whole ‘ritual of unity’ together is the song. The active participation of the assembly in the shared Communion song is a vital and integral part of making this sacramental unity a reality.

The ‘unity of voices,’ which is called for in GIRM 86, is only possible if the assembly can actively participate in the chosen song. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (CSL) states that ‘full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else’ (CSL, 14) and this is especially true for the Communion song. The choice of the song to accompany the procession to receive from the Lord’s table is vital. Enabling the voice of the assembly is the paramount consideration. This is no time for instrumentals, solos or performances of Latin motets or choral anthems. This is about the participation of the people. So the Communion song must be discerned and chosen carefully. Can this piece be sung by the assembly? Is the refrain easily remembered? Does the language in the song express the unity of many becoming one – we, us and our rather than I, me and my? Is the song processional in nature? Does it accompany and assist the physical movement of the procession?

At this point, it must be acknowledged that there are tensions in the documents. After listing suitable texts and songs to be sung during Communion, GIRM 87 goes on to say that ‘[the Communion song] is sung by the choir alone or by the choir or cantor with the people’. The singing of the Communion song ‘by the choir alone’ is inconsistent with the theological basis and spirit of GIRM 86. GIRM 87 is often used to support the use of choral performance pieces, rather than community song, during the Communion procession.

The pattern of many liturgical documents is that the theology, purpose, and best practice are stated first (GIRM, 86) and then a ‘fall back’ position (often to placate alternative viewpoints) is presented afterwards. In this light, it is recommended that music and liturgy directors look to the principles and best practice found in GIRM 86 rather than relying on the often easier option of, ‘Let’s just let the choir do it.’ Clearly, the ‘choir alone’ option fails to ‘express the communicants’ union in spirit by means of the unity of their voices’ or ‘highlight more clearly the communitarian nature of the procession to receive Communion’. Let the people sing and choir support them!

How long should the Communion song last? ‘The singing is continued for as long as the Sacrament is being administered to the faithful’ (GIRM, 86). To unify the Communion procession through the voice of the assembly, the song accompanies the distribution of Communion until the last person has received or for as long as practically possible. GIRM 86 concludes with a reminder that ‘care should be taken that singers, too, can receive Communion with ease’.

So, when and how do music ministers receive Communion? Certainly, musicians’ communion must not be forgotten but this occurs after they have served the liturgy and the assembly. Balancing these seemingly competing needs is imperative and is possible with careful forethought and planning.
Specific procedures will depend on the size and make up of particular music ministry groups and their placement in the liturgical space. A larger music ministry group might go to receive Communion a few at a time so that some are always available to support the song of the assembly throughout the procession; and, of course, when processing they would still sing as members of the full, conscious and actively participating assembly! This might mean that the flute descant or vocal harmonies that have been rehearsed may need to be omitted for part of the song. But are the harmonies the priority here? Is the performance of the choir or instrumentalists more important than the song of the assembly during the Communion procession? GIRM 86 clearly indicates not.

For smaller groups with a single accompanist, an instrumental interlude might continue as the singers receive Communion or the singers could continue to lead the song of the assembly *a capella* as they join the end of the procession. And, if necessary, a little silence as the last few musicians receive communion is immeasurably preferable to delaying participatory song until all of the musicians have processed to the table first! Ministers of Communion must be aware of the local procedure and ensure that the musicians also have the opportunity to share in the eucharistic banquet.

Rather than being perceived as ‘awkward,’ a short period of silence while musicians receive Communion at the end of the procession could be reframed as the beginning the contemplative silence suggested in GIRM 88 where ‘the priest and faithful spend some time praying privately’. It is much more important for the Communion song to begin ‘on time’, as the priest receives Communion, than it is to end it exactly as the last communicant receives.

In conclusion:

• The Communion song begins as the priest receives Communion and continues for as long as the sacrament is being administered.

• This song belongs to the assembly: the unity of voices shows a unity of spirit and highlights the communitarian nature of the Communion procession.

• The Communion procession is not a time for silence, instrumentals, or choral pieces in which the assembly cannot participate.

• As servants of the liturgy and the assembly, music ministers must firstly fulfill the requirements of the rite. This may often mean that they receive Communion at the end of the procession.

Finally, while there may be good logistical reasons for music ministers hurrying off to Communion first, there are no good liturgical or theological reasons to do so. Liturgy always trumps logistics!
Plenary Impressions of the 5th Plenary Council of Australia
By Angela McCarthy

These impressions were recorded each day of the Council as a way of capturing the action and mood of such a major synodal event for the Catholic Church of Australia. They were sent out widely by email and included on the Catalyst for Renewal website during the time of the Council:

Plenary Impressions Sunday 3 July 2022

Today is a furiously wet and wild winter day in Sydney but there is plenty of warmth in the collegiality of the members gathering in hotels in College Street Sydney. We are in good accommodation and I appreciate the studio room with a little kitchenette! I’ve spent time today re-reading all the Statutes, handbook, and the final copy of the Framework of Motions which is the material that we will begin work on tomorrow.

Tonight we celebrated the opening Mass at the McKillop Centre in North Sydney followed by a very noisy and happy drinks and finger food session. So many familiar faces and so many people that we have got to know online last year but now meet face to face. The feeling was very positive and with a sense of getting started and getting the work done for a better Church. The homilist tonight was Bishop Columba Macbeth-Green from the diocese of Wilcannia Forbes. Very apt as it was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday and he spoke well of his relationship with First Nations people. He was also very funny and that warmed us up. The music and liturgy were of course excellent and a real sense of unity as we all spoke and sang with one voice. We need to be at the venue at 8am tomorrow morning ready to go.

A recent webinar with a conversation between Sr Joan Chittister and John Warhurst has continued to hold inspiration for me. We have been asked to do a sacred act for the Church. Sacred in that it is the work of the Holy Spirit and we are to work hard to rebuild the Catholic Church in Australia. We need to seek the wisdom revealed in our spiritual conversations and have the ‘courage of conscience along with the conscience to be courageous’. Joan also reminded us that in every age that is dying there is a new age coming to life. We want to be part of that newness and life. In the dark times the eye begins to see the light with the help of the Holy Spirit. And finally, as Teilhard de Chardin said, only one task is worthy of our efforts and that is to construct the future.

In Pope Francis’ recent Apostolic Constitution, Praedicate evangelium, there is an emphasis on the role of the baptised where he has made it clear that governance within the Catholic Church does not require ordination, it requires baptism. Therefore, lay people are recognised as being able to enter governance at the highest levels. The way in which leadership in our schools, health systems and Catholic welfare associations are run is a ministerial work. This is not less than anything that is led by someone who is ordained for in our baptism we enter into the priesthood of Christ. That does not mean power, but it means that we must be Christ centred and missionary in everything that we do.
The weather here is a challenge and my new umbrella blew inside out tonight and is now useless so the raincoat will have to suffice! Hopefully tomorrow will be a little more moderate as we walk down College Street to the Cathedral College.

Many blessings on you all and please hold the whole Plenary Council in your prayers.

Angela

**Plenary Impressions Monday 4 July 2022**

Today was the beginning of the hard work for us all and the rain diminished so that we got down to the Cathedral College quite dry but on the way back this evening the fast and furious rain has soaked my boots which I hope will dry by the morning. We don’t get this kind of rain in Perth so it is novel and wet! One of the members at our table was late this morning because his train from Western Sydney was stopped due to flooding on the tracks and he had to come the rest of the way by bus in dreadful traffic.

And so, to the work of the Council. Today we began by finding our tables and getting to know our companions with whom we will share the week. The only one known to me at our table is Bishop Gerry Holohan of Bunbury. Next step was to ensure that all the technology was working, and it took quite some time for the numerous assistants to sort out those among the 250+ people who found it difficult. By 8.30 we were all set and began in prayer. It was a wide-ranging prayer that spoke of the state of our Church today and called us to emphasise the role of the Holy Spirit and used the meeting between God and Moses at the burning bush as a scriptural base. Archbishop Timothy’s opening address did likewise and I really need to read it again when it is published. The call is for each of us to make a real difference by listening and praying and speaking.

The next hour and a half was taken up with procedural matters where we had to vote to accept, or not, the various things required of the Council. This was done by holding up red or green cards and was efficiently completed. Morning tea enabled us to catch up with other members and it was very good to be able to greet the members who we got to know online last October. Much better face to face!

The session before lunch was for spiritual conversation and it took our table a while to sit comfortably with each other in the space. Our discernment was in regard to the two of the eight parts that are our agenda for the week. Part 1 is Reconciliation: Healing Wounds, Receiving Gifts and we were presented with 3 motions with amendments for us to consider. Seated beside me is an Aboriginal woman from Darwin and it was indeed wonderful to have her with us sharing her story of faith and her convictions about the future. The bag that I am using I bought at New Norcia and she knows the family of the woman who designed it – a lovely connection. The second part for today’s work was about healing in the Church and the sexual abuse crisis: Choosing Repentance – Seeking Healing.

The text we are working from, Motions and Amendments, can be seen on the website: [https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/](https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/) In our spiritual conversations we listen, pray and speak about what we hear in our prayers as a way of discerning what the Spirit wants for the Church in Australia. This is not easy and it takes a while to work together and it takes considerable concentration and energy. If it emerges that there is an amendment that the whole table wants then we have to email it through before the end of the session. Very pressured! Following a long lunch break (where I popped over to David Jones to buy a new raincoat and umbrella since mine blew inside out last night) we moved into the voting. There
are two kinds of votes, consultative and deliberative. The members who have a consultative vote, which is most of us, vote in the afternoon and then the bishops have overnight to pray about it and they have their deliberative vote in the morning. It is surprising how long this process takes as each amendment has to be voted on and then the completed motion. The results of our voting and that of the bishops in the morning will be available on the website at 1p.m. tomorrow.

The first section that we voted on was in regard to support for NATSICC and its recommendations as well as the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We had Aboriginal people speak to us before these votes and it too is about healing the past and ensuring that our future is different. The next section about the healing needed for those affected by the sexual abuse crisis I found very difficult. It was accompanied by a ritual of song and prayer of lament that was beautifully presented by young musicians and readers. It was heart rending but puts us all in a place where we want to do better. There were speakers from the floor who spoke of the effects of abuse and its ongoing disablement of people and relationships. The sense that I discerned from those around me is that the vast majority of us agree that God’s compassion and mercy shown in all we do is a necessary component of our future. This evening our daily Mass is to be celebrated by the Ukrainian bishop in his rite before he flies back home tomorrow. Our prayer is in solidarity with them all.

There is so much to pray about and so much to do! This Council will not solve every problem and will not be what everyone would like to see but my personal sense of it tells me that it will begin changes that can then develop into other things and in the long run it will make a very good difference to our Church in Australia. It already has energised many other groups to form and have their say and examine who we are now and who we want to be in the future. With the continual gifts of the Spirit we will make a difference.

Many blessings on you all and your support

Angela McCarthy

Plenary impressions Tuesday 5 July 2022

Sydney weather was kinder to us today with less rain and wind. Still very cold and wet though. One of the members on our table went through each of the weather reports for the various places where our members belong and the only place with remotely pleasant weather was Darwin with 24 degrees and sunny. Everywhere else, even Cairns, was cold and wet.

Our day began as usual in prayer and Anne Frawley Mangan and her team did an excellent job of leading us in sung and spoken prayer. The intention is to help us to focus prayerfully on the work of the day and it certainly had that effect with its creative dimension and excellent music.

The first session is about accepting the minutes (which you have to read between 10pm and 8am) with any corrections being submitted by 10pm. It is a little tedious is some ways but very necessary. Then we had the deliberative vote by the bishops which was done on hard copy and counted by hand. That took some time, and the expectation was that we would remain in prayerful silence. Mmmm. That didn’t quite work all the time! A couple of funny faux pas by the chairperson had us in a bit of a garrulous frame of mind. The results of that voting were published at 1pm this afternoon. It felt good to have some of the work passed and applause was heartfelt. We also have the Periti (experts) speak on various topics and...
today we heard from Fr Patrick McInerney SSC on Part Three and Sr Clare Condon SGS who spoke on Part Four. Both were excellent and helped to focus us. Morning tea encouraged lots more conversation and then we had to settle to hard work.

Serious hard work was involved today in our spiritual conversation as we worked on Part Three, *Called by Christ – Sent Forth as Missionary Disciples* and Part Four, *Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men*. It is sometimes hard to keep in mind that we are now in a distinct part of the process that does not require new material but the examination and preparation of the final materials that will then be formed into a document to go to Rome. Once we all get together at our table, now much more at ease with each other, there is the temptation to recreate the wheel but that is not our job. The spiritual conversation was easier today with each of us taking the time in silent prayer first, then spending 3 minutes speaking about what we heard the Holy Spirit saying in our prayer and how we feel. Some very different voices of the Spirit were heard and it took some time for us to reconcile our direction. The silence between each speaker and the silent prayer in preparation have required considerable effort on my part because my mind gets so excited it goes off on tangents!! What we have to focus on is whether we support the motions and the overall direction of whether the motions in question will support our direction of bringing our Church in Australia towards a more Christ-centred and missionary focus.

The spiritual conversation around Part Four was even more difficult as there were diametrically opposed views on the place of women in the Church. I found it a challenge to remain silent and only speak for the allotted three minutes particularly when some of the clerics were so different in their point of view to me. The sticking point was the ordination of women to the diaconate. On our table there are three women, two bishops, one layman and three priests so the women are struggling for a voice at times. We are not going to agree on some things so it was a matter of concentrating on the motions and what they will contribute to the mission of the Church. Very difficult!

After a very nice lunch, we went back in for the voting. During lunch the drafting committee worked feverishly on the further amendments that were submitted. We get 15 minutes to do that before lunch! A touch of pressure there!! There were extra motions then to vote on which is a general vote meaning yes or no and all members, including bishops vote on the amendments. The consultative vote is for the final materials and the bishops don’t vote on that until tomorrow. In between the votes people can offer personal interventions on the motion in hand and that has to be sent to the secretary by 10pm the night before. The Secretary, Fr David Ransom, then has to schedule them and finally sent them out before midnight. He will certainly need a rest after this week. I was surprised at some of the motions in Part Four that got rejected!! There is much to read and listen to constantly and while the voting is taking place we are meant to remain in prayerful silence – not always easy…

We concluded after 5pm and then went across to the cathedral for Mass and then back into the hall for an ecumenical dinner. The Greek Patriarch was there and he led us in prayer, and a leader within the Church of Christ spoke to us about Christian unity and he was excellent. It was a lovely dinner and Fr Patrick McInerney sat with us and he was fabulous to talk to about interfaith dialogue.

But now I’m ready for bed! This is strenuous but exciting and very challenging at the same time. The Spirit is working overtime and She’s very good!!

Many blessings

Angela McCarthy
Plenary impressions Wednesday 6 July

Early this morning I read many of the personal interventions, particularly in regard to the third form of the Rite of Reconciliation, as well as the minutes, in order to be prepared for the day. Not all of them will be read out to the assembly but they are all recorded as Acts of the Plenary and therefore remain part of the material and among them there is a great diversity of opinion. The motions about lay preaching are controversial and we will see what will happen there. However, nothing could have prepared me for the devastation of this morning’s deliberative vote!! The bishops rejected the entire section, Part 4 Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men. To say many were aghast is an understatement and Bishop Holohan with us at our table was, like many others, shaking his head and wondering what went wrong.

There are three ways to vote: placet (I agree), placet juxta modum (I agree with qualifications) and non placet (I don’t agree). There were 43 bishops voting and we needed 28 to agree but only 25 agreed and 10 voted to agree with qualifications and 8 dissented. A 2/3 majority vote of ‘placet’ is required. There was a definite uproar, and it was hard to know what to do next. We were asked to pray and speak with each other but that was near impossible for some of us. We adjourned for morning tea and there were many tears and hugs and all the bishops I spoke to it were as surprised and disturbed as many of the lay people. When we were meant to reassemble many of us, women and men, clergy, religious and lay, disrupted the Council by refusing to go to our seats and begin the next session. There were talks from the floor and the disruption continued for some time until the Vice President of the Council, Bishop Shane MacKinlay, gave us options for a way forward. Eventually we all went back to our tables as the steering committee had met at morning tea and come up with a change of schedule. The Holy Spirit was being called upon big time throughout and someone even said that the fruits of the Spirit are peace and tranquillity – but not yet! This major disruption was a way to move the Council into a totally different frame of mind and become more mature in our deliberations and discernment. Thank you, Holy Spirit.

Scripture each day important and the morning’s prayer, scripture and acknowledgment of country was so apt for what happened later, it was amazing. We sang “Holy Spirit come” as a response to much of the prayer and She did! She stirred us up and really made us look at everything differently. Our beautiful prayer and song was about creation and the gift of the spirit in country and how the Spirit moved to bring everything to creation. Through our heartbreak over the vote we had to move differently in this Council and work much harder. After we resettled, we were asked to pray silently for some time and then for everyone at the table to speak about what they thought had happened. Two of the men at our table were very reluctant but I reminded them that it was important that everyone was heard, whatever their point of view and so they spoke. It was difficult to say the least. At lunchtime there were two meetings. The bishops all met with the steering committee and there was a large gathering of other women and men in the library to find a way forward. The bishops decided not to use the ‘placet juxta modum’ even though it could not be removed. Another move forward was for the bishops to take another vote according to article 24.6 in the statues that gave an option for reforming a vote. A motion was moved, and they all voted again and there were 42 who agreed, and one disagreed. Now we have a way forward. We spent the afternoon putting together suggestions of changes to Part 4 and the miracle was that everyone on our table, despite our differences, fully cooperated and contributed. I offered to write it up and it had to be emailed through to the secretary, Fr David Ranson, by 7pm. I have completed that now and cooked myself some bacon and eggs to have with a glass of wine so now I’m feeling better.
Tomorrow will have a rescheduled format which we will know in the morning. We are also reminded of our fragility because three members went down with COVID-19 yesterday and Archbishop Tim is quite ill. He came in for the bishops’ meeting at lunchtime and spoke to the Council but needed to return to his hotel after that. He reminded us of our need for unity. Prayers needed for him and for the whole Council. By the end of the afternoon, we were all feeling a lot better but aware that the whole Council has now shifted to a different place and a different way of acting. The Holy Spirit has definitely been active in our midst. Not a day for the faint hearted though…

Peace to you all, please pray for the Council

Angela

Plenary impressions 7 July 2022

What a difference a day makes!! After the trauma of yesterday the Council seemed to completely reform today and there was much energy in the room and much goodwill. The Holy Spirit has completely re-energised and directed us in a different direction.

We began with prayer which seemed to be prophetic. The reading was from Matthew 7:25 Jesus taught the crowds, saying…”The rain fell, the foods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock.” This Council is founded on the rock that is Christ and it will not fail. The prayer this morning, as with all the prayers and liturgy, had been prepared weeks ago but they were completely relevant – as it always the case! One of the comments made yesterday when we had to process what had happened about the bishops’ vote on Part 4 about equality for women and men, was that the ‘placet juxta modum’ vote that defeated Part 4 was described as ‘manure’. We all know different names for that substance, but the effect is to make things grow and it is a rich image. This morning for our prayer when we arrived every table had on it what looked like manure!!! It was rich earth and for part of our prayer we were given seeds and asked to plant the seeds in the earth. It felt so strong as an image of what the Spirit was directing us to do. The use of creation images continued in word and song as well as the continued prayer of Francis of Assisi’s Canticle of Creation. The acknowledgement of country was given by three women from Broome as well as their colleague, Adain. They had brought with them a message stick that was carefully painted, and Erica explained all the imagery which was very beautiful and rich with meaning specifically for the Council.

Because of the disruption yesterday we had to change our whole mode of operating so that we get through the business as required. Bishop Shane and the steering committee and writing committee had worked hard overnight and the explanation of the way forward was clear. We will be spending less time in discernment but more time working as a whole group. No interventions will be given in person, but they are all recorded in the Acts of the Council. It is important to read them before the day begins and they are all available to us online. Instead of all amendments being written up and then examined we went through each document and by a show of red or green cards we showed which parts of the document needed to be amended and then the writing was done during morning tea and lunch. The writing committee have done an incredible job, as has the secretariat and the steering committee. The minutes come in by 9pm and then corrections are sent in and they are back online before midnight. Mostly I read them in the early morning as I can’t last until that late at night but copies are on the tables by 8.30. Because of yesterday’s trauma and the way in which people spoke from the floor, the minutes were not available in full until all those who
spoke had checked the content because someone was typing them up as they spoke and it is really important that what is recorded is accurate.

The contentious Part 4 of course is a concern and that was rewritten today and we were given hard copy just before we left the hall today. I have just read it and it is a greatly improved version. I feel quite moved by the way in which it has been recast. It uses the scriptural image of Mary the Mother of God as a model of discipleship which is important. What I wrote up from our table has been included. The various references and motions are much better expressed so I look forward to the bishops’ vote tomorrow.

When votes are being taken it can be quite limiting as it takes time. Might I say, it can also be quite boring!! However, we now have much to cover so while the votes are taking place and being counted we get on with the reading and discussion. The table I am at has become rejuvenated and our conversations are open and supportive. Some had reservations about the section *Integral Ecology and Conversion for the Sake of our Common Home* but our conversation was so supportive that it became much easier to work through. Holy Spirit has really worked in the room and in our hearts. I’m so deeply encouraged now.

We also worked through the section on governance and voted. Again, the conversations were strong, productive and worthwhile. The new method of dealing with amendments works very well and Bishop Shane and his steering committee are to be commended on their flexibility and the way in which they allowed the Spirit to lead us forward.

The rain stopped today so it was mild enough for us to go up onto the roof to eat lunch. What a relief to get fresh air. We had another 4 cases of COVID in the room so I’m wearing a mask most of the time as are many others. Archbishop Tim is quite ill and did not come today. Hopefully he will be well enough tomorrow to be able to come for a while.

Tomorrow, we begin with 7.45am Mass because the end of the day might get a bit pressured and then we have our closing dinner. The closing Mass is at 10.30am on Saturday. Suddenly it seems like the week has flown by and yet only yesterday it felt like an eternity of pain. How strong is the Spirit among us – whether we like it or not. I will be in a podcast at 5.30 with two other members and Michael Kenny. That will be aired on the Plenary Council website. At the beginning of each day, we see a 5 minute video of the previous day and the clip shows the power of the disruption and there I am in the front looking formidable! The one the previous day showed me yawning during the Mass in the cathedral. These are simply the ways in which we live and have our being in a Council!!

Our day concluded today with a further prayer and song from our Broome members. We once again were presented with the message stick and then they called on us all to lift our hands in blessing over each other while they sang a blessing song for us. Bishop Holohan standing next to me expressed it beautifully when he said that the experience brought him a strong feeling of peace. As I said, what a difference a day makes!!!

Blessings on you all and thanks for your prayers – I feel fully supported by them

Angela McCarthy

**Plenary impressions Friday 8 July 2022**

No-one could have imagined the direction of the Council and how we would have been directed today by the Spirit. Some of you will already have been onto the Plenary Council website to check the voting that was announced at 6.30pm AEST and discovered the good
news. Part 4 and Part 5 were passed and there was only one exception for the whole work of the Council. Part 4 was completely rewritten yesterday and the four writers, Bishop Paul Bird, Professor Renee Kohler-Ryan, Sr Melissa Dwyer and Fr Richard Lennan, are to be commended because of their fidelity to the desires of the national consultation plus the tradition and then the earnest desires of the members of the Council. They were able to reorder and rewrite with the help of submissions from each table and the document was resoundingly passed by both the members and the bishops. There were still a couple of bishop dissenters but that is where we are in the Church.

The morning began in brilliant chilly sunshine with Mass at 7.45, fully sung with Archbishop Fisher as presider, and then we moved into the hard work of the day. Because we had lost time on Wednesday the reordering of the agenda reduced our time for discussion, but we didn’t miss out on prayer time. The work was simply more efficient. We made more use of the red and green cards to see if there was a consensus in the room and where there wasn’t then more discernment was given time. By this time those white wooden chairs were no longer very comfortable! Lot’s of old bones in the room.

As I described to you yesterday there was fresh earth in the centre of the table into which we planted seeds. Miraculously they had sprouted some pansies and full bloom by this morning!! During the prayer we added water and the music and text fitted beautifully. We prayed the whole of St Francis’ Creation Canticle which fitted perfectly. The whole movement of prayer was wonderful and led us into the day and made so much sense in relation to what we were doing. Our thanks again to the prayer and liturgy team, particularly Anne Frawley-Mangan and Sophie Morley. The mood today was even jocular at times and during the voting there was a few laughs to keep us going. We worked through Part 4 Witnessing to the Equal Dignity of Women and Men and Part 6 Formation and Leadership for Mission and Ministry. We also had to vote on Part 5 Communion in Grace: Sacrament to the Word. When Part 4 was passed with only 1 bishop dissenting in regard to the introduction there was an audible breath out and then much applause. Of the other motions,
the most dissention was 5 votes from the bishops so that was wonderful. The mood in the room was energised and fully cooperative. At our table we were all conscious of the change that was so incredible considering where we were on Wednesday morning. I was having a conversation with one of our members in Bunbury who was online just to keep her in touch with the feeling. As you can see in the picture below, the big screen at the end had all the online people. There were more and more of them as the COVID-19 cases increased. They formed two ‘rooms’ for discussion and discernment and made wonderful contributions. Note the white chairs which we will never forget. Today was the sad news that Sr Marion has now got COVID-19. She has led us through much of the online gatherings and she was very instrumental in the facilitation team.

There were film crews (on the left) for the live streaming, plus up on the stage the observers which included the Apostolic Nuncio, Archbishop Balvo, Cardinal John Dew from New Zealand, Rev John Gilmore from the Council of Churches, Cardinal Charles Maung Bo from Myanmar plus the media. Really rather wonderful.

Part 5 Communion in Grace: Sacrament to the World was one of the lengthier sections and required some time. There were no personal interventions delivered because of the time imperative but in the new format one person from each table could speak. This is the only section that had one motion rejected and that was about canon 767 to ask Rome that lay preachers be allowed to preach in the Eucharistic assembly. The previous motion had asked for lay people to participate in the formal ministry of Preaching in the Latin Church and it was accepted. This particularly allows for all the lay people throughout Australia who preach in the absence of a priest. Another controversial section called for the Pope to consider where the third form of the Rite of Penance could be used in a more extensive way considering the particular needs in Australia. I heard from many people that this is deeply desired and from priests whose concern it is that they simply cannot get around all the places in regional areas that require the sacrament. It is also important for those who have been hurt by the
Church but earnestly desire healing but cannot come face to face with a priest. Much work to be done.

Part 6 Formation and Leadership for Mission and Ministry had been processed yesterday but we needed to vote on it. All motions were accepted as amended and will make a difference, when implemented, to the formation of all the faithful, clergy and lay people. There was excitement about how this can improve our missionary focus.

As you can imagine this was all very intense work, but the day got lighter in spirit as we progressed. The voting was close to unanimous on many of the motions which was encouraging. As I’ve said before, this will not fix everything, but it will give us impetus for change and focus our resources on positive directions. It will not solve every problem or answer every prayer.

As the day wore on and we wore out, there was increasing jocularity. The final motions were about the implementation of the Fifth Plenary Council, the abrogation of decrees of the previous Plenary Council and the closing of the Council. That was very funny in the end because there was one dissenting bishop in regard to the closing! There was also a persistent invalid vote from the consultative members and for the closing motion there it was again, the invalid vote. There was a hearty laugh to accompany that announcement.

My deep admiration is for the secretariat who have only just recently sent through the minutes of today. Bishop Shane MacKinlay has been a superb leader. He has an extraordinary mind! When someone makes a comment or a suggestion for inclusion, he is immediately able to say ‘but that is included back in section X in paragraph XX’. Very impressive. They all must be exhausted.

Most people got to go back to their hotel then until dinner began at 7pm but I was involved in a podcast until 6.30pm which is now on the website: https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/ Scroll down until you get to #Listen to the Spirit.

The dinner was wonderful but most of us finished up by 9pm and I headed back here to write to you all and prepare for the final session tomorrow morning and then the closing Mass in the cathedral. At the dinner we each were given a place mat prepared by children in Catholic schools around Australia and a beautiful glass cross made by students from Prendiville College in Perth. They will be special treasures for me. For the next couple of weeks, I will be processing what has happened and feeling immensely grateful and privileged to have been part of a wonderful Council that will make a difference to our Church in Australia. My companions at dinner were Fr Frank Brennan SJ, Bishop Eugene Hurley (Darwin), Bishop Ken Howell (Brisbane) and Archbishop Patrick O’Regan from Adelaide. We thoroughly enjoyed each other’s company. Eugene Hurley and my husband John were close friends a long time ago, so it was good to catch up. Bishop Ken and Archbishop Patrick have also been to liturgy conferences that I have attended so it was good to catch up with them too and have a laugh. Frank Brennan’s father, Sir Francis Gerard Brennan who was the 10th Chief Justice of Australia and who wrote the main judgement in the Mabo case, recently died so it was wonderful to hear all the details of the funeral. William Barton, a favourite classical musician of mine, played the didgeridoo and sang at the funeral.

Now it is time to call it a day and I am very grateful for all your prayers and support as this has made it possible. Thank you for your messages!

Blessings

Angela McCarthy

https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol53/iss1/1
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Plenary impressions 9 July 2022

This morning Sydney was bathed in glorious sunshine again. Quite symbolic when you consider the workings of the Council over this week. We’d been through a very dark storm and now the graced moments of the Spirit we are out the other side and full of desire to go forward and make a difference for our Church in Australia through the work we have done this week.

At the dinner last night, we each had a placemat in front of us prepared by a child from a Catholic school. Here is mine by Jack who is 8 years old.

Jack has drawn the devil storm with Jesus holding it back from the world. How prophetic is Jack. I will write to him and thank him. We felt that storm on Wednesday, but Jesus’ Spirit protected us from all harm. This morning the atmosphere in the room at 9am was clearly euphoric. We had survived the week, had formed some great motions that will now take us forward, had made new friends, good friends and worked together with old friends. Besides that, the introductory statements that will now be formed into decrees have profound theological bases from which we can work. Needless to say, we are tired!! Below is what our candle looked like this morning! After Wednesday it had to be propped up with a tealight candle in the middle because it was so diminished. I love the symbol of the candle because it diminishes itself in order to give light and warmth. That is what happened to each member. We have become diminished because we have given our best during this week. It has been a true expression of synodality.
Our prayer this morning was quite simple because we were limited in time since the closing Mass was to begin at 10.30am. I was however, deeply moved by the acknowledgement of country, once again from an Aboriginal member. His last name is Walker because his family walked a lot of the country. He talked about how when you went to a new country you started a smoking fire and it would be seen and someone would come to welcome you. They would then advise on which direction you should go to avoid any sacred areas or families doing ‘sorry time’ after someone had died. He said you always do this with care, and care for those passing through your country because if anything happened to them you would be blamed. He suggested that Catholics are good at blaming and I have seen quite a bit of that on FaceBook this week which is completely counterproductive and ill informed.

He also talked about when he was sat down by an elder who drew three circles in the sand and named the natural world, the human world and the sacred. This helped him understand the Trinity; our God is a relationship that all of Creation mirrors. The business of the day was to approve two sets of minutes, examine the decrees from the canonical committee and approve by the straw poll. So good to see a room full of green cards raised by hand!
Then we accepted the final statement, again by straw poll. Now the materials will be fully put together then presented to the ACBC at their November meeting. They will then be sent to Rome for recognitio (review). Once they have been approved, they will return to Australia and there will be a six-month waiting period until we can begin implementation. Let’s spend the year in prayer for the implementation and do what we can in the meantime!

There were observers there for the week and it was wonderful to hear them speak this morning. Our new Nuncio, Archbishop Charles Balvo, talked about how he is Peter in our midst and bore a message from Pope Francis. That connection with the Universal Church is strong. He also reminded us of the Emmaus story in Luke’s gospel and how now we have to announce all of this to the world as the world is watching. He said he was also impressed with what we have achieved and wondered whether it would be possible in his own country.

New Zealand Cardinal John Dew spoke with great admiration of what we have achieved and the example that we have set. The Rev John Gilmore, President of the National Council of Churches also wondered whether his church, the Church of Christ, would be able to achieve a Plenary Council. He was impressed with how the differences of each table were expressed in cooperation (after Wednesday!) and how every member was invested in this Council.

Cardinal Charles Maung Bo from Myanmar also spoke with admiration and presented three magnificent tapestries from his people to be gifted to the main organisations that propelled the Plenary Council into action.

After Archbishop Timothy spoke briefly to close the assembly there was a standing ovation of quite some duration for him and for the end of the 5th Plenary Council of Australia! It felt very, very good. We then went over to the cathedral to celebrate Mass. It was a powerful moment. The music was excellent, of cathedral worth! Again, it felt good. We responded with one voice.

From the final statement of the 5th Plenary Council, we read: ‘We have seen God at work in these days, comforting and disrupting in order to lead his people into a future of God’s making. This has been a time of grace, and for that we give humble thanks. “May God who has begun the good work in us bring it to fulfilment” (Phil 1:6)’.

Once again, thank you all for your prayers that have held us over the past week. The four-year journey has come to a definitive point, but there is now much work to be done in the implementation so let’s get to work.

Many blessings on you all and with gratitude for all your prayers of support.

Angela McCarthy
Fifth Plenary Council of Australia - Report

By Angela McCarthy

A similar report was published in the Australian Journal of Liturgy, 18,2.

The Journey

The Fifth Plenary Council of the Catholic Church of Australia was celebrated in Sydney in the first week of July 2022. This is the highest level of decision-making at a national level in the Catholic Church, and the resultant decrees, once given recognitio by the Holy See in Rome, become binding on the Catholic Church in Australia.

The journey took over four years, and over 222,000 people joined in the consultation and over 17,457 submissions were made.83 The first stage was the Listening and Dialogue consultation with parishes and groups all over Australia. The process included prayer, deep listening to scripture, and listening to each other in small groups. From the materials submitted, qualitative research discerned six themes relating to the question ‘What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?’ These were:

- Missionary and evangelising
- Inclusive, participatory and synodal
- Prayerful and eucharistic
- Humble, healing and merciful
- A joyful, hope-filled and servant community
- Open to conversion, renewal and reform.

Writing and discernment groups for each theme were established and then a second round of gatherings around Australia used these themes for further Listening and Discernment sessions. Once again, the focus was on prayer, scripture and deep listening to each other, and submissions from groups were once again submitted online. The fruits of this discernment process shaped the agenda of the first session of the Plenary Council, which was held online in October 2021. The agenda was unusual in shape in that it was built around six themes that had emerged from further work and writing:

- Conversion
- Prayer
- Formation
- Structures
- Governance
- Institutions

These themes had a total of sixteen questions attached to them, and these were the focus for the first assembly. The first assembly engaged with these questions through prayer, scripture and deep listening as a full assembly, then in groups of thirty, then groups of ten. Although the online environment was exhausting and not ideal, the first assembly produced much valuable material that was published as the raw fruits of discernment showing the diversity of points of view among the members.

From this material, the Drafting Committee and writing groups produced draft propositions for further discernment which were sent to the 277 members of the Council in February 2022. Further reflections on the results were returned by Council members, and by June the final propositions for the second assembly were sent to all members. The Framework of Motions was distributed to all members prior to the commencement of the second General Assembly of the Plenary Council from 4 to 9 July in Sydney. The finalisation of the Acts of the second General Assembly was completed in August 2022 and the decrees published on the website: plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au

In November the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference [ACBC] will meet and the ten decrees will be sent to Rome for recognitio. Once returned, they will be promulgated in Australasian Catholic Record and the website of the ACBC will oblige six months later.

**Decree on Liturgy**

The document dealing with liturgical matters is called *Communion in Grace: Sacrament to the World*. Each decree begins with an introduction which enunciates the background and wealth of discernment that emerged through the journey. There are thirteen paragraphs in the liturgy decree, and they focus on areas such as the sacramental nature of the Church, with the hope that the charisms of religious orders and ecclesial movements might flourish as a national network to enrich and nourish the Church.

The decree acknowledged the diversity of vocations within the Church and the need for all of them to be fostered. There has been a broadening of criteria for the ministries of lector, acolyte and catechist, which are to be encouraged for lay men and women. There was also a call for the renewal of preaching. This is underpinned by the need for formation, and one decree is devoted to formation in leadership and ministry which is crucial to our growth as a Church. The decree affirms the role of priests as those who gather the community, proclaim the gospel and preside at

85 The Plenary Council documents use the capitalised word Church whenever it refers to the People of God. This makes a good distinction from the word used to describe a building used for sacred purposes. While this is different from LTP guidelines it is in line with Vatican II and the emphasis on the Church as the People of God.
liturgy. As the number of priests diminishes formation and support will need further development.

The document also acknowledges the diversity of the Church through the presence of the Eastern Churches in Australia that are in communion with Rome. Using St John Paul II’s image of breathing with both lungs, the differences between the Eastern Churches and Western Catholic Church are to be valued and included. The Plenary Council affirmed the Second Vatican Council’s declaration of the preeminent role of liturgy as it is the ‘summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; as the same time, it is the font from which all her power flows’.

This affirmation is important as the role of the Plenary Council repeatedly affirmed its union with Vatican II and the importance of focusing once again on the development called for by that ecumenical council. The Plenary Council acknowledged the need for renewal in catechesis, formation and devotion to the eucharist. To support this, the ACBC has requested an International Eucharistic Congress to take place in 2028.

*Communion in Grace* emphasised reception of the sacraments key moments in the lives of Catholics. The document also acknowledged the challenge of families seeing the experience of the sacraments as cultural milestones rather than moments of ongoing faith formation. These celebrations are not just a kind of certification but moments of continuing growth through the sacraments. The Church needs to better engage with families so that the sacraments lead those who celebrate them into deeper personal relationship with Christ. The document again encourages formation for family-centred parish-based experiences in faith as a pathway toward this goal. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) was also highlighted as a way in which parish communities can grow and strengthen themselves, but with the understanding that the fostering of discipleship is crucial and difficulties may call for sharing of resources between parishes.

Recognising the importance of the Liturgy of the Word in the eucharistic celebration, and the promotion of a living love for scripture, there must be support for promoting excellent faithful preaching. Throughout the process there was concern voiced about the state of preaching in the Church in Australia. The Council also emphasised the importance of language in liturgical celebration, with the need for translations to be faithful to the original text but also accessible and able to communicate clearly to all assemblies of the faithful.

There was a call throughout the process for formation in the sacrament of reconciliation, including a call for the third form of the Rite of Penance to be used, in which ‘general’ (rather than individual) absolution is given to all present. Use of this form addresses in some way the decreasing numbers of priests and addresses difficulties expressed by those who have been hurt by the Church and so choose not to celebrate reconciliation individually. The final paragraph of the introduction deals with the sacrament of marriage and the urgent and clear need for a renewed

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catechesis on marriage and support for an ongoing ‘catechumenate for life’ to support married persons and their families.

Following this introductory material there is a section that begins with ‘THEREFORE’. This section affirms the principal points: firstly, to promote full, conscious and active participation as required by Vatican II; secondly, to commit the Catholic Church in Australia to breathe with both lungs and to respect, foster and promote the rich heritage of both Eastern and Western traditions; and thirdly to request the Bishops Commission for the Liturgy prepare a new English translation of the Roman Missal.

The decree that concludes the document contains four articles:
Article 1: That dioceses promote exercise of and formation for the ministries of lector, acolyte and catechist.
Article 2: That in the light of the change in circumstances over the past twenty years, the ACBC review the provisions and guidelines it issued in May 2003 for lay people to participate in a formal ministry of preaching in the Latin Church, as provided for in canon 766 of the Code of Canon Law.
Article 3: That the Bishops’ Commission for Liturgy institute a sustained program of catechesis of the Sacrament of Penance to promote an understanding of the conditions for, and appropriate practice of, each of the three forms of the Rite of Penance.
Article 4: That the Plenary Council request that the Holy Father consider whether the third form of the Rite of Penance might have a wider use on occasions when it is particularly appropriate, granted an understanding among the faithful of its distinctive nature and requirements.

Conclusion

The Catholic Church in Australia is not seeking radical change to the liturgy but really an affirmation of the teachings of Vatican II and the increase of formation and development as an ongoing practice. Some things can only be changed with the full agreement of the universal Church, and they might be included in the Churchwide Synod of Bishops in 2023. The life of the Church, however, needs the life of the Spirit, and to promote a more Christ-centred and missionary focussed community will no doubt enhance the life and faith of the Church. Many other aspects of life in the Church were developed in the other decrees but this report has only centred on the decree on liturgy.

Being a member of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia was a profound experience of synodality and the pinnacle of my life in the Catholic Church. It was a privilege and an outstanding faith experience to work towards the culmination of over four years of listening and discernment and to walk together with so many faith-filled people, all embracing the challenge together in a non-hierarchical manner. The Holy Spirit was tangibly evident in many of our challenges and in the conclusion when the Council was closed as well as in the excellent prayer and liturgical environment.

Dr Angela McCarthy, Perth
Member of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia
Book Review: Liturgical Lockdown: Covid and the Absence of the Laity, a New Zealand Perspective

Reviewed by Angela McCarthy


(A previous version of this book review was published in the Australian Journal of Liturgy (18,1) 2022.

In this 60th year anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, it is very refreshing to read something that is completely in tune with Sacrosanctum Concilium (SC) and that offers new thoughts and questions about what the future could or should hold. Grayland’s book gives a very sound understanding of the current liturgical life of the Church in his context of New Zealand and poses profound questions about the future of the priesthood and the laity as we understand it now.

Grayland’s exploration of “liturgical lockdown”, a new term arising among others from the pandemic experience of 2020-2021, is within the context of a combined parish that has two metropolitan parishes and one rural parish in Aotearoa, New Zealand. As with Australia, island nations could more easily isolate and hence the impact of the pandemic was lessened. As the author outlines in his introduction, the patterns of worship and interaction were brought to an abrupt halt and the response of the People of God is well worth assessing. There was a wide variety of responses among worshipping communities and so it is valuable that Grayland chose to examine the community in which he works, prays and celebrates liturgy as well as providing wider responses through surveys of laity and clergy.

The framework of disruption and innovation is used to hold aspects of the narrative in place and is taken from Clayton Christensen’s term from his 1997 book The Innovator’s Dilemma (pg. 5). Grayland uses this framework in Part One to describe how COVID-19 impacted the laity, the priesthood and the church. He acknowledges that the main force of disruption has not come from the responses which include the virtual Mass but has been the ‘limiting of physical gatherings and social distancing because these are seen as high-risk activities’ (pg. 15). Through the loss of physical sacramental mediation, the pastoral, sacramental and liturgical lives of the People of God have been changed. The loss of the Sunday Mass showed that the essential means of communicating with parish members was through that particular gathering and without it there was an exhausting pastoral activism and a fear of losing everyone (pg. 21). The disruption of the pandemic showed that the parish’s top-down enfeebled decision making was not working and hence the need to change to a more relevant and productive pattern that could meet the parish demands. The aged demographic of the parish was also recognised as the social outreach group which was very engaged pre-pandemic was unable to work because only four of the twenty members were under 70 years of age (pg. 26). A deep concern emerged around the ‘falsehood that those watching an online Mass were actually participating in it was...
never challenged’ (pg. 29). For further exploration Grayland used two surveys, one being parish based and one sent out nationally.

To explore the disrupted and innovated priesthood, Grayland also used a survey as well as ‘professional conversations, one focus group, and a large variety of internationally published material on the clergy response to the pandemic’ (pg. 43). Through the responses of the clergy Grayland discovered a ‘disconnect between a theology of the liturgy and a theological praxis in the liturgy but also a disconnect between the roles of presider and laity as presences of Christ in the liturgical act’ (pg. 51). Functionalism proved to be one of the major motivators of the liturgical response by the clergy and Grayland offers some disquieting reflections and questions.

In Part Two Grayland presents a theology of liturgy based on the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium, SC). This is very refreshing as there are increasing amounts of liturgical writing, particularly online, that make no reference to this foundational document. The summary of the theology of liturgy is only short (pp 76-85) but is profoundly rich and completely accessible. It is followed by a theology of praxis which again is well formulated and profoundly anchored in Vatican II teachings. ‘The worship of the Church is humankind’s response to the presence and action of God in the world, saving us in Christ’ (pg. 94). In the next section discussing the priesthood’s operative theology during the lockdowns, Grayland refers to the ‘Decree in Time of Covid-19’ which was published by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (pg. 97). This document, Grayland maintains, implies that the ‘Mass is said for the people, but not with the people’ (pg. 97) with an underlying assumption that the laity are not necessary for the celebration of liturgy. This is followed by a discussion around the profound understanding that the liturgy is the work of Christ, the Priest who has died, risen and ascended and that the liturgy of the Church calls this to mind through anamnesis, the actual remembering that draws us all to the Father through the sacrifice of the Son in the power of the Spirit.

In Part Three Grayland examines virtual presence. The arguments continue around the difference between virtual presence and real presence and what it exposes is the lack of understanding about the act of anamnesis and the nature of presence. Christ is truly present in the person of the priest, the consecrated bread and wine, the Word, and in the people as they pray and sing (SC, 7). There is a unity between the ‘originating event and every subsequent remembrance of that event’ (pg. 117). This discussion must be ongoing to clearly help our Church to truly understand and express in our liturgy how we understand the salvific action of God.

In Part Four Grayland looks at the impact of technology on our understanding of presence. The pandemic has changed us and changed our patterns. We only have to look at the impact on the CBDs of many cities with the exodus of workers and the catastrophic effect it has had on industries such as hospitality. We can be present in a technological sense, but can we be present in a liturgical sense? Grayland stresses that it is not technology that is at fault as it has many benefits, but the ‘operative, transactional theology’ (pg. 135) that drove the use of such technology to
help us view the Mass rather than being present through sign and symbol in a tangible sense where we have a proximate physical relationship. The issue of spiritual communion emerges throughout the book as an unrealistic participation that has been acknowledged and promoted which has increased a lack of true understanding of liturgical reality.

Part Five concentrates on the mediated sacramental system and what alternatives are present when the priest, not considered an essential worker, cannot enter aged care homes, or hospitals, or churches, and is therefore unable to offer the sacraments in time of need. He particularly refers to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Anointing of the Sick. He concludes with comments on Home-Eucharists.

In Part Six Grayland offers some models of liturgy with excellent discussion and development of those models. If the model followed does not function as a participative experience of salvation, then it cannot express who we are in the redemptive action of Christ. This is followed by seven considerations for both questioning and reflection and a concluding chapter that is not a conclusion! The experience of this pandemic is not over yet, and we are still in the throes of trying to understand what we need to do and how best to do it. The questions around sacramental mediation by an ordained clergy are very challenging and need to be considered by all of us. This book is invaluable in the way the complex issues are presented and the solid background of Vatican II is used to support solutions and theological realities.
Book Review
The Synodal Pathway: When Rhetoric Meets Reality
Reviewed by Angela McCarthy


While the Catholic Church has used synods for a very long time, the way in which Pope Francis has focussed on this particular process to renew the vision of Vatican II and to move the Church towards a more missionary stance, has given great hope to some and fearfulness to others so until the journey to the October 2023 Synod in Rome has been completed the understanding of the process and the possible results will not be fully understood.

Section 1. Chapters 1-7, lays the foundations for synodality. In Chapter 1 Conway recounts the history and meaning of Synod and synodality. While in the past Roman Synods have often been ‘carefully contrived’ (23), Pope Francis has found a way of removing them from the hierarchical clutches of those who wish to hold power. Pope Francis also differs in that he does not see a Eurocentric Church as being most important but the global Church where all peoples are represented and he ‘is convinced that this style of governance is essential to the Church and is precisely that to which God is calling it in the twenty-first century’ (25).

Chapter 2, by Austen Ivereigh, biographer of Pope Francis, presents the Pope’s clear vision of what it means to be a synodal Church. Deeply formed by the synodal processes in Latin America, what Francis seeks is a global synodal process that will lead to reform with each Church making it their own. Chapter 3 (Rafael Luciani and Serena Noceti) emphasises again the process as being the key development. Understanding ‘the People of God as the basic active and communal subject of the whole Church and thus giving priority to evangelization … rather than to sacramentalization, which is reserved to the ministers’ (53), which emphasises that the baptism into the priesthood of Christ is superior to the power of those who baptize. L and N also reaffirm the aspects of Lumen Gentium that Pope Francis reiterates when the entire body of the faithful are one, they cannot err is maters of belief (56). Pope Francis sees that happening in the process of synodality and it needs much more unpacking.

Chapter 4 (Nathalie Becquart smcj) looks specifically at clericalism and the call to shared ministry within the Church. The abuse crisis in the Church is definitively connected to clericalism and as Pope Francis affirmed, it has to be addressed by the whole People of God where power is shared by all the faithful in the service of all (63). B reminds us that ‘relationships of respect and mutuality between men and women, between people and our plant go hand in hand’ (77). In Chapter 5, Jos Moons SJ adds more definition to the process of discernment and the roll of the Holy Spirit. The process is one of discernment and that cannot be done alone as it needs the ‘purification brought about by sharing questions, suggestions, exploration’ (88).
This is further developed by Jessie Rogers in Chapter 6 in reference to the early Church.

In Chapter 7 Gerry O’Hanlon SJ more thoroughly unlocks the concept from LG of sensus fidei. O’H states that because ‘the sense of faith can also be accompanied by elements of erroneous human opinion, there is often need for considerable time, patience and respect until a conclusive discernment is arrived at, with the faithful at large, bishops and theologians all having their respective roles to play’ (103). This is critical to the process of discernment in synodality.

Section 2 dwells on the practice of synodality. Three of the chapters reflect on the experience of the Irish, German and Australian Church in walking the synodal pathway.

Chapter 10 (141-152) written by Archbishop Timothy Costelloe SDB, President of the Council, summarises the process of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia. C describes the origins of the initial decision taken by the Bishops of Australia and the reasons for it. It was delayed because of the Royal Commission into child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church and then the Plenary Council responded directly to this crisis, among other pressing issues within the Church in Australia. The initial question, which took three days to discern, was ‘what do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?’ (144). This was echoed later in the Irish Catholic Church’s announcement in 2021 of a Synodal Pathway: ‘What does God want from the Church in Ireland at this time?’ (11). COVID-19 delayed the Council and meant that the first of the two assemblies was held online. In the second assembly in July 2022, there was a serious disruption in the middle of the week about the role of women and men in the Church and the resolution, driven by the Holy Spirit, changed the course of the Council and was fruitful. I was a member of the Plenary Council, and it was a true experience of synodality in every aspect and the pinnacle of my experience of Church. It will not solve all the problems, but it opened us to active discernment as People of God with the support and presence of the Holy Spirit.

The final two chapters by Nuala O’Loan and Patrick Treacy deal with the practical and legal matters that arise. Levels of accountability and transparency have to be addressed for the Church to regain credibility.

This is an important book and of benefit to the Church and the wider global community as we move towards the Synod in October 2023. It must resound with the ‘inviolable dignity of peoples and of the function of authority as service’ (49).
Book Review: The Eyes and Ears of Conscience: Lessons of Encouragement
Reviewed by Peter Black


Countless books have been written on conscience down through the centuries because conscience is at the heart of the moral life and the starting point for Catholic moral theology. So why another publication on conscience? Theology constantly develops for many reasons, including a shift of emphasis, change in the cultural and social environment, new theological insights, or new leadership within the Church. Fr. Tom Ryan SM has tapped into all these developments in his latest publication approaching the topic of conscience with a method, a structure and a stress which prove to be both refreshing an informative.

Allow me to illustrate this firstly with some broad strokes before going into more detail of each of the chapters of the book. Traditionally conscience has been explained with a heavy stress on the philosophical concepts that undergird the concept and experience of the human conscience. The author while not neglecting this approach takes seriously the call of the Second Vatican Council to make the sacred Scripture the soul of moral theology. Beginning with the first chapter of the book, “Conscience as Attention and Recognition” the author explores three biblical stories, namely, the creation account in Genesis, the widow in the temple (Mk12:42-44) and the uninvited woman at the dinner hosted by Simon for Jesus (Lk 7:36-50).

Before delving into these scriptural texts the author helps the reader to appreciate the modern tools employed to interpret the sacred texts in a way this is easily understood. The texts selected illustrate what we might call the bright side of conscience, the ability of conscience to recognize and to act for the good. This use of biblical stories and images continues throughout the book, such as the image of the tree and the fruit it produces, the story of Zacchaeus and the Prodigal Son. These powerful images and stories in the early chapters of the work give us an insight into the nature and workings of the human conscience which will be developed in more detail in the second part of the book. For example, the stories of Zacchaeus and the Prodigal Son remind us that our perception of what is truly good and our choice of the good can be in slow increments sometimes. We need to patient with ourselves and others as we grow in the moral life.

The second broad stroke I will make is in reference to chapter nine in Part Two of the publication, the chapter is entitled “Conscience and the Courtesy of God.” Here Fr. Tom Ryan does us a great service as he explains how the Church is always at the service of conscience. Pope Francis stands within the evolving history of fully understanding the development of the human conscience. His exhortation The Joy of Love is a long and complex document dealing with the joys and challenges of the married life. He is not afraid to address those couples whose relationships “show
signs of a wounded and troubled life.” There is an acknowledgement that people often grow morally in the midst of many limitations, that their consciences often take small steps in the recognition and the doing of the good. These small steps are pleasing to God because they are trying to give the most generous response they can to God in a difficult situation. Fr. Tom Ryan skilfully demonstrates that Pope Francis comes from a Catholic moral tradition of patience and mercy. This moral approach is exemplified in St. Alphonsus Liguori, Doctor of the Church and Patron of Moral Theology and in Fr. Jean-Claude Colin founder of the Society of Mary. The conclusion made is that God will gradually bring people of good will, despite their limitations, to what is true and good and that the Church should be encouraging in its patient approach in the service of conscience.

So much for some broad strokes. No doubt the reader would like some more detailed information concerning the structure and content of the book. The book consists of Two Parts entitled “Served by the Past” and “Served by the Present.” Each part has five chapters.

Part One considers conscience as attention and recognition, conscience and the conflict with sin, failure and hope, the centrality of hospitality and mercy in the developed conscience, Jesus at the heart of the human conscience and finally the journey the conscience takes to forgiveness.

Part Two continues to dwell on conscience and how it is directed to the service of God and others but this time through the witness of some very powerful non-biblical stories. These stories make the point that we are fundamentally drawn to the beauty we see in heroic lives. The good and the beautiful in these characters speak to our conscience, moral beauty has a capacity to arouse moral emotion in us so that we want to follow their example. The chapters of Part Two include the themes of conscience and self-transcendence, the Spirit at work, conscience and redeeming grace, partners and friends with God and as already previously mentioned conscience and the courtesy of God. Of course, a book review of this size and nature cannot take up each chapter in detail. However, I would like to take up one theme in one of these chapters to illustrate how the development of the human conscience can be deeply influenced by the society within which it lives.

In chapter eight, “Thinking About Sin” the author considers institutional injustices and cultures where attitudes have been deformed or distorted, values lost or obscured. The specific issue taken up is racism. The question is asked: how can a conscience develop when the social context, the culture, over an extended period of time, has produced an insensitivity and callousness toward those of darker skin? The author draws on the context and experience of the North American theologian, Bryan Massingale, to explore how a conscience needs to free itself sometimes from a blindness that can be culturally induced.

Throughout the book Fr. Tom Ryan is careful to be faithful to the truth that our God given conscience, which calls us to what is good, reflects the image of God in which we are made. Such a conscience involves all the dimensions of being human, namely, thinking, feeling, desiring, imagining, intuiting, remembering, judging and finally choosing and acting. In other words, the author’s treatment of conscience is
comprehensive, not restrictive. His broad knowledge of literature in general and theological literature in particular, allows him to present a consideration of conscience that speaks to the contemporary Christian. The book is not written only for professionals but “importantly, for the general reader and those who want to nourish their faith.” Even the structure of each chapter makes it accessible to all and suitable for group discussions. At the end of each chapter there is a summary of the key points made and after each summary there is a list of questions. I highly recommend this new publication and only regret that I cannot give a detailed account of each chapter. For example, the treatment of the erroneous conscience, which includes a consideration of where such a conscience stands in terms of responsibility is concise and easy to comprehend. Of course, a book review is supposed to give the reader a taste rather than a full meal and indicate if the meal is worth consuming. This book on conscience offers a rich and satisfying repast with all the essential vitamins and minerals. The gift of conscience involves an interplay between light and dark and at times a struggle between grace and sin but it is always at the centre of being a person made in the image of God called to be responsible.
The Advent Wreath
Adapted by Vincent Glynn

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, when he comes again at a time we do not know.

For each Sunday of Advent we take our focus for the Advent 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 will come in glory to judge the living and the dead.

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

First Sunday of Advent (Year A)
Presider:

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

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.

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, your coming was proclaimed by the prophets of old. The Prophet Isaiah called the Chosen People and today calls all people ‘to walk in the light of the Lord.’ (First Reading)

R. Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, we believe you come among us now. St Paul urges us to be people of the light and to let our armour be the Lord Jesus Christ. (Second Reading)

R. Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, you will come again in glory. You ask us to ‘stand ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour we do not expect.’ (Gospel)

R. Come, Lord Jesus.

Presider [Collect: First Sunday of Advent]

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 your 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, One God for ever and ever.

R. Amen
Second Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Presider:

The Presider or an assistant lights the second candle, which can be named the John the Baptist Candle. John the Baptist was the one who prepared the way for the Lord.

V. Lord Jesus, your coming was proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah who calls us to be a signal to the nations and to recognise the Messiah in our midst. (First Reading)

R. Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, you come among us now. St Paul reminds us to treat each other as Christ treats us and so give glory to the God and Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ. (Second Reading)

R. Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, you will come again in glory. John the Baptist calls us to ‘repent for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.’ (Gospel)

R. Come, Lord Jesus.

Presider [Collect: Second Sunday of Advent]

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, one God, for ever and ever.

R. Amen

Third Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Presider:

The Presider or an assistant lights the third candle, which can be named the Saints’ Candle to call to mind all the saints who share the life of Christ by being baptised into his Body the Church.

V. Lord Jesus, your coming was foretold by the prophet Isaiah who proclaims ‘Look, your God is coming, he is coming to save you.’ (First Reading)

R. Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, you come among us now as the light of the world. St James urges us to be patient and not to lose heart, the Lord’s coming will be soon. (Second Reading)

R. Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, you will come again in glory and raise the dead to new life. (Gospel)

R. Come, Lord Jesus.

Presider [Collect: Third Sunday of Advent]

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,
One God, for ever and ever

R. Amen

Fourth Sunday of Advent (Year A)

Presider:
The Presider or an assistant lights the fourth candle, which is often named the Angel Gabriel Candle for those messengers who bring God’s Word into our world.

V. Lord Jesus, your coming was foretold by the prophet Isaiah when he proclaimed ‘The maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son whom she will call Immanuel, a name which means God is with us.’ (First Reading)

R. Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, you come among us now in your Word and Sacrament to give us the strength to live according to the Good News you revealed. (Second Reading)

R. Come, Lord Jesus.

V. Lord Jesus, you will come in glory in the fullness of time because you are the Christ the one who has saved his people from their sins. (Gospel)

R. Come, Lord Jesus.

Presider [Collect: Fourth Sunday of Advent]

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,
One God, for ever and ever

R. Amen
Introduction

Today we celebrate the beginning of the Church’s year. Advent is a time of waiting. Over the next four Sundays the readings will take us through prophecies, promises, annunciations and fulfilment. Today we prepare our hearts and minds in anticipation of Christ’s coming. We are called to reflect upon our own lives: to watch and pray.

Penitential Act

The Advent Wreath Responsory (see ‘Advent Wreath Year A) often replaces the Penitential Act and therefore leads into the Collect.

Or use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came that we might have life. Lord have mercy.

You raised the son of the widow of Nain. Christ have mercy.

You promise us eternal life with the Father. Lord have mercy.

Collect

The oration

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 and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

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).

**Acknowledgement**

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

**First Reading**

*Isaiah 2:1-5*

Israel anticipates the reign of God’s Kingdom, when the seeds of God’s compassion and mercy will flourish, and peace will reign.

**Responsorial Psalm**

*Psalm 121: 1-2, 4-5, 6-9. R. cf. v. 1*

*Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord*

The psalmist rejoices in a hymn of praise, thanksgiving, and peace. Our feet stand on sacred ground in the gates of God’s house.

**Second Reading**

*Romans 13:11-14*

St Paul reminds us to put on the armour of Christ as we anticipate his coming. We are to step forward into the light and to live in its brightness.
Gospel Reading

Matthew 24:37-44

Life is fleeting. The Matthean Jesus warns us to be vigilant and expect the unexpected. We cannot know the day nor the hour. We must stay awake.

Reflection

Almost three years ago, on the 12th of December 2019, a new viral outbreak was detected in the City of Wuhan, China. Covid-19 spread throughout our world and has arguably changed the lives of the global population forever. While the initial outbreaks in China, Italy, Brazil, the US and the UK (among many others) were certainly devastating, cases remained of people who were exposed to the virus yet did not contract it. Others were exposed, became ill and recovered. Many have had long lasting effects, and millions have also died.

The fact that family members from the same household have had such a wide range of outcomes from potentially the same exposure, reminds us of the precarity of life, and the lack of control we have over our own health and ultimately, our death.

Then two will be in the field, one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together, one will be taken and one will be left (vv. 40-41)

Humans have certainly found ways of prolonging life. We can reduce pain, retain youth, and ensure the comfort of ourselves, our parents, and our children. We can also resuscitate our loved ones after they have died, and delay death using medications and machines. Ultimately, however, our lives are fragile, and we never truly ‘know the day’ when death will call us from this world (v.42). Yet, our ability to prolong life for some is at the expense of denying life to others. When almost half of the world’s wealth and resources are owned and utilised by a mere 1% of the population, it doesn’t take us long to work out the probability of which woman will be taken from grinding meal, and which man will be left to work in the field.

Jesus asks us to ‘stay awake,’ to remain vigilant, to keep watch (v.42). His command imparts a sense of trepidation, a nervous energy that often reflects our fear of death, for death is the great unknown. Matthew situates this particular story as part of the dramatic set of teachings in and around the Temple, after Jesus has triumphantly entered Jerusalem. He has cleansed God’s ‘house of prayer’ which had been turned into ‘a den of robbers’ (Matt. 21:13), chastised the Scribes and the Pharisees (23:13-36), and even cursed a fig tree (21:18-19). Far from proclaiming a comfortable life of discipleship, Jesus has warned his followers (and his adversaries) of impending doom through the parables of the wicked tenants (21:33-44) and the wedding banquet (22:1-14), and prophesied the wars, famines and earthquakes to come (24:7). Finally, in this Gospel, for the first Sunday of Advent, Jesus heralds his ultimate plea to the disciples, uttered days later in the garden of Gethsemane: stay awake, ‘Watch and pray’ (26:41).
While today’s Hebrew scripture and the psalm proclaim such praise and rejoicing as we might associate with birth and the coming of Christ, the language of the Gospel is dramatically negative. Or is it? There is something mysterious about this inversion, this warning to ‘watch out’ as we head towards the Nativity. Death, destruction, pain, suffering, change and the unknown. All these possibilities haunt us as we go about our lives, but surely as we head towards Christmas, and the celebration of the birth of the Saviour, we might be excused from reminders of the flood. Why reflect on the end when it is all just beginning?

As we wait for the ‘master’ (v.42), or ‘the Lord’ as most translations inscribe, who are we expecting? Jesus, risen? God? The Holy Spirit? The Son of Man coming on the clouds? Might we expect an infant, I wonder?

Who is the Lord if not every infant born into poverty, every starving child, every broken woman, every displaced person. Jesus ‘comes again’ in every cry for help on a rickety boat, in every silent scream of a mother losing her child. To be watchful and ready is to be aware of the suffering and death in all the world and to work towards alleviating it, remembering that each suffering person is Jesus, Lord, Master, come again.

St Paul encourages the Romans to put on the armour of Christ – to live in the light and be as people of God. What is the armour of Christ? Love, of course. Yet, love is not a defensive armour, such as a shield of iron or steel. Love does not shelter us from the world, rather it breaks us down, removes our protective coatings, makes us vulnerable. Anyone who has been in love, or loves deeply, or has known love, understands that love pierces our hearts, causes us to feel, to know, and to be, authentic and real.

We watch and wait, not from a place of safety, not in the sure knowledge that we have the answers, that we can expect our rightful place in heaven, but with the unsurety of brokenness, of people who truly know what love is. Love is the crucified Christ. Christ, betrayed, abandoned, forgotten, hanging, nailed to a tree. As a babe opens her arms in vulnerability from the cradle, Jesus opens his arms on the cross. His love is vulnerable. His love is broken. His love can only be real for he has given his all, his entire being, in bestowing love upon us.

So yes, we must wait and watch and stay awake. But not for one event, one salvation, one personal coming of God. Rather, the small everyday comings of Christ, the moments of pain and suffering and death that fill our world and shake our senses. Awake to these moments, we are broken in love, and in turn can open our own arms on the cross.

We do not know the hour we will be called as we head towards home, to the eternal resting place, the protective walls of Jerusalem, and God’s final embrace. Let us pray that when it comes, we are already sitting with Christ, alleviating the suffering of another, broken in love for the world.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
As we gather here today rejoicing in the house of God, let us bring together our needs and the needs of all God's people.

Petitions
We pray for the Catholic Church as she moves towards the Synod of 2023. During this time of Advent may the world see a longing for Christ our Saviour.

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

We pray for the leaders of the world that they may exercise their office for the work of peace and unity among all peoples.

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

We pray for the ones burdened with suffering, especially those who have lost hope and find no meaning in their lives. We pray that they hear and welcome the Good News brought to them by those who care that salvation is close at hand.

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

We pray for the people gathered here today that we may be granted the grace to stay awake and to see the love of God in the events of our lives.

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

We pray that in this time of Advent, as we anticipate the incarnation of Christ your Son, that all may come to together in unity and joy.

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

We pray that all gathered here will not be distracted by the consumerist pressures of this pre-Christmas time and therefore be able to be moved with the longing of Advent.

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

We pray for those who have died and those who are in mourning for the loss of loved ones. May salvation become evident in their lives through the blessings of the Advent season.

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

Conclusion
Father, in your great mercy and love you give us this opportunity to pray to you. We implore you to accept these prayers through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ our Lord.

Amen.
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>Come to set us free</td>
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<td>Find us ready</td>
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<td>Out of darkness</td>
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<td>Sing to God with joy and gladness</td>
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<td>To you, O Lord, I lift my soul</td>
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<td>When the King shall come again</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 121: Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.

<table>
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<tr>
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Music selections by Michael Mangan

O Emmanuel (TT/SYJ/CWBII) [Gathering, Communion, Recessional]
Come, Lord Jesus, come CH & V1 (SYJ/CWBII) [Lighting Advent Wreath]
To you, O Lord (LCC) Ps 24/25 (Chn’s Lectionary) [Seasonal Psalm]
Help me know your ways (FWS) based on Ps 24 (25)
Advent alleluia (Vs 1) (TT) [Gospel Acclamation]
We rejoice (SYJ) based on Ps 121 (122) [Gathering, Gifts]
Watch out, wake up (TT/SYJ) [CHILDREN: Gathering, Recessional]
We come, we come (TWB) [Communion – esp V3]
Waiting for the child (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection]
The Second Sunday of Advent inspires us to repentance. A simple act of contrition is not enough, however, for we must go and sin no more (John 8:11). Only through active forgiveness, where we purposefully change the direction of our lives toward God, can we be fully present to the gift before us—the loving gift of life.

Penitential Act

The Advent Wreath Responsory (see ‘Advent Wreath Year A) often replaces the Penitential Act and therefore leads into the Opening Prayer.

Or, use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

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

You draw us into the reign of God. Christ have mercy.

You are the one who is to come. Lord have mercy.

Collect

The oration

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.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

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.

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Isaiah 11:1-10

Isaiah’s text foretells the day of the Lord, a prophesy of the Messiah. When this day comes, violence will come to an end and all creation will live in harmony.

Responsorial Psalm


Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.

The psalmist implores God for a king who is just and righteous, one who will rule with integrity and peace, with compassion for the poor and vulnerable.

Second Reading

Romans 15:4-9

Paul exhorts his readers to recall the many faithful people of the scriptures who were helped by God. He urges his followers to never give up and to treat all with respect.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 3:1-12

John the Baptist is the fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophesy of a voice in the wilderness will cry out to all, calling the world to repent in preparation for the coming of the Lord.
Reflection

This Gospel has everything! Prophecy, burning fires, cleansing waters, apocalyptic drama, repentance, baptism, even the possibility of Abraham’s children being raised from stones! In 2022, we celebrate John the Baptist as the forerunner to Christ, the prophesier, the one who makes straight the paths for the one who is to follow, all the while rejoicing at his message. The voice that cried out from the wilderness 2000 years ago, however, may not have been welcomed in the same way that he is for us today.

A mosaic of John the Baptist can be found in the Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque, Istanbul, Turkey. It depicts a sad man, eyes cast down and the weight of the world upon his shoulders. His hair is wild, his beard unkempt and he slumps forward with grief, sorrow or despair. Might this image depict John waiting, alone in his cell, for any word or news of Jesus? Has he perhaps just received his death sentence from Herod? Could it, in fact, illustrate John in the wilderness, deep in prayer, as he foresees the mystery of God to come. Whatever this exquisite artwork recalls for the person in contemplation, the feeling of desolation is palpable. The loneliness of one called to receive God’s Word and prophesy to the world, while paying the ultimate price for choosing to say ‘yes.’

Elizabeth and Zechariah name their baby John (Yohanan in Hebrew), meaning graced by God or God is gracious. Born to aged parents, John understands from an early age that his birth was considered by many to be both a gift and a miracle from God. Given their age, it is likely that John lost both parents while he was still young, however their experiences are recorded in Luke. John jumps within Elizabeth’s ‘barren’ womb at the sound of Mary’s ‘virginal’ voice—even before he is born, he knows and expects the Messiah. Elizabeth proclaims to Mary, ‘Blessed is she who has believed’ (Luke 1:45), perhaps comparing her cousin’s faith with that of her doubting husband who was struck mute at his own annunciation (Luke 1:18). Zechariah redeems himself by naming his son John (1:63) as instructed by the angel Gabriel, and goes on to pronounce John ‘a prophet of the Most High’ (1:76), the one who will go before the Lord to prepare his way. John’s very life is miraculous, and he fulfils both his father’s and Isaiah’s prophecies.

That ‘nothing is impossible for God’ is thematic of the Gospels – water transformed into wine, the feeding of thousands with a few loaves and a couple of fish, the paralysed who walk again. While John’s claim that God can ‘raise children for Abraham from these stones’ (v.9) may simply be a dismissive comment highlighting the arrogance of the Pharisees and Sadducees who believe their place in the kingdom is assured, the claim that God can bring forth life where none was expected is symbolic of a new way of thinking and being. Children born from stones, the barren, or the virginal, may sound impossible, yet these ideas lie at the heart of repentance and are crucial to conversion.

When we are children, we are taught to say sorry when we hurt one another, do wrong, take something that doesn’t belong to us, or refuse to share. The first few times we do these things we may be gently chided, however if we continue to exhibit these behaviours, adults become less accepting. We are expected not simply to say
sorry but to actually change our behaviour. Actions come from our hearts—it matters less what we say, rather it is what we do that is important. The son who tells his father he will not go and work in the field but eventually thinks better of it and goes, is far more at rights than the one who tells his father he will go, then doesn’t (Matt. 21:28-31). John the Baptist’s call to repentance and conversion of heart is not easy to hear. It requires us to change our hearts and minds, to cease our judgement of others and, as Paul instructs the Romans, to be tolerant of each other. Many are called to repentance, yet few will be chosen (Matt. 22:14).

John prophesies the power of the one who will follow him—not one born of priestly stock, into wealth, prestige, influence and authority, but one who will dine with outcasts and sinners, who will touch the unclean, bless those considered worthless, and ultimately give his life for those who persecute him. Jesus is the shoot who ‘springs from the stock of Jesse’ (Isa. 11:1), whose breath is ‘the fear of the Lord’ (11:3). All nations will bless him, cries the psalmist, for he will rule with justice (71:17). A new order is coming, claims Isaiah, one that disrupts the current power structures of the world and allows the forsaken to flourish. The hunter will lie in peace with its prey, the meek and the mighty are as one. God listens to the cries of the poor and marginalised—they instead will be lifted on high.

John preaches a kingdom ‘close at hand’ (Matt. 3:2), the promise of a saving God who works miracles, yet also one who will divide the wheat from the chaff. This God, who will bring life forth from the virgin, the barren and even the stones, will lay the axe to those trees that bear no fruit. This paradox cannot be lost upon us for it calls us to reconsider our own lives. Do we produce fruit? Are our actions lifegiving? Do we, like the Pharisees believe we have been chosen? Do we consider our place in society indicative of our place in heaven? According to John, the kingdom of heaven is not a birthright. We should not expect a place of honour simply because of our heritage, and certainly not because of what we say and believe. We are called to repentance, to a faith that moves mountains. Nothing is impossible for God.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
As we gather today to celebrate in Word and Sacrament, let us pray to God for the needs of the world and our community.

Petitions

We pray for all Church leaders, especially Pope Francis, that they may always be filled with the Holy Spirit who enabled Christ your Son to be born to the world. May the Church’s desire for synodality, led by Pope Francis, be fulfilled. (Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of the world that in their immense responsibility and power they may be protected from the temptations that urge them to strive for selfish ambitions that lead to war, famine and recession. (Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all people who are stricken with difficulty and suffering, especially for those who are enslaved by addictions, that they may humbly seek help. (Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the local community that we may love one another and be united in mind and voice to give glory to God. (Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for ourselves that in this time of preparation for Christmas we will not be seduced by our wants but attend generously to the needs of others. (Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
Father, in your promise of peace and salvation, hear our petitions and grant them according to your will. We make our prayer through the Spirit and in the name of Christ our Lord.

Amen.
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<td>Like a shepherd</td>
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<td>On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry</td>
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<td>Wait for the Lord</td>
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<td>Wake, awake for night is flying</td>
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<td>We shall prepare</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 71: *Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace for ever.*

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Music selections by Michael Mangan

Fill every valley (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
O Emmanuel (TT/SYJ/CWBII) [Gathering, Communion, Recessional]
Come, Lord Jesus, come CH & V2 (SYJ/CWBII) [Lighting Advent Wreath]
To you, O Lord (LCC) Ps 24/25 (Chn’s Lectionary) [Seasonal Psalm]
Advent alleluia (Vs 2) (TT) [Gospel Acclamation]
We come, we come (TWB) [Communion – esp V3]
Waiting for the child (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection]
Introduction
While the Gospel for this Feast Day is that of the Annunciation, the Immaculate Conception does not refer to the conception of Jesus. The Feast instead celebrates Mary’s conception, promulgated as dogma in 1854 by Pius IX to confirm that Mary was born free from original sin.

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
Tempted by the snake, Eve eats the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. After tasting it, she shares the fruit with Adam and their eyes are opened.

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 97:1-4. R. v. 1

Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done wonderful deeds.

The Psalmist sings a song of praise for the salvation of the world. God recalls the house of Israel in truth and love, and the earth is compelled to sing out in joy.

Second Reading
Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12
St Paul reminds us we are all chosen by God. Through Christ we are claimed as God’s own, born to praise the power and glory of God’s grace.
Gospel Reading

Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel is sent by God to Mary, to announce to her that she will conceive through the Holy Spirit and bring forth a child who will rule over Israel forever.

Reflection

The Immaculate Conception declares that Mary was born free from original sin. Regardless of the intent of this statement of sinlessness, it has always struck me that Mary’s worthiness is made clear in Gabriel’s words at the Annunciation, do not be afraid, you have won God’s favour (Luke 1:28). The Gospel clearly confirms that God sees Mary as worthy to conceive what was in her by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 1:20). As Mary’s conception is not found in the Gospel, this reflection will not delve into the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. It will instead focus upon the Annunciation from Luke 1 and the account of Original Sin from Genesis 3. Both readings are dense, dramatic and deserve contemplation.

Reflecting upon the Annunciation, I was struck by the number of revelations given by Gabriel to Mary. You will conceive a son and you will name him Jesus (v.31). He will be great and called Son of the Most High (v.32). He will be given the throne from his ancestor David (v.32). He will rule over the house of Jacob forever and his reign will have no end (v.33). Seven prophecies in all. Yet, Mary’s response is a simple, how can I possibly be pregnant? (v.34) How often are we given a plethora of information, either in spoken or written form, only to retain or react to, a single word or phrase? Mary’s virginity is often the emphasis in this Gospel passage yet, Gabriel’s message is not merely the proclamation of a miracle birth. Ought not the focus be on the number and enormity of all the prophecies? Mary will bear a son who will rule over Israel – a King whose reign will never end! This is extraordinary! Perhaps, even more so than a virginal birth!

Looking to Genesis 3, we might reflect upon the same thing. Which verse stands out for the reader? Which phrase or meaning is attributed more importance or becomes the focus of homilies and journal articles? Perhaps it is Adam confessing to God, I was naked and afraid (v.10), or his clarification, the woman that you put me with gave it to me and I ate (v.12). It might instead be the woman explicating, the snake tempted me (v.13), or perhaps, it might even be the silence of the snake once accused. How often do we recall God’s punishment of the snake, that it will eat dust all the days of its life (v.14)? Most often, it is that Eve ate first (v.6), and that God punishes Adam for having listened to his wife (v.17)!

Why have these particular readings been chosen for this Feast? If the reason is to express redemption, then Genesis 3 is certainly a necessary precursor for Luke. The sinful and rebellious Eve is redeemed by the submissive purity of Mary who does God’s will, mirrored of course by Adam, who brings sin into the world, yet is redeemed by Jesus who dies for all sins. Further, although the well-known pericope, in which God curses the woman with the pangs of childbirth, is omitted (v.16), the
curse of enmity between Eve and the snake may be contrasted with the rich prophesy of the conception and life of Jesus.

Redemption compares the snake, condemned to crawl on its belly with its head crushed by humans, with Jesus who will be Son of the Most High and rule over all. In turn, the pain of childbirth for Eve, along with the fear of the snake who will strike at her heel, is redeemed by the [painless?] covering of the Holy Spirit who will come upon Mary. A further juxtaposition is that of Adam naming his wife, Eve, because she would be the mother of all who live (v.20), while Mary mothers Jesus who dies for all of creation. Read with the lens of fulfillment and redemption, Genesis contrasts the mother of all who live in sin, with the portrait in Luke of the mother of Christ the Saviour.

Even if we ignore the blatant patriarchal bias between these stories of redemption, we still fall short of richer possibilities. An exquisite truth is revealed by both scriptures when we remove the lens of redemption and instead, Listen! as Gabriel commands (v.30). These two readings celebrate three diverse experiences of conception, pregnancy, childbearing, and motherhood. In short, they celebrate women. How often does the lectionary allow for this?

When Mary asks, how will this come about? (v.34), Gabriel’s response is complex. He clarifies that the Spirit of the Most High will cover Mary and allow her to conceive, then reveals that Elizabeth, her aged cousin, has also conceived. Elizabeth is not virginal – she and Zechariah have tried unsuccessfully for many years to fall pregnant. While Mary’s pregnancy is miraculous because of her virginity, Elizabeth’s is deemed astonishing despite her lack thereof.

In reality, every conception is miraculous, regardless of its genesis. That life is created through the most extraordinary sequence of events is indeed phenomenal. That infants are nurtured within the bodies of women, regardless of their perceived sinfulness, purity or barrenness, is the point of the readings today. Named as mother of all those who live (v.20), Eve reminds us that every single human who lives has been born of a woman. Mary, young and virginal, and Elizabeth, old and barren, conceive through the power of God, for whom nothing is impossible.

Rather than redemption, the readings of today celebrate the diversity of women, their God given power and grace, and the variability of their experience, whether they have given birth or not. Rather than set Eve against Mary or Elizabeth, the sinner versus the saint, we might instead consider that all three can inspire a thirst for knowledge, and an acceptance of suffering. Along with Kari Børresen, I believe portraying Mary as the new Eve is harmful to Christian women as it ignores “the androcentric convergence of Scripture and tradition” (p. 54). Like Eve, we all search for knowledge (Gen. 3:6) and like Mary, we also question (Luke 1:34). Just as Eve is punished (Gen. 3:16), Elizabeth suffers shame and disgrace (Luke 1:25), and a

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sword pierces Mary's soul (Luke 2:35), women throughout the world, suffer each day for countless reasons. Who are we to judge whose suffering is worse?

This Feast Day, let us celebrate all those who search and serve, and all those who suffer and share in the sorrow and solace of being woman, born in the image of God.
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 and all Church leaders as they move towards the General Synod. Guide them to be leaders of integrity and that they respectfully consider the voices of those they serve as we all walk in synodality.
(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 Synod this year 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 Mary 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 children 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 still affected by the pandemic. May they be strengthened in God, 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 selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>O holy Mary</td>
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<td>O Mary of graces and Mother of God</td>
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<td>O purest of creatures</td>
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<td>Sing of Mary, pure and lowly</td>
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<td>The Angel Gabriel from heaven came</td>
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<td>There is nothing told</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 97: Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done wonderful deeds.

<table>
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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

Wait, be patient and keep faith is the essence of the readings today. There is an urgency in the waiting. We hear of good deeds and miracles worked, and hope that the promise of God will be fulfilled. Jesus opens humanity’s eyes and ears in both a physical and metaphorical sense. He assures us that the Good News has arrived.

Penitential Act

The Advent Wreath Responsory (see ‘Advent Wreath Year A) often replaces the Penitential Act and therefore leads into the Opening Prayer.

Or use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you became flesh. Lord have mercy.

You offer us salvation. Christ have mercy.

You lead us rejoicing to the Father. Lord have mercy.

Collect

The oration

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 and ever.

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 saviour 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.

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Isaiah 35:1-6, 10

The proclamation from Isaiah rejoices at the coming splendour of God. Life will come forth from the desert, all who suffer will be saved by the retribution of God.

Responsorial Psalm


Lord, come and save us

Israel’s saving God will look after the poor and the vulnerable—the widow and the orphan, the prisoner and the stranger will be raised up.

Second Reading

James 5:7-10

The coming of the Lord requires us to be patient. As the farmer waits for the fruit of the land, we too must await without judgement or complaint.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 11:2-11

Like us, John faithfully waits for news of Christ’s coming. Jesus assures him that miracles are being worked, while reminding his own disciples of John’s greatness.
Reflection

There is an old saying, no expectations, no disappointment. How often do we build something or someone up into something impossibly perfect, only to find that the event or the person falls short of our expectations? Many of us feel sure we will find the one, we muse about landing the dream job or believe in the integrity of a righteous cause so deeply that we give our lives to it, only to find that the reality we experience is less than the perfection we imagine. No-one and no-thing is perfect.

People are flawed, yet their imperfections make them real and interesting. Jobs and careers have good and bad days, as does life itself. Rewards are thus dependent upon our mood, circumstances, and daily pressures. Passionate goals reached through collaboration and hard work can be inspiring, yet they often require more energy than we can muster. It is important to recognise goodness and beauty in imperfection, in pain and in suffering, and sometimes in the desolation of the world, lest we be disappointed when something or someone falls short.

‘What did you go out in the wilderness to see?’ Jesus asks his disciples (v.7). What did they expect, a man in fine clothes? A swaying reed? A prophet? Were those who sought out John the Baptist looking for a single answer, an easy way out? Did he live up to their expectations, or were they disappointed in what they found? Despite their preconceived image, John was indeed a prophet, and much more (v.9). Not a single child born of women is greater than John the Baptist, Jesus proclaims, ‘yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he’ (v.11). According to Jesus, John is the prophet of all prophets, the greatest of all born human.

Isaiah gives us a clearer grasp of John. John is the wilderness, the dry-lands, the wasteland, that rejoices and blooms at the coming of God’s glory and splendour. John’s life has been one of patient waiting and anticipation. Like the followers of James, entreated to be like farmers unwearyingly awaiting the arrival of the fruit of their labour, John has been patient. Yet, what was his life for? What was its purpose? To be lauded as a prophet, only to be condemned by a promise? Herod, bound by his oaths, must wash his hands of John like Pilate of Jesus. John gives his all for God and, like Jesus, loses his life through betrayal and fear.

Jesus inverts the story of John. He is the prophet who saw far with the eyes of his soul, who jumped for joy in recognition of the presence of Jesus while still a foetus in his mother’s womb. John prepared the way and foretold the future of the coming of Christ. Yet, imprisoned in a dark and lonely cell, John cannot lay his eyes upon Jesus. He cannot see for himself the works of the Lord and must ask his disciples to go and question Jesus himself. Are you the one who is to come, or must we wait for someone else? (v. 3).

It seems ironic (and perhaps even a little cruel) that John, who has spent his life preparing for the coming of the Lord, cannot tell for himself whether Jesus is the prophesied Christ when he finally arrives, nor can he bear witness to the fulfilment of his own prophecy. Blind and deaf to the world in his confined cell, John only hears Jesus’ proclamation second-hand from his own disciples, ‘the blind see . . . and the deaf hear’ (v.5). With this message, John’s sight is returned. Does he rejoice? Does
he feel his mission is complete? Happy is the person who does not lose faith in me (v. 6). Jesus proclaims these words, not to those who are with him, but rather to John. Alone, confined, desperate for information, John is reminded to keep faith in Christ.

How difficult is it, having worked desperately hard for a particular end, when we cannot see a project to its completion? A prophet’s life must at times feel pointless when there is no finality. Yet, for most of us, this is how life is. We have no way of knowing how or when we will be called from this Earth, we can only be grateful for the time we are given. There will always be those who die too young, whose lives have touched ours in a significant way. Their loss seems to be more than we can bear. In Matthew 14, John is beheaded. Grieving his death, Jesus attempts to escape to a lonely place by boat, but the crowds follow him. Jesus has compassion for them and heals them. In a way, he honours John by carrying on the promise of God.

How do we deal with disappointment and loss? Do we accept struggles and despair and look outward in compassion for ways to assist and care for the world? Or rather, do we turn inwards, and bear our grief and sorrow in silence? Every person, born in the image and likeness of God, has a purpose. We may not always know what that purpose is or understand the situation of another as we struggle to find our way in the world. Our challenge is to recognise our own gifts and the gifts of others, without placing impossible demands upon either, or imagining perfection where none is possible.

John’s purpose may simply have been to prepare the way for Jesus, to call people forth to repentance, acknowledge their failures and change their ways. What a huge task and how committed he must have been to see this through. Most importantly, however, John prophesied the Christ, whose sandals he himself was unfit to carry (Matthew 3:11). He fulfilled this purpose and, while seemingly unsure of the authenticity of Jesus, John becomes the most fortunate of all prophets, for he lives to appreciate that Jesus is the Messiah, who has indeed come. Let us pray for the strength and patience of John the Baptist. May our eyes, ears and hearts be opened to recognise the coming of Christ in our midst.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
As we continue to joyfully await the Saviour's coming, let us raise our needs to God and trust in the Lord's unconditional love.

Petitions
We pray for the leaders of the Church that they may zealously bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to the weary and faint hearted.

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

We pray for all world leaders, especially for the government of Australia, that the leaders may strive to protect the dignity of the human person from life's beginning to its natural end.

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

We pray for those who suffer throughout the world, particularly those living with a physical disability, that they may have the grace to lean on Christ through the comforting care of those around them.

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

We pray for all gathered around this altar that as the prophet Isaiah proclaimed, our dryness may rejoice and bloom.

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

We pray for all those who travel at Christmas to be with their families. May this journey be safe and may it be a special time expressed through love and generosity to one another.

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

Conclusion
Father, you who are ever faithful to your promises, accept this prayer and those that are still in our hearts and grant them according to your will. We make our prayer through the Spirit in the name of Christ our Lord.

Amen.
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<td>Come O long expected Jesus</td>
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<td>Comfort, comfort now my people</td>
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<td>Cry out with joy</td>
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<td>Let heaven rejoice</td>
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<td>780</td>
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<td>On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry</td>
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<td>Rejoice in the Lord always</td>
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<td>Wait for the Lord</td>
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<td>When the king shall come again</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 145: Lord, come and save us.

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Music selections by Michael Mangan

We rejoice (SYJ) based on Ps 121 (122)
Fill every valley (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
O Emmanuel (TT/SYJ/ CWBII) [Gathering, Communion, Recessional]
Come, Lord Jesus, come CH & V2 (SYJ/CWBII) [Lighting Advent Wreath]
To you, O Lord (LCC) Ps 24/25 (Chn’s Lectionary) [Seasonal Psalm]
Advent alleluia (Vs 3) (TT) [Gospel Acclamation]
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]
Chosen and sent (LCC) [Recessional]
Introduction
Throughout Advent, we have prepared our hearts and minds for the birth of Christ. Like Joseph, we may be surprised to find that Jesus comes to us in an unexpected way this Christmas. Joseph accepts and acts upon the vision of his dream – he inspires our own faith and acceptance of God’s will.

Penitential Act
The Advent Wreath Responsory (see ‘Advent Wreath Year A) often replaces the Penitential Act and therefore leads into the Opening Prayer.

Or use one of the Roman Missal texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you became fully human to save us all. Lord have mercy.

You are the one whom the prophets foretold. Christ have mercy.

You bring salvation to all nations. Lord have mercy.

Collect

The oration
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.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.

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.

Acknowledgement
The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading
Isaiah 7:10-14
Refusing to put the Lord to the test, Ahaz refuses to ask for a sign. Isaiah prophesies to the House of David, the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son.

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 23:1-6. R. cf vv. 7. 10
Let the Lord enter: he is a king of glory
The psalmist reminds us of the grandeur of the earth and its people. Only the pure of heart shall climb God’s mountains and such a person will receive God’s blessings.

Second Reading
Romans 1:1-7
Paul introduces Christ to the Romans. He proclaims Jesus’ ancestry from David and professes the spirit of holiness within the Son of God who has sent Paul to them.

Gospel Reading
Matthew 1:18-24
Along with Jacob’s favoured son, Joseph acknowledges and interprets his dreams. He believes in the prophecy of Isaiah, proclaimed by Gabriel, and takes Mary home.
There are two stained glass windows that hang above the choir at St Joseph’s Church in Hobart, Tasmania. Each illustrates a series of images that capture the life of St Joseph. The first window portrays four panels: the nuptials of Joseph and Mary, the Angel Gabriel revealed to Joseph in a dream, the birth of Jesus, and Simeon’s prophecy at Jesus’ Presentation in the temple. A further four scenes are portrayed in the second window: the Holy Family’s escape from Herod into Egypt, Jesus, as a twelve-year-old, thought lost, yet found in the Temple, Joseph and Jesus at work together, and finally, the death of Joseph, with Mary and Jesus by his side.

The windows are intricate in design and capture the life of a man that we know little about. Indeed, three of the stories portrayed above are not specifically told by the Gospel. Instead, they have been pieced together from a yearning to understand the childhood of the Son of God and his relationship with his parents. It is a very human desire to fill in the gaps – to ascribe meaning to situations that we value. Oral traditions passed down through generations have a beautifully significant way of capturing the experiences of our elders and ancestors, and those that have been written down have been kept alive. Often, however, stories that are told for cultural, religious or political reasons bind us with truths that are difficult to extricate ourselves from.

So, why is the story of Joseph so important?

There is an allusion only to the marriage of Mary and Joseph in today’s text—perhaps the interpretation has been lost in translation because the course of events is extremely unclear. Mary is betrothed, or engaged, to Joseph. Before they lived together (v.18), Joseph finds she is pregnant and decides to divorce her (v.19) The Angel Gabriel appears to Joseph in a dream and tells him that all is well, Mary has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit (v.20). When Joseph wakes up, he takes his wife to his home (v.24). Married or engaged, divorced or broken engagement, before or after. The story in its detail does not make complete sense, however, the point is not in the detail, but rather to show one thing: Joseph was a man of honour.

While it is hard to imagine the societal norms of first century Israel, it is clear from the many stories of the condemned, widowed and unclean, the divorced or bleeding women, that life is challenging. Had Mary been discovered unwed and pregnant, her life would have taken a very different course. The story of Joseph’s ability to reassess and reconsider gives us an insight into his person – Joseph is not power hungry, nor concerned with the opinions of others. He risks shame and judgement of his own people by making this decision. It is both noble and worthy. Joseph will not forget Mary.

What does the Gospel actually say of Joseph? According to Matthew’s genealogy, Joseph is a descendant of David (Matthew 1:1-17). This lineage is important as the Messiah was prophesied to be born of David’s line. The story of Joseph therefore becomes a fulfillment text: Joseph dreams of the prophecy (Isaiah 7:14), and Jesus Christ is indeed born of a maiden.

Joseph is further warned in a dream to uproot his family and escape into Egypt. Herod realises the Magi have eluded him and, in his fury, has all children under two
killed. Here, the connection with Exodus 12 is clear – the Messiah has been ‘passed over’ as were his descendants on the night of their escape from Egypt. A further dream alerts Joseph to the fact that Herod has died and it is safe for him to return home.

Joseph is not given a voice in the story of Jesus’ Presentation in the Temple. He, along with Mary, are amazed (Luke 2:33), yet remain silent witnesses to Simeon’s prophecy. When Jesus is thought lost on the way home from Jerusalem, only to be found in his Father’s house (Luke 2:49), Joseph is again a silent bystander. He accepts the presence of God, and acts silently, yet with honour. Throughout the scriptures, God provides insight through dreams. What can Joseph teach us about listening to and acting upon the visions revealed to us? Joseph trusts his intuition. He does not speak – he acts.

Joseph’s story is passed down, recalled, elaborated upon, and honoured. His narrative is unusual, for biblical men are usually given more agency, while women are so often the silent or nameless ones. Later, in Matthew’s Gospel such a woman is moved to anoint Jesus with expensive oil. Her act is condemned as wasteful by those present yet Jesus honours her. This might this be read as a parallel to the story of Joseph. Today, a prophecy is delivered through a dream to Joseph who acts – Jesus’ birth follows. In Matthew 26, a woman also acts. Jesus affirms that her deed will always be remembered, for she has anointed him for his burial. In both stories, an honourable silent act is proclaimed.

The Gospel comes to us from a particular time and place. Beautiful artistic interpretations, such as the windows described above, along with the many sculptures, paintings and hymns gifted to us over the past 2000 years, often bring these stories even closer. Whereas we might sit with the words of a text and ponder them in our hearts, there is an immediacy of experience as we reflect upon visual art and music—the interpretative lens is on full display.

Let us sit with Joseph today, acknowledging his support and care for Mary and Jesus, and recall all men who have acted silently with honour, who recognise women as created equally in the image of God. There are many ‘Josephs’ in our Church and world who have resisted the cultural norms, religious authority, or outdated rules that have segregated women from men and for you all, I give thanks.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
As we prepare to celebrate the Nativity of Jesus, let us offer our prayers and needs to God through the power of the Holy Spirit in Christ.

Petitions
We pray for the Church, that we may be united as one in our words and deeds and therefore be a visible sign to the world of your love.  
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of our world that they respect all religious traditions and allow all Christians freedom to celebrate the coming of Christ.  
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those at a crossroad in their life or faced with difficult decisions, give them the gift of discernment to act according to your Will.  
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for families, particularly as they celebrate the coming of your Son at Christmas. May they have a sense of togetherness and hope especially if these are difficult times for them.  
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those experiencing discrimination and hardship. May our actions support them in their need and help them to know that when Christ comes again justice will reign through all creation.  
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those from our community who travel at Christmas time. May they reach their destinations safely and share the love and joy of Christmas with their families and friends.  
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who do not know Christ that they will come to know his presence in the world through the love that Christians show for all people that they meet.  
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
Father, you sent your Son and the Holy Spirit to change our world. Hear this prayer for those in need as we work to unite your earthly family. We make our prayer through the power of the Spirit, in the name of your Son, Jesus.

Amen.
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<td>Joy to you, O Virgin Mary</td>
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<td>My soul rejoices</td>
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<td>O come, divine Messiah!</td>
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<td>O come, O come, Emmanuel</td>
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<td>O Emmanuel</td>
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<td>O holy Mary</td>
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<td>Open the heavens</td>
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<td>Saviour of the nations, come</td>
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<td>Take comfort, God’s people</td>
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<td>The Angel Gabriel from heaven came</td>
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<td>You heavens, sprinkle dew (Rorate caeli)</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 23: *Let the Lord enter; he is king of glory.*

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Music selections by Michael Mangan

**O Emmanuel** (TT/SYJ/CWBII) [Gathering, Communion, Recessional]
**Come, Lord Jesus, come** CH & V2 (SYJ/CWBII) [Lighting Advent Wreath]
**To you, O Lord** (LCC) *Ps 24/25 (Chn’s Lectionary)* [Seasonal Psalm]
**Advent alleluia** (Vs 4) (TT) [Gospel Acclamation]
**Mary said yes** (TT) [CHILDREN: Gathering, Recessional]
**We come, we come** (TWB) [Communion – esp V3]
**Waiting for the child** (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection]

https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol53/iss1/1
DOI: 10.59405/2653-7834.1176
Pastoral Note
Often a Christmas Vigil Mass will have a focus on children and families. Many parishes would use the readings from Mass During the Night, perhaps with the Gospel from Luke adapted for proclamation to children.

The texts for the vigil mass need not be used at an evening Mass on 24 December – the texts for Mass During the Night may be used.

Introduction
In this Vigil Mass of Christmas, we wait with even more joyful and intense hope for the coming of the Saviour, as if we have one foot still in the season of Advent and one foot already in the Christmas season. In this Mass, we see the beginning of the development of the theme of the four Christmas Masses: of night giving way to day, of the light breaking through the darkness.

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

Lord Jesus, you come in flesh from the Father. Lord have mercy.
You were born of the Virgin Mary. Christ have mercy.
You take us to the Father. Lord have mercy.

First Reading
Isaiah 62:1-5
This reading comes from a section of the Isaiah’s prophecy about the glorious future of Israel, and in this reading we hear what Jerusalem will be like when her messiah comes. When the long-awaited messiah comes, the joy will be as when there is a wedding: God will rejoice.
Responsorial Psalm

Ps 88:4-5. 16-17. 27. 29. R. cf. v. 2

Response: For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

This psalm is one of the royal psalms – praising God who promised to make a covenant with the royal house of David, the God who is faithful to that covenant. Just as God’s faithfulness endures, so too, does this covenant.

Second Reading


Paul’s preaching in Antioch traces the history of our salvation, from slavery in Egypt, through David the king, to David’s descendant, Jesus our saviour whose coming is heralded by John the Baptist.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 1:1-25 (Shorter Form 1:18-25)

The long version of this Gospel Reading opens with Matthew’s account of the genealogy of Jesus, reminding us that Jesus was born into a human family in the midst of human history. The second part of this reading (the shorter form) tells of the birth of Jesus who is not like any other? figure from human history, but God-with-us.

Reflection

It is perhaps a pity that Christmas Vigil Masses in Australia do not use the prayers and readings which the Church provides. The texts of this Mass truly have the character of a vigil…there is waiting…there is a sense of expectation and deep longing in the texts which the Church presents to us. Even if a parish community does not use these texts but those of the Mass During the Night, they still provide a rich source of prayer and reflection for those of us waiting in joyful hope.

The First Reading (Isaiah 62:1-5) comes from that section of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah which deals with the return of the Exiles from Babylon. The return had stunned them into silence. Jerusalem was destroyed, they faced hostility from those who had moved in to take their place. The exiles had returned to a situation of discouragement and disappointment. But, prophesies Isaiah, ‘I will not be silent…about Jerusalem, I will not grow weary.’

For even though these exiles had returned to disaster, when the Messiah comes, Isaiah assures them, the holy city will shine like the dawn, aflame with salvation. And then, perhaps strangely to our ears, Isaiah talks of the coming of the Messiah using the imagery of a wedding….‘you shall be called ‘My Delight’ and your land ‘The Wedded’. But it should not sound strange to us. As we have journeyed through Advent and listened again and again to what Isaiah has promised us, we know that the land itself, indeed the whole of creation will sing with joy when the Lord comes.
And when the Lord comes, there is a very real sense of the marriage of God with humanity...for God takes on our human flesh, so that we might take on God's divinity.

In the birth of the Messiah, our 'exile' comes to an end, for no longer are we strangers in a strange land. Because our Messiah comes, not with chariots and horses, but in our own flesh. So, we can no longer ever be strangers in a strange land, far distant from God. In the mystery of the Incarnation, God is forever wedded to our humanity so that we might be forever wedded to God's divinity. For the Incarnation does not end somehow, somewhere along the line. When God takes on our human flesh, not only is humanity forever changed, but the way we experience God must be forever changed, too. It is for this good news that we keep watch in vigil.

This, too, is the reason why, at this Vigil Mass, we read Matthew's genealogy of Jesus. To trace the history of our salvation, Matthew lists the three lots of fourteen generations of Jesus. When this Gospel Reading is proclaimed, it is sometimes hard to see how it is good news. After all, it's just a list of names, isn't it? Well, yes, but it is much more than that. While Matthew's account of the genealogy of Jesus does indeed remind us that Jesus was born into a human family in the midst of human history, this is not the full story. While his human lineage might be impressive, by naming him "the Christ...son of David and Son of Abraham", Matthew is reminding his readers that Jesus is also the Messiah, quoting again of the words of Isaiah: "the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'."

It is worth noting, too, that three of the four women mentioned in the genealogy were foreigners, who all give birth under irregular conditions. What is God saying to us in these women? I think the answer is clear and simple. In this child Jesus, born at the end of this long family tree, salvation is no longer just the preserve of Israel. The horizons of God's grace have been expanded – blown apart really – in this child whose advent we await. Just as in Luke's Gospel the first to hear the good news of the birth of Jesus will be those on the fringes of society like shepherds, so too, in this genealogy, it is these women 'on the outside' who are brought into God's household through the part they play in the ancestry of Jesus. And of course, these three women who give birth in unusual circumstances prefigure Mary, the mother of this child Jesus, who too, gave birth in unusual circumstances. God uses the unusual, those on the fringes, those considered strangers and outsiders to unfold his plan. Reminding us always that his embrace of salvation is never exclusive and limited, but boundless and without end.

This Vigil Mass does prepare us, indeed, pushes us headlong into our celebration of the Christmas mystery. And as we celebrate this Mass (or even as we pray and meditate on the Vigil texts which the Church places before us), we know 'the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see the salvation of our God' (cf. Isaiah 40:5, Communion Antiphon).
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
As we celebrate the coming of Jesus who leads us towards the Kingdom, let us offer the needs of our world and our community to our merciful Father.

Petitions
We pray for the leaders of our Church as they prepare for the Synod of 2023. Sustain them so that the Church may continue to be the visible presence of faith, hope and charity in the world.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for world leaders, that guided by the Holy Spirit they will meet the needs of the wider community and always allow freedom of worship and bring peace, not war.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are ill or injured, may they find hope and renewal in the triumphant message of Christmas through the love and care of others.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for this assembly, that we may trust in the Holy Spirit and bear witness to your glory through our celebrations of the Lord’s coming as a baby in Bethlehem.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those without shelter or security, may they find generosity and kindness in the hearts of their neighbours.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who cannot be with us to celebrate Christmas: our family members who have died, those who are travelling, those who are suffering illness. May our prayers for peace blend with theirs.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
Father, you sent your Son to bring Salvation to all humankind. We acknowledge your love and offer these prayers to you with trust and confidence through the power of the Spirit and in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen.
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<td>Angels we have heard on high</td>
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<td>Emmanuel</td>
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<td>Good Christians all, rejoice</td>
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<td>Hark! The herald angels sing</td>
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<td>O come, all ye faithful (Verses 1-2)</td>
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<td>Of the Father’s love begotten</td>
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<td>Sing we, sing we Nowell</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 88: For ever I will sing the goodness of the Lord.

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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]
25 December 2022
Nativity of the Lord
Christmas Midnight Mass

Reflection by Anthony Doran

Pastoral Note
Since the third edition of the of the Roman Missal, the Christmas ‘Midnight’ Mass is now known as ‘Mass During the Night’. While some parishes would celebrate a Mass using the prayers and readings of this Mass late in the evening of 24th December, many parishes would maintain the tradition of celebrating Mass at midnight on 25th December.

Introduction
Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord. We rejoice and give thanks for this light which has come into the world. In this Mass, in the dark of the night, we hear and pray and see – in the birth of Jesus – night giving way to day, light breaking through the darkness. We, who once walked in darkness, now walk in great light.

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

Lord Jesus, you are the revelation of God. Lord have mercy.
You came to bring peace to the world. Christ have mercy.
You free us from all selfishness to live anew. Lord have mercy.

First Reading
Isaiah 9:1-7
Some of the best known and most compelling lines in all of Sacred Scripture are contained in this reading: a prophetic oracle of the light of a new-born king. While darkness means shadow and oppression, the light which this child born-for-us brings, means gladness and rejoicing and peace.

Responsorial Psalm
Ps 95: 1-3. 11-13. R. Lk 2:11
Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.
This is a psalm of praise for the reign of God breaking into our world. With the birth – today – of the incarnate Son of God, all of creation joins in this song of praise.

Second Reading
Titus 2:11-14
The ‘purpose’ of the Christmas feast is explained to us in this reading – Christ Jesus, our God and saviour, reveals God’s grace to us, thereby opening for us the way to salvation.

Gospel Reading
Luke 2:1-14
The Gospel Reading for this Mass During the Night tells what is perhaps the most well-known of all the stories in the Gospel. The child who is born – for whom there is no room – will bring God’s Kingdom to birth, where there is room a-plenty for all.

Reflection
We are all very familiar with the Christmas story. In response to the call for the census, Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem – the town of David – to be registered there. While there, the time comes for Mary to have her child. And there is no room for them at the inn – no doubt because Bethlehem is crowded with other people who had journeyed there for the census.

And so Jesus is born in the stable. He is wrapped in swaddling clothes. And for a bed, they use the manger. The trough in which the feed for the animals in the stable would have been placed. And, in the fields surrounding Bethlehem, the shepherds hear choirs of angels announcing the birth of Jesus.

Little children in particular seem to know the story by heart. And they never get tired of the story being told and re-told. And when children draw their versions of the Christmas story – the stable at Bethlehem – no one is left out. Quite the contrary. When children draw the nativity scene, they tend to add figures. Certainly the result of inspiration and holy imagination. It seems quite natural to them to introduce into the scene people, animals, and objects from their own world. Sometimes, they even include themselves and those people who are dear to them. Is this simply childlike simplicity? On one level, yes.

But on another level, it is an understanding of the very heart of the Christmas story. Whatever the case, the nativity story which we read on this night is no fairy tale, but is certainly, as the angel says to the shepherds, ‘news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.’

This news of great joy to be shared by all the people is the news that, in the birth of Jesus, our God comes to dwell with us. No longer is God distant and remote. No. In the Incarnation – the mystery of the birth of Christ – our God takes on our human flesh and shares our human life. In the birth of Jesus in the poverty and danger of
the stable at Bethlehem, once and for all, God says that the power and wealth of the Augustus Caesars of this world matter no more. The true glory of the Kingdom of God lies in the powerless child of Bethlehem. And if this powerless child of Bethlehem is indeed our Mighty-God and Prince-of-Peace, then our poverty and weakness is transformed and truly becomes the glory of God. Jesus shares our poverty and weakness so that we might share his glory. This is ‘God’s grace revealed to us.’ This is why salvation is possible for the whole human race. Because Jesus Christ is Emmanuel, our God-with-us.

Around the world on this night, thousands of Christians will spend some time in prayer and meditation in front of a Christmas crib. From the Pope in Rome looking at the larger than life-size crib in St Peter’s Square, to the smallest bush church, which might only have a small cardboard cut-out version. The ones I like the best are the ones which are open to the world. Why? The answer is simple. Like the drawings of the stable which children draw, we are there, too. The Christmas crib, the stable at Bethlehem, the birth of Jesus encompasses the whole of creation and the whole of human history. We are all participants in the Christmas story. We are all invited into the stable at Bethlehem. Yes, we are probably wedged in between animals and shepherds, in the messiness and beauty and wonder of our everyday lives. The crib should have no walls for there are no boundaries to the good news of the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. There is no limit to our joy that Jesus Christ is born today – Jesus Christ, our-God-with-us. The angels proclaim it; the shepherds have passed on the story.

O come, let us adore him…God-with-us…Christ the Lord.

You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
As we gather to celebrate the Birth of our Saviour, Christ the Lord, let us open our hearts in prayer for the needs of our world and of our community.

Petitions
We pray for Pope Francis and all our Church leaders that they may continue to guide us into unity with you through the love they show for others. May the work of the Plenary Council be continued in its implementation.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for leaders throughout the world that in justice they will allow all Christians to celebrate the Incarnation and demonstrate the importance of Jesus in their lives and the life of the world. May this help move our world towards peace.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the poor and marginalised. Give those around them the gifts of charity and compassion so that help may be authentic and valued.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those gathered here. May we be a sign of Christ's glory and hope in the world.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for children, that the Holy Spirit opens their minds and hearts to the message of Christmas through selfless giving and care of others.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those away from family during Christmas time that they experience God's love through the love and care of those around them and feel comfort in God's presence.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
God of love, you reveal yourself to us fully in Jesus Christ. We celebrate the gift of your love and offer our prayers to you with faith in our hearts. We make our prayer through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, your Son.

Amen.
# Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<td>Break forth, O beauteous heavenly light</td>
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<td>Good Christians all, rejoice</td>
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<td>O come, all ye faithful (Verses 1-2)</td>
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<td>Sing we, sing we Nowell</td>
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<td>The people who in darkness walked</td>
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<td>Unto us a boy is born</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 95: *Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord.*

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Music selections by Michael Mangan

Glory to God (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
There is a child (TT/SYJ) *based on Is 9:1-7*
This little boy (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection]
Introduction

Today is born our Saviour, Christ the Lord. We rejoice and give thanks for this light which has come into the world. In this Mass, we see the culmination of the theme of the Christmas Masses: of night giving way to day, of the light breaking through the darkness. The Word-become-flesh is the true light enlightening us.

Penitential Act

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

Lord Jesus, you are the radiant light of God's glory. Lord have mercy.
You loved us before the beginning of time. Christ have mercy.
You are the Word who is God. Lord have mercy.

First Reading

Isaiah 52:7-10
In this prophetic oracle, a new messenger appears, a messenger of salvation for the people. At the arrival of this messenger of good news, the people break into shouts of joy. The messenger we love for the news he brings.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 97:1-6. R. v. 3
All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.
This psalm praises God who 'wins' a mighty victory, bringing salvation to God's people. This victory is witnessed by 'all the ends of the earth'. For this, we ring out our joy.

Second Reading

Hebrews 1:1-6
While in the past, God spoke through the prophets, now, in the Incarnation, he speaks to us directly in his Son. In the light of the Son, we see the radiant light of God's glory.
Gospel Reading

John 1:1-18

The Prologue of John’s Gospel, read at this Mass, takes us back to the very beginning. Before anything else was created, the Word was with God and the word was God. Through this Word-made-flesh we are enlightened and receive God’s grace.

Reflection

In this Christmas mass – the Mass During the Day – the prayers and readings do not tell us of the story of the birth of Jesus in the stable at Bethlehem. But that doesn’t matter. Because we know this story already. And we know it well. Rather, in this mass, it is as if we are looking at the mystery of the Incarnation from a higher vantage point. Our joy at the birth of Christ is expressed in greater strength in this mass. We are invited to reflect on the mystery of Christmas more deeply. Perhaps it is a bit like savouring a fine vintage wine. Richer, deeper, stronger, more flavoursome.

Our Gospel Reading today takes us back to the very beginning. Long before Bethlehem. Long before the Exodus. Long before even the creation of the world. ‘In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.’ From all eternity, the Word was with God. Unlike the idols made by human hands and unlike the voiceless idols of the pagan world, our God speaks. For ‘at various times in the past and in various different ways’, as the author of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us, ‘God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our own time…he has spoken to us through his Son.’ God speaks a Word in love. And that Word is his Son.

‘The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory.’ But the eternal Word of God, Jesus Christ, does not just remain a word uttered by God. He is made flesh. He lives among us. Jesus is truly our Emmanuel. Jesus is truly God-with-us. When God takes on our human flesh, nothing can ever be the same again. For not only is humanity forever changed, but surely God is forever changed, too. God becomes one of us so that we might become one of him. God shares in our human life so that we may share in his divine life. That is the heart of the mystery of the Incarnation. This is why we echo the angels’ song of praise.

At Christmas, we are called to recognise and to love Jesus Christ, our Emmanuel, our God with us. And ‘beautiful on the mountains are the feet of one who brings this good news.’ The good news that our God lives among us. The good news that Jesus Christ, ‘the radiant light of God’s glory’ is born for us. The good news that the Word is made flesh and lives among us. We see his glory. We receive from his fullness. We worship and we give thanks. And we know that when we worship our God-with-us, Jesus Christ, the newborn babe of Bethlehem, nothing can ever be the same again.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

On this day we remember that the Word was made flesh. We turn to God with our petitions confident that God is near to us in our needs.

Petitions

We pray for the leaders of the Church as we celebrate the Feast of Christmas. May their example of love and mercy shine through the world and show the real meaning of Christmas as they walk in synodality.

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

We pray for leaders of all nations that they recognise that you came to us as a defenceless little baby and became a refugee. May our leaders work for the rights of the refugees, victims of abuse, the elderly and the disabled.

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

We pray for this parish community. Moved by your love for us may we serve our neighbour with humility and be signs of Christ’s presence in the world.

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

We pray for the lonely in our society as we remember that Jesus was also rejected by his own people. May there be extra places added at the Christmas banquet for anyone would otherwise be alone this day.

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

We pray for all broken families who will not be reunited this Christmas. Fill them with your grace, that aware of your love for them, they may desire to work towards reconciliation with their loved ones.

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

Conclusion

Father, you reveal yourself to us fully in Jesus Christ. We celebrate the gift of your love and offer our prayers to you with faith in our hearts. We make our prayer through the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, your Son.

Amen
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<td>O little town of Bethlehem</td>
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<td>296</td>
<td>772</td>
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<td>Of the Father’s love begotten</td>
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<td>779</td>
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<td>Once in royal David’s city</td>
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<td>782</td>
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<td>Sing to the Lord a new song</td>
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<td>Sing we, sing we Nowell</td>
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<td>822</td>
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<td>The first Nowell</td>
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<td>849</td>
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<td>Unto us a Boy is born</td>
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<td>What Child is This? (Vs 1-2)</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 97: All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>CWB</th>
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</table>

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Glory to God (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
Glory, gloria (STAR) [CHILDREN, Gathering, Recessional]
All the ends of the earth (LCC) Ps 97/98 (Chn’s Lectionary)
Sing new songs of joy (FWS, CWBII) based on Ps 97(98) [Gathering, Recessional]
There is a child (TT/SYJ) based on Is 9:1-7
This little boy (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection]
Introduction
Divine blessing comes to us in many ways if we only have the hearts to receive it. Today we celebrate the woman, Mary, the one blessed among women, because she believed that what was said to her from the Lord would be fulfilled. In 431 the Council of Ephesus declared that Mary was to be called the mother of God.

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

Lord Jesus, you came as the son of Mary. Lord have mercy.
You draw all creation to the Father. Christ have mercy.
You are our salvation. Lord have mercy.

Collect
The oration

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.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

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. Further, 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 new born 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.

**Acknowledgement**

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

**First Reading**

**Numbers 6:22-27**

Aaron and his sons – the priests of Israel – are entrusted with the responsibility of blessing God’s people.

**Responsorial Psalm**

**Psalm 66(67): 2-3, 5, 6, 8**

*May God bless us in his mercy.*

The psalm, a harvest song of both petition and praise, echoes the first reading and expands upon the meaning of blessing.

**Second Reading**

**Galatians 4:4-7**

For Paul, it is the Spirit of God’s Son in our hearts that releases us from slavery to the Law of Moses.

**Gospel Reading**

**Luke 2:16-21**

The shepherds hasten to Bethlehem to find the baby who is the Saviour, Christ the Lord.

**Reflection**

It is hard to sit with today’s readings and not be struck by God’s graciousness and love for us.

In the reading from the Book of Numbers, it is still early days for the Israelites in the desert. They have been camped near Mt Sinai but soon will leave to continue their
wanderings in the wilderness. In this context, God tells Moses to instruct Aaron and his sons, who are the Israelite priests, how they are to bless the people.

In the Hebrew Bible, blessing is present in all of creation. We see this clearly at the very beginning, in one of the most familiar of all Biblical texts, when God creates the world and sees that everything is good. In other words, we are already abundantly blessed.

The role given to the priests is to invoke God’s name, but it is God alone who does the blessing. Blessing is God’s work. Nevertheless, the story affirms the place of blessing in public worship. We might see this as God’s initiative to keep reminding us of God’s watchful love and the relationship that God so desires to have with us.

This beautiful blessing tells us that the LORD will keep us – sheltered and safe from harm; the LORD will look upon us and be gracious – loving and merciful; the LORD will show his face to us and bring us peace – wholeness and harmony. This is sheer generosity and gift. This is what God wants to lavish on us.

It is worth noting that in the Hebrew, it is the word Yahweh that is translated as the LORD. Yahweh – “I am who I am” – is a word that has no gender, a word that is not a noun, but a verb. “The LORD” is a masculine metaphor that unfortunately dominates our thinking about God.

The psalm repeats the theme of blessing, but this time with an outlook on the whole world, asking all nations to join Israel in praise for God’s saving help, justice and fairness, as well as for the harvest. As this is a harvest song, it is a pity that verse 7 is left out of the liturgy:

The earth has yielded its fruit
for God, our God, has blessed us.

In a post Laudato Si’ world, we need, more and more, to see our earth and its fruitfulness as God’s blessing, so that we might be moved to cherish and protect it.

In the Hebrew Bible, fruitfulness, as a measure of God’s blessing, is often discerned in the birth of sons, especially in those births that are associated with some difficulty. We can see this too in Luke’s account of the conception and birth of Jesus. In today’s gospel reading the shepherds have heard an angel announce Jesus’ birth – the good news is that he is the Saviour, Christ the Lord, and he will be found wrapped in swaddling clothes in a manger in Bethlehem. Just like Mary when she had listened to an angel, the shepherds set out in haste. They found the baby and told their story to Mary and Joseph.

There is only one sentence here that tells us anything about Mary. “As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.” In these words we have a sense of a deep interior life in Mary, a woman who carefully observed and listened, a woman of faith constantly seeking to understand. And when she didn’t understand, Luke will tell us later, “she stored up all these things in her heart.” She strikes us as a woman of deep contemplation. As a woman of her time and place,
however, she would have had a hard physical existence, always busy with work to be done.

While there is no way of knowing what Mary pondered, we can always speculate. In her *Magnificat* she focuses on God's favour for the poor and lowly. Clearly this was who God was for her – someone who loved those who were of little seeming value in the world. It must have struck her, when she saw shepherds arrive to see her child, that these were the most marginalised of men, and yet God had chosen them to hear and proclaim the good news. Once again, God had privileged the lowly. God had proven to be true to Godself. For Mary, here was one more confirmation that God was as she believed.

She may have pondered that the shepherds had found what they were looking for, just as the angel had told them. And if by now, nine months after the angel Gabriel appeared to her, she had any doubts about what she had been told about the great blessing her son would be for Israel, the words of the shepherds must have banished them. Her son was indeed to be the saviour of Israel, as Gabriel had promised. Surely she was impressed by God's faithfulness to her, God's steadfast love in keeping her, in shining upon her, and in bringing a message of peace, not just to her but now to the whole world.

The shepherds returned home, praising and glorifying God, their spirits filled with joy and wonder. And yet, this was also an ordinary baby, born of a woman, wrapped in swaddling clothes. God's great blessing in the person of Jesus, son of Mary, came to the world in the ordinariness of messy lives. Like any other Jewish boy, he was circumcised on the eighth day as the Law prescribed.

St Paul is keen to point out in today's reading that although a subject of the Law, Jesus came to free us from slavery to it. He came to show us that it is relationship with a loving, generous God that sets us free, not necessarily to give up the Law but to let love be our primary guiding light. The Spirit of the Son in our hearts, the gracious gift of God, cries out to God as Father. We are caught up in the loving embrace of the mystery of God. So too was Mary, whom we honour today as the mother of God, and therefore our mother too. As her children, let us learn to see God's blessing in all things, let us be joyful in praise and thanksgiving, and let us be a blessing in our turn for all of God's good creation.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
On this Feast of Mary, Mother of God, and the first day of the New Year, let us imitate Mary and turn to God, for all our needs as we pray.

Petitions
That the Church, through all the baptised, may effectively proclaim to the world the divinity of Christ and the special role of Mary, his mother. May this bring peace into our world.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

That Church leaders may be strengthened by God’s grace as they face the challenges of the New Year. May they walk together in true synodality and promote peace in everything that they do.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

That the leaders of nations will, this year, seek equality and peace for all people as they enact just laws and equal distribution of wealth.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

That all parents and those who care for children may, like Mary, welcome new life and be strengthened to nurture and guide their children.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

That lonely and neglected people may come to understand the love of Mary and Jesus through the generosity and care of others.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

That those in our community who have asked for our prayers and those who are suffering during these festive days, may receive a spirit of grace and power to sustain them.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
God of peace, in our expectation of your answer to our prayer, we pray with hope through the strength of the Spirit and in the name of Christ our Lord.

Amen.
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<th>Title</th>
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<th>AOV2</th>
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<td>Angels we have heard on high</td>
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<td>Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come</td>
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<td>Good Christians all, rejoice</td>
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<td>Hail Queen of Heaven, the Ocean Star</td>
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<td>Hark! The herald angels sing</td>
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<td>Holy Virgin, by God’s decree</td>
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<td>Immaculate Mary, we praise God in you</td>
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<td>Joy to you, O Virgin Mary</td>
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<td>May God bless and keep you</td>
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<td>Mary, crowned with living light</td>
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<td>My soul rejoices</td>
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<td>O holy Mary</td>
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<td>O Mary of Graces and Mother of God</td>
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<td>O purest of creatures</td>
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<td>Sing of Mary, pure and lowly</td>
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<td>The Angel Gabriel from heaven came</td>
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<td>Tell out my soul</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 66: *May God bless us in his mercy.*

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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*
Glory to God (TT/SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]
My spirit sings (FWS/SYJ/CWBII) *Magnificat* [Gathering, Recessional]
8 January 2023
The Epiphany of the Lord
First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Patricia Gemmell

Introduction
Sheer poetry and storytelling dominate today’s readings, but their visionary and prophetic hope underpin the practical teaching that we see in the letter to the Ephesians. No one is excluded from God’s kingdom. Nor should we exclude.

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

Lord Jesus, you to redeem all people. Lord have mercy.
You are the light of the world. Christ have mercy.
You bring us all to the Father. Lord have mercy.

First Reading
Isaiah 60:1-6
This is a triumphant poem, celebrating a vision of the future Jerusalem under the reign of God.

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 71(72):1-2, 7-8, 10-13

Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

In this royal psalm, enthusiastic praise for the king suggests that a more than earthly king is being described.

Second Reading
Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6
Paul declares that it is by a revelation that he has received the mission to the Gentiles.
**Gospel Reading**

**Matthew 2:1-12**

Who is this infant king of the Jews? Who was he for Herod? Who was he for the wise men from the East? Who is he for us?

**Reflection**

Today’s responsorial psalm takes us back to the time of the kings of Israel and may have been a coronation hymn. While it expresses an ardent desire, as you might expect, that the king be wise and just, its hyperbolic imagery does suggest a more than earthly king. No doubt the early Christians interpreted it as a prophetic psalm speaking of the Messiah-king, for Jesus certainly conformed to this ideal of wisdom and justice, combined with solicitous care for the poor and needy. The idea that before him all kings will fall prostrate and all nations serve him resonates with the prophet’s vision in the first reading from Isaiah.

The exultant poem of Isaiah 60 belongs to the post-exilic period, when Israelites have returned from exile in Babylon and are now struggling to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem in their ruined homeland. Here the prophet envisions a glorious future for Jerusalem, even while night and darkness hold sway.

The poem imagines a new dawn about to break, one in which the light of the radiant glory of the Lord will shine all around. We are drawn into this joy-filled vision by the invitation to lift up our eyes and look around, so that we too will be radiant and our hearts throbbing and full. Furthermore, and most importantly, this is a vision of world peace, where the nations and kings are drawn to the brightness of Jerusalem, bringing not only their wealth with them but also their hearts in praise of the Lord. Needless to say, on the level of objective reality, this ancient vision has not yet been realised, but still remains a hope for the future.

Images of camels in throngs and everyone in Sheba bringing gold and incense and singing the praise of the Lord immediately bring to mind the story of the magi in Matthew’s gospel. While, in the popular imagination, this is a story of 3 kings, in Matthew it is an unspecified number of wise men from the east who journey to find the infant king of the Jews. Matthew’s account is inspired by Isaiah 60 and designed not to recount historical fact but to impress upon us who Jesus is – the one promised long ago, the new king in David’s line, who will be the glory of the Lord, ushering in a kingdom where peace and prosperity will reign for the whole earth.

There is much that we could dwell on in today’s gospel. The story contains dark historical realities – Herod’s oppressive and murderous reign – as well as the foreshadowing of Jesus’ death, both in the risk to his life already present at his birth, and in the gift of myrrh, a fragrant oil used for burial. That the wise men learnt of the infant king of the Jews through their study of the stars connects the birth of Jesus to the whole created cosmos. We are reminded too of Isaiah’s themes of light and joy: the star they had seen rising filled them with delight. Matthew clearly wants his listeners to see the birth of Jesus as the fulfilment of the vision of Isaiah 60, and...
while that fulfilment does not translate into objective reality, it remains true for believers that the glorious reign of God has now begun.

Matthew also wants to draw attention to the place of foreigners in this cosmic story. This newborn king will not just shepherd his people, Israel. Foreigners from all nations will be drawn by God’s glory (whether a dawning brightness or a rising star) and come to do homage. They are to be included in Israel’s story.

The wise men returned to their own country, but by a different way. They no longer held any allegiance to Herod and his court. T.S. Eliot (in ‘The Journey of the Magi’) imagines one of them remembering the journey, many years later:

We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.

This is the kind of transformation wrought by an epiphany – a sudden revelation of something previously unseen. As so often in Scripture, where much is left unsaid, we are invited to go deeply into the nature of today’s epiphany. What did these wise men see in Jesus and his mother? Surely it was not what they were expecting, for they had expected to find the answer in King Herod’s palace. What was revealed to them in Mary’s house? Or is the revelation really for us?

Paul, or the disciple writing in his name, also speaks of a revelation in the letter to the Ephesians: ‘it means that pagans now share the same inheritance, that they are parts of the same body, and the same promise has been made to them, in Christ Jesus, through the gospel’. Although scholars are unsure as to whom this letter was originally written, it was probably for a mixed community of Jews and Gentiles. As elsewhere in the Pauline epistles, we see here an emphasis on Christian unity trumping all kinds of division. Paul was always at great pains to convince the leaders of the Jerusalem community (and other Jewish Christians) that there should be no distinction between Jew and Gentile in the Christian community, and that this had practical implications. It usually meant that Jewish laws had to be broken to give precedence to love and unity.

Paul’s vigorous shaping of the early Church was driven by his own personal revelation of Jesus Christ, but also by his deep knowledge of the Scriptures. We can see the vision of Isaiah 60 in his letters. For Paul, there is only Christ, and no one is excluded from Christ.

Anyone who has been involved in any of the recent consultative processes for either the Plenary Council or the Synod on Synodality knows that inclusion has been a significant issue for dialogue and discernment. In paragraph 8 of the 3rd Decree of the Plenary Council, the Australian Catholic Bishops affirmed the following statement:

During the First Assembly, as Members of the Plenary Council, we devoted time to thinking of and praying for people who have experienced marginalisation within the Church, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women, those who are divorced, those who identify as

https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol53/iss1/1
DOI: 10.59405/2653-7834.1176
LGBTIQA+, and those who have suffered abuse of any form. We express our profound sorrow to those who have been hurt through an encounter with the Church. We call on all members of our Church to make our community one in which all the baptised find welcome and inclusion.

Today’s glorious, light-filled feast challenges us to lift up our eyes and see those coming towards us. How can we welcome and include those we consider foreign or unworthy? Let us arise and shine out, for our light has come.


Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

God has led us by a star, a sign that Our Lord, Jesus Christ is born for our salvation, and so we are confident that God will always listen to our prayers.

Petitions

We pray for our Church leaders that they may strengthen and confirm the truth, heal their divisions, and unite in Your love as they move together towards the Synod on Synods.

(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.

(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 as 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.

(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.

We pray for all those who are unemployed or unable to be employed. May they find peace in the knowledge that they are loved by God and are important members of the community.

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

Conclusion

Loving Father, today we are united in our prayer and have confidence that all our petitions will be granted in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ, through the power of the Spirit.

Amen.
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<th>Title</th>
<th>AOV1</th>
<th>AOV2</th>
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<td>All the Earth proclaim the Lord</td>
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<td>City of God</td>
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<td>Earth has many a noble city</td>
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<td>Good Christians all, rejoice</td>
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<td>Joy to the world</td>
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<td>728</td>
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<td>Lord, every nation (Blakesley)</td>
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<td>Lord, every nation (Manibusan)</td>
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<td>70</td>
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<td>O come, all ye faithful</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>760</td>
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<tr>
<td>Of the Father’s love begotten</td>
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<td>779</td>
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<td>Song for Epiphany</td>
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<td>The first Nowell</td>
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<td>We three kings of orient are</td>
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<td>281</td>
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<td>What child is this?</td>
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<td>275</td>
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<td>Your light will come, Jerusalem</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 71: Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

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<td>196</td>
<td>pg. 24</td>
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Music selections by Michael Mangan

Follow the Christmas star (TT/SYJ) [CHILDREN Gathering, Recessional]
Song of light (SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection]
Live in the light (TWB) [Non-Scriptural Reflection]
We come to worship him (STAR)
Sing new songs of joy (FWS/CWBII) based on Ps 97 (98) [Gathering, Recessional]
15 January 2023
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time
Reflection by Gerard Moore

Introduction
It still may be a bit early in the post-Christmas summer holiday to concentrate fully, however we are allowed a glimpse of God’s vision for us in the reading from Isaiah, while our texts from Paul and the evangelist John are taken from the beginning of the Letter to the Corinthians and the opening narrative of the Gospel. We are at the beginning of our annual cycle with texts that offer hope, grace and direction.

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

Lord Jesus, you are the Lamb of God. Lord have mercy.
You take away the sins of the world. Christ have mercy.
You are the Son of the Father. Lord have mercy.

Collect
The oration

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.
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.

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 God 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 fellowship with the saints. This is a great prayer with which to begin the new year.

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

The prophet Isaiah offers us a vision of the glory of God spreading light beyond our boundaries to the ends of the earth.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 40:2,4, 4-8, 8-9,10

Response

Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Paul opens his letter to the Corinthian community with companionship and the blessing of God’s grace and peace.

Gospel Reading

John 1:29-34

John the Baptist recognises that Jesus is full of the Spirit, who existed before him, and whose ministry he has served.

Reflection

We will start our reflections with the first reading, a prophetic piece from the middle of the writings ascribed to Isaiah. In a way it matches the Gospel where John recognises Jesus as the one to come. There is a trace of these future Johannine themes in the passage. Jesus’ pre-existence has a parallel in the sense of being ‘formed’ from the womb. The extent of Jesus’ mission is beyond the bounds of Jacob
and Israel to all the nations. The message is one of dispelling darkness and bringing light to the ends of the earth.

Our reading from Paul comprises the first lines from his Letter to the Corinthians, and as a reading about a beginning it helps us to open into the new year. It is essentially a greeting of grace and peace, and a reminder to us that every day ought to be a greeting of grace and peace to those we meet and those we influence. We are also reminded to be living and speaking and visiting in the name of Jesus.

The passage also reminds us that Paul did not travel alone. He is with Sosthenes, who remains unknown yet named. They travel together and Paul sees this as so central that he opens the letter referencing his companion.

The Gospel of John is full of surprises. We forget how individual an approach the ‘fourth’ Gospel takes to the revelation of Jesus the Christ. This scene with John the baptiser is no different and has features that point to themes that will recur across the Gospel.

The Baptiser, known as John, does not actually baptise Jesus. Rather, as a prophet he recognises him and points his own followers to him. This is a significant action of the prophet, as the text makes clear that he has no prior knowledge of Jesus, yet on seeing him approach dissolves his own ministry as no longer needed. The Baptist also acts here as a witness: Jesus is already fitted out for ministry and so baptism is redundant. In fact, he is the pre-existent one, and to encounter him is to encounter the divine. By contrast John is a transitional figure, whose work is completed with the manifestation of Jesus.

The theme of witness occurs across the Gospel. Aligned with this is the theme of testimony. The dynamic of the court room is a recurring one, with the language of witness, testimony, judge.

What John recognises is the presence of the Spirit. Again, this is a theme that will run across the whole of the text. Jesus is the bringer of the Spirit, his ministry is filled with the Spirit, those who follow are led by the Spirit.

So, in a way the gospel invites us to begin the year with the pre-existent yet present Jesus, filled with the Spirit, recognised by the prophet, underpinned by witness and testimony. And our response is like that of John, to let go and to allow the presence of Christ to emerge.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

We have been called by Christ, the Lamb of God, to be servants of God and to serve each other. Mindful of this calling, let us ask God to hear our needs as we pray.

Petitions

For Pope Francis, for our Bishops and clergy, for all lay and religious leaders in the Church, that they live their lives knowing that they are called to be witnesses to the world of Christ's presence among us.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

For our national leaders and those who work for peace and justice to make a better world, that they show leadership in the reconstruction of lives and economies in countries affected by war, natural disasters and civil unrest.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

For unity among all Christians in seeking God’s will and harmony among all people, that we may strive to respect each other’s gifts while working as servants of God’s Kingdom particularly as we move as a synodal people towards the Synod on Synodality.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

For our parish community, called in Baptism to proclaim God’s praise, that each one of us may grow more Christ-centred, seeking a deeper relationship with God and reaching out to others with missionary zeal.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

For the spiritual and physical well-being of all parishioners, that they may show the presence of God to all those they meet in their domestic world, places of learning, or places of work.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who have died or are bereaved. May our community continue to reach out in generous support to those who are grieving the loss of loved ones.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

God, you who revealed your Son as the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, listen to our prayers so that we may reflect your salvation to the ends of the earth. We pray this prayer through the power of the Spirit and in the name Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>AOV1</th>
<th>AOV2</th>
<th>AOVNG</th>
<th>GA</th>
<th>CWB</th>
<th>CWBII</th>
<th>S&amp;S1</th>
<th>S&amp;S2</th>
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<td>371</td>
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<td>All people that on earth do dwell</td>
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<td>533</td>
<td>613</td>
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<td>All the ends of the earth</td>
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<td>All you nations, sing out your joy</td>
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<td>Be thou my vision</td>
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<td>540</td>
<td>105</td>
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<td>Christ, be our light</td>
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<td>Christ is the world’s light</td>
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<td>Church of God</td>
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<td>Come down, O love divine</td>
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<td>Here am I, Lord</td>
<td>63</td>
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<td>Here I am</td>
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<td>In Christ there is no east or west</td>
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<td>Lord, whose love in humble service</td>
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<td>Love divine, all loves excelling</td>
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<td>Now let us from this table rise</td>
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<td>On Jordan’s bank the Baptist’s cry</td>
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<td>Praise the One who breaks the darkness</td>
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<td>Praise to you, O Christ, our saviour</td>
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<td>407</td>
<td>587</td>
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<td>The Church’s one foundation</td>
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<td>The voice of God</td>
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<td>Thus says the Lord of hosts</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 39: Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm 39</th>
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<td>352</td>
<td>pg. 54</td>
<td>pg. 80</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Sing out with joy (FWS) based on Ps 65 (66) [Gathering.]
Hearts on fire (SHOF) [Gathering, Recessional]
Holy Spirit, come (TCS)
Holy Spirit of fire (SHOF, CWBII)
Introduction

As the year starts to move us from relaxation and holidays to the familiar rhythm of work and school, our Gospel offers us an insight into the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. He commences far from the centre of Law and religion, preaching, healing, reconciling and calling disciples in far removed Galilee. Though forced into an inauspicious place and with John under arrest, Jesus does not step back from his mission.

Penitential Act

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

Lord Jesus, you call us to follow you. Lord have mercy.
You are our light and our salvation. Christ have mercy.
You came that all might be healed. Lord have mercy.

Collect

The oration

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.
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.

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 to 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 are pleasing to God. On reflection this prayer provides a good test of those easily forgotten new year resolutions!

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Isaiah 8:23—9:3

Our poem from the prophet Isaiah offers the hope of light in darkness and of the lifting of our burdens.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14

Response: The Lord is my light and my salvation.

This psalm links strongly to Isaiah and to the gospel. Jesus is the Lord who brings light into the darkness.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

Paul responds to the plea from Chloe’s people and seeks unity amongst the community based in participation in the Cross of Christ.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 4:12-23 or 4:12-17

Jesus begins his ministry of teaching, reconciliation and healing in the remote districts of Galilee as John is arrested.
Reflection

Our first reading has been chosen ostensibly as a match to the geographic aspect of the Gospel narrative. And as usual there is a bit more at play. The prophet Isaiah is not so much interested in the regions of Zebulum and Naphtali as their treatment by the Lord. Firstly, there is a double play. The lands are degraded by the Lord, and then glorified by God. The people are the people of Israel, but there is acknowledgement of gentiles as well. The theme of the Lord punishing and redeeming has a strong place across the Hebrew bible and is a particular literary tool in the hands of the prophets. It is applied here in the opening stanzas of our text.

Yet there is a second metaphor at work once the location is put aside. Admittedly it is closely related, but the sense is quite different. As the reading continues the prophet's contrasts provide something different. He has moved from the Lord punishing and redeeming to the people being under oppression and then freed. The sense is more existential. Where there was darkness and gloom now there shines a light. Where there was anguish and distress now there is joy and rejoicing. The people felt as though they walked in gloom, burdened by a yoke, under the oppressive forced march of a whip. Yet now something has changed. There is a new leader, a cause for hope, a journeying together that is not forced nor burdensome or oppressive.

There is something of a geographical divide at work in our reading from Corinthians. In Paul himself there is some possessive protection of the Christian communities he has founded, and some resistance to teachers who come in from ‘outside’. But he also recognises the dangers of divisive behaviour and the need for a core centre of unity. It is hard not to think here of a parallel situation where ‘new’ people come into the community and the ‘long term’ members become a bit unsettled!

With Paul's situation there are some other dangers lurking. Firstly, he removes himself as best as he is able from the centre of the problem. There can be no sense that following Paul downgrades Christ. The opposite is true. It is Christ at the centre, and all others contribute to unity in Christ. With this comes the anxiety for Paul. The divisions in the community are based on personalities, and while diversity is accepted, division is not. The long standing tensions between Paul and Peter (Cephas) are brought to the surface. More interesting is the emergence of figures such as Apollos, where there is a hint that more than personality is involved. Paul will go on to take issue with those he calls ‘super apostles’, whose teaching may be suspect and who win over by personality. For our dogged apostle to the gentiles, they are too often deceivers seeking their own advantage.

There is also an acknowledgement of courage by Paul. He lets the community know that the group around Chloe has brought the divisiveness to his attention. They have the courage to name the issues and seek resolution. It is difficult to imagine that this strategy would make them welcome to other groups as peacemakers, but rather would identify them as ‘dividers’. They show leadership and clearly have a sense that there is danger lurking in the community at large; Paul is wise enough and concerned enough to respond.

Paul calls the members of the fledgling community to focus on the person that unites them, on Christ, and on his genuine teachings. It is Christ in Paul, in Peter and in Apollos that enables them to be teachers and apostles and guides. Furthermore, the Christ recognised in them is the Christ crucified. Paul and Peter certainly meet this mark, though we know little of Apollos. The baptised should not look for personalities but for witnesses to the Cross.
The recent Plenary Council and the ongoing Church-wide discussions around synodality, make this reading pertinent to us today. Synodality has an openness and respect for difference and diversity of gifts and approaches, but only if centred in the reality of the Cross and the core teachings of Jesus. There are Church factions, some deliberately created. Often our Church belonging has more ‘personalised’ feel, where leaders attract adherents. In fact, it is this dynamic that Pope Francis is trying to disable. Rather, he seeks a Church built on baptism and faith. He would be one with Paul asking what is distracting us from holding Christ at the centre and engaging with the community and creation as missionary disciples of Christ rather than disciples of one leader or another.

Our gospel shows Jesus acutely aware of his environment and of his mission. It also opens up an interesting dynamic of the Gospel writer. Let’s start with a feature of Matthew’s style. The evangelist heads this passage with a reference to the prophet Isaiah. Close examination shows that he has not captured the original text accurately. Matthew’s reference is inspired by Isaiah, does cover the geographical areas, but is not the exact text and more importantly cuts out the dynamic of God punishing and freeing! Here we have an ancient writer at work, allowing a revered text to inform his new writing. Matthew’s point in using Isaiah is not to be literal about the poet, but rather to show Jesus as within the mould of a prophet by locating him in the same regions that Isaiah wrote about. What follows is how Jesus, the new and complete prophet, acts in ways that surpass the prophecy itself. He will be the one who releases the people from their yoke, who brings light to darkness.

Matthew gives us an announcement of the ‘way’ of Jesus the prophet, whose message is of repentance and the incoming of the reign of God. It is immediately effective. He gathers disciples who willingly leave all and follow him. They are not from the priestly or scribal classes, they are not learned in the law or the temple. They do respond to his preaching and see in it the reign of God, giving up much to follow him. Despite all this they remain loyal and close to Jesus. Unlikely as they seem, they are a good first set of team members! Jesus preaches, invites into the reign of God, cures disease and illness. He is welcomed in synagogues as one who can open up the word of God. Jesus is also aware of the danger of his mission. With the arrest of John, the Master shares his particular mission and love with the people of the far reaches of Palestine. Jesus’ initial focus is the coastal shores of Galilee: the word of God is for everyone, particularly the lowly, the ill, the possessed, those without hope.

We can see in this mission a metaphorical link to Paul’s dynamic with the Corinthians. Jesus is amongst those who bear the burden, the ‘cross’ if you like, of illness, non-acceptance, expulsion, possession, poverty. He enlivens their hearts with his preaching and enables their lives with his healing and communal reconciliation. As presaged in the arrest of John, the mission of Jesus to help those burdened with their imposed ‘cross’ leads to his assumption of the Cross. There is an invitation to us, here at the beginning of the year, to consciously embrace the Cross that seeks to heal and include. It is a call to missionary discipleship and synodal responsibility.
**Prayer of the Faithful**

**Introduction**

Just as Peter and Andrew ‘left their nets’ to follow Christ, we gather together to pray for the needs of our Church, for those who are lost, as well as our own community.

**Petitions**

We pray for the continual protection of our Church leaders, especially Pope Francis, as they follow the call of God in their lives and lead us towards the Synod of 2023.  
*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for world leaders in this time of war and economic difficulty. May they hold true to values that support the care of the poor and those displaced by war, natural disasters and climate change.  
*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the police force and those who work in the emergency services, that they will be granted the strength and courage to care for those who have suffered injury through floods, fire or road trauma.  
*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who do not know Christ. May they come to know the love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through the efforts of those who have been baptised in faith.  
*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the victims and survivors of persecution, including our nation’s asylum seekers and refugees, that they be comforted in their time of need by those who live their lives in a Christ-centred and missionary way.  
*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who suffer grief and struggle with the needed changes. May the love of those around them bring them the light of Christ in their place of darkness.  
*(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

**Conclusion**

Gracious God, we ask that you hear our prayers and grant our petitions, as we continue to humbly seek your face in the poor. We make this prayer through the power of the Spirit, and the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<tr>
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<td>God of day and God of darkness</td>
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<td>The Lord is my light and my salvation</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 26: *The Lord is my light and my salvation.*

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Music selections by Michael Mangan

Sing new songs of joy *(FWS/CWBII)* based on *Ps 97 (98)* [Gathering, Recessional]
You are the light *(FWS)* based on *Ps 26 (27)* [Gathering]
The Lord is my light *(LCC)* *Ps 26/27* *(Chn’s Lectionary)*

https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol53/iss1/1
DOI: 10.59405/2653-7834.1176
Introduction

Australia Day is a festival with an uncertain cultural texture and a sly ambivalence. It is not ANZAC Day with its solemn play on remembrance and forgetting. Nor is it Labour Day when the theme is just work and just wages, with a celebration of work. Nor is it quite a true national day, with its geographical and historical focus on Sydney Harbour slightly off kilter in other cities and towns. Nor is it a unifying festivity, with its sanctification of colonial dominance and indigenous dispossession driving wedges through the community.

The day does try hard to implant itself into our national imagination and has struck some resonant chords. It is a holiday in summer before the kids go back to school and the work life resumes: that is not a bad thing. It involves family, barbecues, swimming, cricket, a long evening: these fit the bill. It is a day when many took up their Australian citizenship in town halls with elected government members and mayors across the country: it is Australia-as-multicultural and welcoming and local. It is us being not too good at being us yet being ourselves, nevertheless.

This good natured ambivalence should not be underestimated. It is good natured because we want to be good natured: it is an expression of our aspiration. It is ambivalent because the aspiration of Australia is not yet formed, not yet settled. The colonial narrative of a prison island transformed by squatters and soldiers and gold miners has just enough truth to make us wonder why it has worked. The historical narrative of indigenous dispossession, repression and ‘stolen’ is less able to be hidden as each day passes. And to collude in hiding it is certainly a sin as well as a national shame.

Our festival is a reminder that the ‘founding myths’, those central touchstones of identity, are not yet settled or sturdy. A small fleet of slightly sea-worthy 18th century ships sailed the vast oceans with an unedifying crew of sailors and a dismissive cargo of convicts. It was a remarkable feat, set in motion by a chillingly cruel and contemptuous home government. The ramifications of their success began the path to the ongoing dispossession and denigration of a culture 60,000 years in the making. In the middle of this history came more groups of second peoples fleeing hunger, famine, war. They came by any means, different types of ‘boat’ people, breaking cultural and racial stereotypes. These have been joined by migrating families seeking a better life and economic success. All are being slowly made and remade on a remarkable and ancient mass of land.

From this melange has emerged international talents, sportswomen and men, scientists, soldiers, leaders, gay icons, artists, missionaries, musicians, food producers, inventors: a remarkable pool of achievers and creators. Our success is part of our ambivalence. While it is not at all settled who we are, this mixture is ‘us’
and we strive to own all of it, the bad and the good and the ordinary and the unfinished.

**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 those in darkness. Lord, have mercy.

**First Reading**

*Isaiah 32:15-18*

The effect of justice will be peace.

**Responsorial Psalm**

*Psalm 84:9-14*

*The Lord speaks of peace to his people*

Following the Isaiah reading, the Lord’s voice is heard proclaiming our need of justice for the desired result of peace.

**Second Reading**

*1 Corinthians 12:4-11 OR Romans 12:9-13*

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians the variety of gifts given by the Spirit is the work of God among us. From the letter to the Romans, there are very sound instructions on how to love each other and to work together.

**Gospel Reading**

*Matthew 5:1-12 OR Luke 12:22-32*

From Matthew 5 the Beatitudes, part of the Sermon on the Mount, point in the direction of how to live a Christian life.

Luke’s gospel selection calls on us not to worry but to hand everything over to the Father and trust that we will be cared for in the fullest possible way.

**Reflection**

While preaching on Australia Day may run against the spirit of the occasion, our readings give us pause for reflection. The lection from the prophet Isaiah has as its premise that there is divine justice and divine righteous dwelling throughout the country. The text has a very domestic feel. It implores a peace marked by quietness.
and confidence; secure homes undisturbed by ructions. The homeliness of the imagery serves to remind us of the way domestic violence is at work in our society rendering homes unsafe. This is brought to our attention through the Australian Bishops’ Social Justice Statement for 2022, which focused on the sources of domestic and family violence.

There are two Pauline readings provided as options. The excerpt from 1 Corinthians recognises the gifts distributed across the community by the Spirit. The emphasis falls on the utilisation of these gifts for the work of the Spirit, marked by the common good of all and the unity of all things in Christ. The Australian community is replete with gifts, and the reading directs them towards the upbuilding of the peoples and their service in Christ.

The second option is from the Letter to the Romans. It opens with a characteristic Pauline praise and admonition to love, but it is the closing lines that have strong resonance within Australian understandings. Paul directs the members to share with the poor in their midst, and to practice hospitality. Perhaps this year we can insure that sharing with the needy and offering hospitality are not declared to be on the endangered list.

A pair of Gospel passages are also provided, with a choice between Matthew and Luke. The Matthean reading is the Sermon on the Mount, allowing the festival of Australia to be brought into the blessings of the Beatitudes. It provides an opportune moment to invite those present to name the blessings that determine the conduct of their lives. Our Lukan text is a set of sayings which have a parallel in the saying ‘no worries!’ Jesus invites his followers to forsake worry. As for clothes and food, they are not the only things that are important, rather what matters is where our hearts are set. We can be a ‘no worries’ people, but only when we set our hearts on God’s reign.

I will give you as a light to the nations. Isa 48:6
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As the psalmist declares, the Lord speaks of peace. With peace in our hearts let us offer the needs of this community and of the world.

Petitions

We pray for the Church in Australia that she can effectively carry out her mission to be a sign of God’s unfailing and everlasting mercy through becoming more Christ-centred and missionary.

(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 for the leaders of Australia that they be effective and just leaders within this ever-changing society. May they always act with integrity for all races and cultures as we strive to live together in peace.

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

We pray for all those seeking refuge in Australia 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 those who are suffering, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, that they can experience the resurrection of your Son in their lives through the love and support of others.

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

We pray for all of us gathered around this altar and for all Australians, that we acknowledge the providence of God in our life and in the lives of all who call this land home.

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

Conclusion

In faith we bring these petitions that the needs of our community will be heard and answered. We ask this through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ Our Lord.

Amen.
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<td>Christ, our Lord, the Prince of Ages</td>
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<td>Come, Holy Ghost, Creator, come</td>
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<td>Gift of grace</td>
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<td>God of peace</td>
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<td>Help of Christians, guard this land</td>
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<td>Lord of earth and all creation</td>
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<td>Lord, show us your mercy and love</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 84: *The Lord speaks of peace to his people.*

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Music selections by Michael Mangan

Hearts on fire (SHOF) [Gathering, Recessional]
29 January 2023
Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction
Today’s readings speak of an evaluation of worth that is inverse to typical human reckoning. It is not the rich, powerful and mighty that are automatically blessed with happiness. Rather, it is the humble, the poor and the persecuted, especially those who are such on account of their faithfulness to God who are the truly blessed. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven!

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

Lord Jesus, you call us to be happy in spirit. Lord have mercy.
You are the peacemaker and Son of God. Christ have mercy.
You invite us into the kingdom. Lord have mercy.

Collect
The oration
Grant us, Lord our God,
that we may honour you with all our mind,
and love everyone in truth of heart.
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 and ever.

Sunday 4 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.

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Zephaniah 2:3, 3:12–13

Some during the history of Israel tended to equate material prosperity with divine blessing. Zephaniah’s words point in a different direction. It is those who are humble and seek their refuge in the Lord who receive divine blessing. It is the lowly and the poor who set their eyes to God who are truly blessed.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 146(145):6-10. R. Matt 5:3

Happy the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!

The Psalm praises the Lord who lifts up the lowly, who never leaves the orphaned abandoned.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:26–31

Paul speaks of the limitation of human wisdom as God chooses what we assume is insignificant to show the true glory of God. It is a reminder that we have nothing to boast for on our own accord. All that is worthwhile truly comes from God.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 5:1–12

The Beatitudes present a collection of ways that we can live the blessings of God. Those who humbly seek the will of God will be assured of lasting happiness.
Reflection

The Beatitudes that we hear in today’s gospel reading opens the famous Sermon on the Mount where Jesus offers a lengthy teaching on the sorts of virtues and actions that accord with finding true happiness and blessings. Though the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes are relatively well-known terms, some are occasionally confused and think that the Beatitudes we hear in today’s Gospel and the Sermon on the Mount are the same thing – as if the series of ‘happy are they’ statements form the whole of Jesus’ important discourse. However, it is but the opening, an important opening as we will reflect on momentarily but, nevertheless, only part of a wider teaching that forms chapters five to seven of Matthew’s Gospel.

We will hear many of the other parts of the Sermon in coming weeks. Next Sunday we will hear of salt and light, then on the Law of the scriptures, on adultery and divorce, on retaliation and love of enemies, and on God and money. There are also teachings that we will not hear during our Sunday liturgies in coming weeks but are, nonetheless, well known and much admired. Some examples include lessons on almsgiving (6:1-4), fasting (6:16-18), judging others (7:1-5) and on false prophets (7:15-20) as well as the seminal instruction on prayer featuring the Lord’s Prayer (6:5-14) and the near ubiquitously known ‘Golden Rule’ (7:12). These collections of teachings are some of the most inspiring among Jesus’ many words of life. However, they are also among the most difficult. Indeed, included in the Sermon we find Jesus reminding would be followers that the road is difficult. The pathway of living the way of the Kingdom is a ‘narrow gate’ and, in contrast, the life that leads to destruction is ‘wide and easy’ and, not surprisingly given it is wide and easy, ‘many people take it’ (Matt 7:13-14).

When we hold that broader teaching of Jesus in view and, further, when we reflect on what it really means to follow Jesus, we find a greater sense of what the Beatitudes offer us. When Jesus looked out among the crowd gathered to hear his words of life, he no doubt saw people struggling to live the ‘difficult road’ of God’s ways. He also was well aware of the price of discipleship that he was calling his particular followers to take.

Times have changed significantly in the approximately two thousand years between when those words were uttered and our world today, but the ‘narrow road’ is just as difficult. We live in a world where to lie and cheat is sport for many and certainly not a hindrance to the wealth and power that fraudulence can allow. To be pious can be seen as weak and, in some quarters at least, insignificant or unwanted. To chase monetary gain as a supreme goal is considered the norm and to truly live for others is a quaint but unrealistic notion at best. It is not hard to find places where we are encouraged to caricature our enemies rather than see them as vulnerable human beings worthy of due attention much less to love and forgive them. It is relatively easy to find in popular discourse those who are pridefully self-assured to the point of arrogance and just as easy to witness a world comfortably able to ignore the plight of the poor and disenfranchised. In contrast, the teachings of Christ seem to require a humility, to recognise our limitations coupled with a bold and restless dissatisfaction at the injustice we see all around us.
To live the sort of life that Jesus is about to speak to in the Sermon, to attempt to follow the ways of God which such teachings reflect is not only difficult, but also, at times at least, lonely and mournful. Jesus repeats nine times ‘happy are those’ who are just such people. The more commonly used adjective translation of the original Greek *makarios* is the English ‘blessed’ as it attempts to capture the transcendent lasting happiness that *makarios* imports. The Latin word *beatitudo* is where we get the English ‘beatitude’ and typically translates as ‘happy’ but, even so, the Latin term is loaded and rich in understanding. It is indeed a happiness that God is offering, but it is not simply a happiness of the senses. Clearly not because it seems obvious that simple sensory happiness can come a lot easier than attempting to be ‘peacemakers’, for example, and certainly a lot easier than being ‘persecuted for the cause of right’.

However, this happiness that Jesus speaks of cannot come the easy way and is certainly not fleeting or temporary. It is a state of being where one is in accord with the very will of the mind of the Creator. It is a happiness that is of the soul that may spill out to material and sensory experience but is not dependent on it.

Naturally, we hear resonation of the Beatitudes in the first reading. Zephaniah refers to the blessing of the humble and lowly which echoes the meek and the poor of Matthew. However, Zephaniah is describing such figures as a faithful remnant. The idea of a remnant is a repeated theme in the Hebrew scriptures. Part of the notion is that, even when the people of God suffer greatly and become scattered and disconnected from their place, community and their God, there is always a remnant that will remain. A group of faithful who provide both a sign and means to restoration and of healing to all the people of God.

We may find the path that Jesus is talking of difficult in all sorts of ways. It may also sometimes seem that few are bothered with the seemingly less attractive ways of Christ. But God is still calling and enabling great men and women to live the ‘blessed life’, the truly ‘happy life’. We are all called to be among them and, if we feel we’re waning ourselves, we can look to that faithful remnant, the ‘humble and lowly’ who model to us the lasting blessedness of God.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
Jesus gave us the beatitudes, so let us keep in mind those who need the blessings of God as we gather together to pray for our Church and the world.

Petitions
We pray for a blessing upon the Leaders of the Church. May they become blessed through their care of the poor and have the courage to suffer in Christ’s name. 
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for our nation’s leaders, that they may be granted the wisdom and discernment necessary to make the right decisions for our country; choices that acknowledge the presence of God on our world. 
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the missionaries who have dedicated their lives to saving the poor as they seek to spread the message of Christ’s love and forgiveness. 
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have recently undergone surgery or are suffering serious illness. May they make a full recovery and may this community be a blessing to them in the way that they are offered care and support. 
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those in the local community who are struggling with financial difficulties. May they continue to place their hope in God, trusting in his unfailling goodness and have the courage to take the narrow road. 
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are grieving for loved ones, lost to them through death or separation. May they be comforted by those who care. 
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
Father, we humbly ask that you hear our prayers and grant our petitions. Hear us, through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<th>Title</th>
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<td>Alleluia, sing to Jesus</td>
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<td>Christ is the world’s light</td>
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<td>Christians, lift up your hearts</td>
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<td>Church of God</td>
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<td>Lead me, Lord</td>
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<td>Lord of creation, to you be all praise</td>
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<td>O breathe on me, O breath of God</td>
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<td>Rejoice the Lord is King</td>
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<td>Seek, O seek the Lord</td>
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<td>Tell out my soul</td>
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<td>The Beatitudes (Kearney)</td>
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<td>The Beatitudes (Russian Orthodox Chant)</td>
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<td>We are the light of the world</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 145: Happy the poor in spirit; the kingdom of heaven is theirs!/Alleluia!

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<td>Psalm 145</td>
<td>358</td>
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Music selections by Michael Mangan

Heaven shall be yours (TWB) based on Mt 5:1-12 (Beatitudes)
Introduction
As people following Jesus Christ, we receive much blessing. We are reminded that God blesses us so we can be a blessing to others. Thus, we become a light on a hill transforming darkness with the light of Christ.

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

Lord Jesus, you are the light who rises for the upright. Lord have mercy.
You are the salt of the earth. Christ have mercy.
You are the light of the world. Lord have mercy.

Collect
The oration
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.
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 and ever.

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 continually need these gifts.

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal *Celebrate!* (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Isaiah 58:7–10

Being a people of God demands real-world service to the hungry and the afflicted. It requires peaceable attention to those in need.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 112(111):4–9 R. v. 4

*A light rises in the darkness for the upright.*

The Psalm speaks to the intertwined relationship between how one blesses others and a blessed life received.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 2:1–5

Paul reminds the Corinthian community that the only teaching of worth he offers is found in a humbled and crucified Christ that is, however, the wisdom of God.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 5:13–16

The teachings on salt and light come immediately after the Beatitudes. Jesus reminds us that those ways of living the Christian life are not just for our own benefit but are to benefit the world in which we live.

Reflection

The Gospel reading from today’s liturgy utilises two beautifully simple yet effectual symbols to encourage Jesus’ followers to engage in the world they live in with purpose.
Starting with salt, we should begin by recognising that salt in the ancient world was a more significant commodity than it is today. As well as being used in the familiar way as we do so today to flavour food, it was also vital for preservation, used in medicine, and also in religious rituals. It was also rare and nowhere near as freely available as it is today. Today we can find boxes of high-quality salt for a few dollars. In the time of Jesus, even though some parts of the Palestine region had access to large quantities of salt, it was still a relatively precious substance. This was especially so among the more ordinary strata of society who often only had access to salt that was not fully separated from impurities and bonded to dirt and rock from which it came. Thus, though salt as a substance cannot lose its saltiness, it can become less effective and tainted by what it is bonded to, effectively losing its potency.

This would be the background of Jesus’ words. We are to be salt that is useful because it is ‘in the world’ but is not bound to it and diluted by its impurity. This interpretation is often stated when reflecting on this reading. There is more here though. Salt is also only effective when it is infused in something else. In itself salt is not particularly useful. Its purpose is to be combined with other things.

A common occurrence in my family home when I was growing up was big family dinners with pasta, meats and a big bowl of green salad, dressed with vinegar, oil and salt. The salt was usually left until last so as to help maintain the crispness. One day, deciding to help out the preparation I dressed the salad with the usual ingredients, including the salt. I moved on as the rest of the meal continued to be prepared. Unbeknown to me, my father decided to do the same. He could see that there was oil and vinegar in the bowl but had assumed that the salt had not been added. He duly added a generous amount of salt as he often did and tossed it. A few moments later, my mother did likewise unknowing that it had already been done twice! Suffice to say, the salad was not a nice addition to the meal that it usually was. It was so heavily salted that it was near inedible. A small amount of salt is blessing to the meal taking even a simple thing like lettuce and giving it vitality of taste. However, too much, and it ruins the food with which it is combined.

I suspect that Jesus was not only talking of the purity of salt when he drew the simile, but also the quantity required. We may feel insignificant and small relative to the forces that may surround us or the grandness of the situation we may be in. But a small amount of salt, especially if pure, goes a long way and will be enough.

We are to be like salt, the small amount that infuses into what is already there giving it vitality. Our Christian calling is to go into the world, whatever that looks like to us, and help make life palatable, to be a blessing to what is already there, drawing out the best in the world around us. It is not supposed to ‘take it over’ and overcome the goodness that is already there. On the other hand, neither is our life of faith to be insipid and reserved. Kept in the cupboard hidden and useless.

The simile of light indicates the same thing. We are to be a light that helps the world find its way. But the light is not an end in itself. Light is purposeful because it illuminates objects so that they can be seen properly so we can successfully navigate our way. Those of us blessed with sight have all experienced that effect of looking directly into an intense light source and being blinded by it. Ironically the
source of light becomes a hinderance rather than a help. However, when the light is used to illuminate a dark situation, and we set our eyes with the aid of such light, it is most useful and, in some cases, a vital life saver. Like salt, it brings out the best of what is already there. Helping to define, understand and navigate whatever the object happens to be.

We heard last week the happiness and blessing it is to be able to hear and respond to the words of Christ. Even when it seems poorly by worldly standards, we know the gift of what it means to be living the life of the Kingdom. However, this blessed experience is not to be privatised. The world we live in, even as parts of it might reject Christ and such teaching, still needs it as much as ever. The purity of the life of Christ is always a blessing to what encounters it and we, as bearers of Christ’s light, are to be just that in the world. Moreover, we can be confident that we are a blessing to our world as we contemplate and receive the life of Christ through our sacramental liturgy and through the many other ways that we encounter the living God. We pray that, as we receive the blessing of the light and love of Christ, we also find the confidence to be bearers of such light and love to the world we live in. Not by arrogant overbearing, but in small ways, often unseen ways, flavouring and illuminating the places we happen to be.

You are the salt of the earth.
Mt 5:13
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
The Psalmist declares that a light rises in the darkness for the upright. Let us also rise up from the darkness and offer our needs to God.

Petitions
We pray for the leaders of our Church, that they may be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and great examples in their faithfulness to God as we move towards the Synod of 2023.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of nations, that they may not be selfish in their actions but rather be selfless in the giving of their lives in service to their communities.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all students from primary and secondary schools and tertiary institutions as well as all teaching staff as they commence the new academic year. May they illuminate the life of Christ in all that they do.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray that the bread which comes from God’s creation and is the work of human hands may be shared equally and fairly.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who are alone in the world, especially those without family or friends. May they see light in the darkness through the care of those around them who care.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who struggle to deal with grief, mental illness, serious illness and loss of identity. May they find a way to the light of Christ through others who light the way.
(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion
We offer these prayers knowing that our needs will be heard and answered. We make our prayer through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ our Lord.
Amen.
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<td>Come, my way, my truth, my life</td>
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<td>Forth in the peace of Christ we go</td>
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<td>God of mercy and compassion</td>
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<td>I want to walk as a child of the light</td>
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<td>Lord, whose love in humble service</td>
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<td>O Christ, the healer we have come</td>
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<td>O come and sing to God, the Lord</td>
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<td>Out of darkness</td>
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<td>Praise, my soul, the king of heaven</td>
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<td>Return to God</td>
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<td>Send down the fire of your justice</td>
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<td>Song for human rights</td>
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<td>The gift of the Holy Spirit</td>
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<td>The living God my shepherd is</td>
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<td>Tree of life</td>
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<td>We are the light</td>
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<td>We are the light of the world</td>
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Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 111: A light rises in the darkness for the upright./Alleluia!

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Music selections by Michael Mangan

True colours shine (TCS) based on Mt 5:14-16) [Gathering, Recessional]
Taking it to the streets (TWB) based on Mt 5:13-16) [Gathering, Recessional]
Whatever we do (DOM) based on Mt 25:34-45 [Gifts, Communion]
12 February 2023
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction
Jesus’ presence attests to the benevolent wisdom of God’s law. However, following the Law is not simply about external behaviour. It rests on an attitude of the heart.

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

Lord Jesus, you are the wisdom of God. Lord have mercy.
You came to complete the Law of God. Christ have mercy.
You direct us to the Father. Lord have mercy.

Collect
The oration
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.
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 and ever.

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 characterized 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.

Acknowledgement
The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading
Sirach 15:15–20
Fire and water; one burns, the other quenches. The contrast is clear, and we are in a blessed position, aided with the wisdom of God, to be able to recognise that contrast and reach out to that which gives life.

Responsorial Psalm
Psalm 119(118):1–2, 4–5, 17–18, 33–34. R. v. 1
Happy are they who follow the law of the Lord!
Today’s selection of verses come from a long acrostic Psalm that praises the Lord for giving the people of God such marvellous instructions and dictates to live by.

Second Reading
1 Corinthians 2:6–10
We hear a continuation of teaching from Corinthians where Paul compares the attractive philosophies of the day with the sort of wisdom of God that goes beyond any human understanding. Yet, it is a wisdom available to us through the Holy Spirit.

Gospel Reading
The more difficult parts of the Sermon on the Mount become apparent in today’s reading from Matthew. A collection of six instances of the Law of Moses (four this Sunday, two next) are taken by Jesus and presented in a way that call us to deep and authentic goodness.

Reflection
This week’s selection from the Sermon on the Mount, particularly in its longer form, takes in a number of teachings that pertain to the Law. Known as the Torah in the Hebrew, the Law is still regarded as the heart of the Jewish Scriptures and of the
Christian Old Testament. Today’s Gospel reading starts with a remarkable statement that Jesus has come not to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to ensure that every stroke is fulfilled and that not even one of these commandments should be considered disposed of – none can be infringed by those seeking to live in the kingdom of God (vv. 17-19). As if to underline the point, the opening finishes with the statement that ‘unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven’ (v. 20).

Wow! What extraordinary words. The scribes and Pharisees are presented in all sorts of ways in the Gospels, but what is always recognised is that they were experts in the Law. They wrestled, deliberated, taught and sought to apply the Law better than anybody else. So, at a quick glance, are we being told that followers of Christ are supposed to hold to the entirety of the Law, with all its intricate commands and directives better than the experts of the day?

There is much to unpack and we cannot possibly do it all here, but there are some important layers that may help us navigate our way through. Firstly, we should resist assuming that what Jesus means is literal application with little or no interpretive understanding. A pointer in that direction is the fact that what follows Jesus’ opening statements are many verses where Jesus himself deliberates and interprets various precepts of the Law.

More significantly, Jesus points out that nothing of the Law has been removed or superseded with his coming. However, that does not equate (as some might assume) that the coming of Christ requires a legalistic implementation of the Torah. Rather, it is likely that Jesus is attempting to draw attention to a fuller understanding of the Law. Firstly, there is the inner disposition that Jesus is clearly pointing to that matters as much if not more than any external action. However, there is also a broader context at play. The Law is part of a story of relationship between a God who saves and a people seeking freedom from bondage and a life of promise. The Torah, we recall, was given to the chosen people not simply because God loves to be a rule giver but, rather, because God wanted the Hebrew people to retain their freedom, to become a people of God and become a people who could enjoy life in the Promised Land. To put it succinctly, the Law only makes sense within the context of the loving relationship within which it was founded.

So, the letter of the law, every ‘stroke and dot’ does not simply mean what it seems in a literal sense. Rather, it means every layer of meaning and depth of relationship within which the Law sits. It is a relationship that is the story of Israel and continues to be the story of Jews and Christians to this day. So, yes, naturally Jesus does not come to destroy such a Law. Jesus is the continuation of it, the way through which we as a people continue to move from bondage to freedom. From a life in chains to life in all its glory.

Much is often made of the high moral standard that seems to be demanded when navigating the Sermon on the Mount, and especially the parts that we are hearing today. However, there is equally a deep relationship that Jesus is inviting people to and an infinitely gracious God that is asking us to hold to such teaching. As Ben Sirach in the first reading indicates, we can grasp the commandments as a matter of
choice. However, it is not entirely up to us and our own strength. The second reading speaks of a wisdom that is beyond any wisdom of this age. A gift of the Holy Spirit that probes even the depths of God is availed to those who love God. This Spirit helps us recognise and actualise the good that is otherwise beyond us. The Spirit will always aid us to take steps to form those inner convictions to act justly, lovingly and truthfully.

Jesus has not so much come to fulfill the Law in a legalistic sense as some magistrate or promulgator of legal code demanding adherence. Jesus has come to fulfill and complete it by his very presence with us. When we receive the Eucharist, we are being nourished with Jesus’ very body. When we received our baptism, we were gifted with the Holy Spirit to empower us to navigate the difficult challenging choices we sometimes confront. Further, even when we get it wrong, there is the constant mercy of God and the gift of reconciliation allowing us to overcome even the greatest misstep. God has created a sacramental universe and God’s aiding presence is entwined right through every human experience and ‘every letter of the Law’ is not extraneous to it. We truly can say, as Ben Sirach attests, ‘how great is the wisdom of God’ (15:15) in allowing us to know and navigate the good life with Jesus, the fulfilment of the Law, always at our side.

Be reconciled with each other.

Mt 5:24
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

God has prepared blessings for us that are greater than the mind can imagine. Therefore, let us with confidence bring our needs and the needs of our world before God.

Petitions

We pray that all the leaders of the Church may clearly proclaim the Gospel of the Lord and instil into all people the confidence to choose the way of life over the way of death. May synodality be the goal of all the Church.

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

We pray that political and business leaders may let God’s word shine upon their policies and decisions and guide them to be generous in their service of those in need.

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

We pray that those who are at the beginning of life or at the end of life. May their fragility be respected so that they might live with dignity all the days of their lives.

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

We pray for those preparing for the sacrament of marriage that they may find strength and joy in the will of God for themselves and for their families.

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

We pray for those who have returned to work and school after the holiday period. May they be mindful of the blessings of rest and enter into their duties with enthusiasm and joy.

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

We pray that the sick may experience the consolation of God’s strength, and that those who have died may enter into the light of divine glory.

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

Conclusion

We pray with confidence that our prayers will be answered as we strive to keep faithful to the way of life Christ taught us. Through the power of the Spirit and in the name of your Son Jesus Christ, who is Lord forever and ever.

Amen.
Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<td>Eye has not seen</td>
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<td>Grant to us, O Lord</td>
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<td>How rich are the depths of God</td>
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<td>Jesus Christ is waiting</td>
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<td>Love Divine, all loves excelling</td>
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<td>O God, your people gather</td>
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<td>The hound of heaven</td>
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<td>This is my will, my one command</td>
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<td>We live and love your word</td>
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<td>What does the Lord require?</td>
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Psalm 118: Happy are they who follow the law of the Lord!

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<tr>
<th>Psalm 118</th>
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19 February 2023
Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction
Today we hear a continuation of Jesus’ engagement with the Law of Moses. We will be entering into Lent in coming weeks and leave the Sermon on the Mount behind, but we carry the call to ‘be holy’ with us, recognising that holiness is not a purely spiritual exercise nor holding to objective arbitrary law. Holiness is founded in God’s love and in love of others.

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

Lord Jesus, you reveal the wisdom of God. Lord have mercy.
You are the perfection of God. Christ have mercy.
You came to draw us to the Father. Lord have mercy.

Collect

*The oration*
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.
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.

The collect for Sunday 7 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 dissent and dispute in a monastery. The text is also closely related to the prayer for Sunday 4, 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 Sunday 4 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, 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 dissention 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.

Acknowledgement

The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by Gerard Moore for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). Our thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Leviticus 19:1–2, 17–18

The text from Leviticus prefigures the teachings of Jesus – how we treat our brothers and sisters is fundamental to the whole Law.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 103(102):1–4, 8, 10, 12–13. R. v. 8

The Lord is kind and merciful.

Today’s Psalm is a reminder that the foundation of loving others rests first in God’s constant mercy shown toward us.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 3:16–23

The repeated theme that we have heard from Corinthians in recent weeks continues; God’s wisdom far supersedes human wisdom. This week, Paul focusses on how we are called to unity in such wisdom. Being a family that belongs to Christ is the only source of self-importance that matters.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 5:38–48

The first chapter of the Sermon on the Mount finishes with a call to a life mirroring the perfection of God.
Reflection

Any parent or anyone close to families of parents with young children would likely have witnessed the process of a child attempting to take their first steps. All children are different and begin walking at different times and with various methods of getting there. I recall one of my own children was a good crawler, but not so interested in walking. My wife and I were not particularly worried, but at some point we started, like many parents in similar situations, attempting to help our child learn the basic skill of walking through various forms of enticement and encouragement. It was relatively slow going; she might stand occasionally, happy to lean on items and waddle along on her feet, so we knew she had the basic ability. However, she just didn’t seem interested in taking that jump of letting go of any support, standing on her own strength and taking those steps.

This changed quite quickly one day when spending a weekend away with some friends. Among them was a young toddler about a year older than my child. They delighted in each other’s company and suddenly, with the older toddler friend running around having fun, my own child was drawn to get up and do the same. Where our parental enticements didn’t seem to work, a relatively short time with my daughter’s walking friend drew her up and on her legs, attempting and quickly succeeding in joining the run around play with the older child. Of course, my daughter was not perfect. Not even close, she was wobbly and up and down all weekend as she worked it all out.

The point is, that sometimes we need that enticing experience that seems a bit out of reach to help us recognise what we are capable of – and something of that is happening in today’s Gospel message. In it we hear a continuation of the high standard of life that Jesus is calling his followers to.

However, it is helpful to recognise a couple of things. Firstly, the ‘perfection’ that Christ’s followers are being called to is God’s first. It is ‘perfect’ because it is God’s ways. Such a statement can cause us to assume a mutual exclusivity; if it’s God’s ways, it cannot possibly be our way in an identical manner. It is simply beyond us. Perhaps part of today’s scripture message is that teachings such as turning the other cheek and love of enemies might seem beyond us, however, that does not make it utterly impossible, at least from God’s perspective.

Like the story of my daughter learning to walk, in one sense, it would seem silly to have told my crawling daughter to “walk perfectly as your earthly father walks”. It would make no sense on the face of it; however, my statement is reasonable in another sense in that she was going to be capable of it in due time and I could see her potential where she could not. It’s hard to know the mind of a young child, but when considering my daughter on the edge of toddlerhood, she probably didn’t realise that she could walk and certainly she wasn’t aware that she could do all the things she can do now as a young woman – running, jumping, athletic activities of all kinds. When she saw what she was capable of in a mode that made sense and motivated her, she was indeed able to take steps (in more ways than one) in that direction.
So, we too hear the call of the perfect life, but we also draw on the witness of the scriptures, great men and women of the faith, and people near and far who can encourage us to join in the journey toward the perfection of Christ. Such sources show us the joy of such a life in our reality.

This leads to another important point; we are called to be perfect not as a matter of being inerrant or infallible in the total sense of the term. Such a thing is evidently not the experience of the world we currently live in. Rather, it is a direction we're supposed to be heading in. A model of being, illustrated in the person of Christ, to show us what we are actually capable of. That we can stretch and move from moral infancy to moral maturity.

We tend to think of the Christian life, especially its moral dimensions, as either on or off, right or wrong, black or white – perfect or imperfect. However, we must remember that the Christian life is just that, a life, a dynamic existence in motion. We are a pilgrim church after all. The call to ‘be perfect’ is not a static state that we either are or are not. Only God can claim to have a perfect state of being. We, on the other hand, are being called to form ourselves in the image of the Perfect.

The call to ‘be perfect’ should not be equated to perfectionism. Jesus’ teaching of the ‘higher life’ should not be used as a verbal cudgel on ourselves or each other. It is an expression of who God is and what God ultimately wants. It is a reminder that, through Jesus Christ our Lord, we have a sense in what our purpose ultimately is. We may feel like we’re fumbling around, well short of the spiritual maturity that such high standards entail, but we’re more capable than we think, it is possible. We should hear Jesus’ words today as a loving reminder of what our true selves is capable of, even if we feel distant from it.

Moreover, we need not run before we crawl, toddle, or walk. Wherever we are at is where God will meet us, giving us vision of the next step on the way. Jesus will call us to the ‘perfect way’ but will meet us in our ‘imperfect reality’. In this imperfect reality, we can hear the voice of God in our prayer, in our sacramental life, and in people around us that will draw us closer to the perfection of God.
Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction
The Psalmist reminds us that all good things come from the kindness and mercy of God. With faith in such kindness and mercy we bring our needs in prayer.

Petitions
We pray for the leaders of our Church throughout the world as they walk together in faith towards the celebration of the Synod on Synodality. May this be fruitful for all the People of God.

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

We pray for the political and economic leaders of the world. May their hearts be open to the mercy of God so that their work bring economic and political justice in these difficult times of war, climate change and recession.

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

We pray for those at the beginning of life and those at the end of their natural lives. May their worth as creatures made in the image of God be respected and supported by all who care for them.

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

We pray for those who are sick, mentally or physically. May they be supported by caring hands in the medical profession and with compassion by their family and friends.

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

We pray for our community that in our work or study at home and in the world may be fruitful and a beacon of light for those around us.

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

We pray for those who mourn that they will be comforted and those who have died that they be welcomed into the kingdom of God.

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

Conclusion
God of love, we offer you these needs and the needs as yet unspoken in our hearts with the full knowledge and confidence that you hear our prayer. We ask this through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ our Lord.

Amen.
### Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>AOV1</th>
<th>AOV2</th>
<th>AOVK</th>
<th>GA</th>
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<th>CWBII</th>
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<td>All people that on earth do dwell</td>
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<td>Eye has not seen</td>
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<td>Father of mercy, God of consolation</td>
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<td>Forgive our sins as we forgive</td>
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<td>For the fruits of all creation</td>
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<td>God gives his people strength</td>
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<td>In Christ there is no east or west</td>
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<td>Joyful, joyful we adore You</td>
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<td>Lord of all nations, grant me grace</td>
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<td>Lord, whose love in humble service</td>
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<td>Love divine, all loves excelling</td>
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<td>O breathe on me, O breath of God</td>
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<td>The Church of Christ, in every age</td>
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<td>The servant song</td>
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<td>This is my will my one command</td>
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<td>To live like Jesus</td>
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<td>Where there is charity and love</td>
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<td>Where true charity is dwelling</td>
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### Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

_Psalm 102: The Lord is kind and merciful._

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<td>pg. 62</td>
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<td>pg. 78</td>
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</table>
Our Contributors

Chris deSilva
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

Peter Black
Fr Peter Black is a priest of the Archdiocese and is Professor Emeritus of Moral Theology at the University of Notre Dame Australia. He has co-authored two books: The Essential Moral Handbook: A Guide to Catholic Living (2003) and Life Death and Catholic Medical Choices: 50 Questions from the Pews (2011).

Anthony Doran
Anthony Doran is priest of the Archdiocese of Melbourne, currently Parish Priest of Strathmore. 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, a semi-retired teacher of Latin, French and Italian, graduated with a Masters in Theology from Newcastle University in 2014. Biblical studies and eco-theology remain ongoing passions. Currently serving on the National Leadership Team of the Grail in Australia (an Association of the Lay Faithful) she is also the coordinator of the Grail’s International Spirituality Network. She is one of the working team responsible for Australian Women Preach, a weekly podcast of women proclaiming the gospel, launched in March 2021 to highlight women’s theological voices in the light of Plenary Council discernment.

Chris Kan
Chris Kan is Dean of Campus Ministry at Sacred Heart College, Sorrento in Western Australia. An Oblate of the Benedictine Community of New Norcia, Chris’ interests include Monastic Liturgy and history, and the use of Narrative in Theology. He recently completed an M.Phil examining the liturgical changes at New Norcia after the Second Vatican Council.

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.

**Mary-Anne Lumley**
Mary-Anne Lumley is currently liturgist and teacher of Religious Education at John XXIII College in Mount Claremont. Mary-Anne has worked across TAFE, secondary and primary education sectors. Over several years in Perth and the UK, she has been involved in music ministry as well as preparing and celebrating liturgy.

**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 Marquis**
Angela is the Liturgist at St Joseph’s Catholic Church in Hobart. She studied teaching after completing a BA majoring in English and Philosophy. Her undergrad Honours Thesis was entitled, “A Theopoetics of Feminist Faith.” Angela taught in primary schools throughout Southern Tasmania until 2016 when she and her husband moved to an Indigenous Community in the Tiwi Islands to teach in a Catholic primary school. Whilst there, she began studying Theology through UoN and transferred to BBI in 2017. Currently in the final year of her Masters, Angela’s focus throughout has been on the silenced female voice in major Monotheistic religions, as well as interfaith dialogue. Angela worked as part of the liturgy team for BBI’s recent conference, Women As Church, and is currently part of the organising team for the podcast series, Australian Women Preach.

**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 the former editor of the Australian Journal of Liturgy, a member of the Australian Academy of Liturgy, Chairperson of the Madorla 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.

Thomas O’Loughlin
Born in Dublin, 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* (2019). He is directing the new Brepols Library of Christian Sources, a series of bi-lingual edition of patristic and medieval texts.

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.
Musicians’ Appendix
Abbreviations and Explanations

PM  Psalms for All Time. Paul Mason © 2007 Paul Mason
Published by Willow Publishing Pty Ltd.
Sales: info@willowconnection.com.au
Paul Mason’s website www.liturgicalsong.com
PM  Vol 2 Psalms for All Time: Lectionary psalms for Sundays and Feasts. Paul
Mason ©  2017 Paul Mason. Published by Liturgical Song.
PFS  Psalms for Feasts and Seasons;
Revised and Augmented Full Music Edition Christopher
Willcock. Published by Collins Dove. All music copyright
© Christopher Willcock SJ 1977, 1990
LPSF  The Lyric Psalter: Revised Grail Lectionary Psalms,
Solemnities Feasts and Other Occasions. Music by
Tony Alonso and Marty Haugen
Published by GIA Publications, Inc. © GIA 2012
LPA  The Lyric Psalter: Revised Grail Lectionary Psalms, Year B
Music by Tony Alonso and Marty Haugen
Published by GIA Publications, Inc. © GIA 2012
CWB  Catholic Worship Book I
Published by Collins and E J Dwyer 1985
© Compilation the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of
Melbourne 1985
CWBI Catholic Worship Book II
Published by Morning Star Publishing 2016
© Compilation the Australian Episcopal Conference
of the Australian Catholic Church
AOV1  As One Voice Volume 1.
Published by Willow Connection Pty Ltd.
© Willow Connection Pty Ltd. 1992
AOV2  As One Voice Volume 2.
Published by Willow Connection Pty Ltd.
© Willow Connection Pty Ltd.
AOVNG  As One Voice The Next Generation.
© 2009 Willow Publishing Pty Ltd.
Email info@willowpublishing.com.au
S&S1  Spirit & Song 1
S&S2  Spirit & Song 2
©Division of OCP. www.spiritandsong.com/ss
GA  Gather Australia. ©1995 by NLMC Publications and GIA
Publications Inc.
JOB  Psalms for the Sundays of Year B (Jenny O’Brien)
JOBF Psalms for the Easter Triduum and Other Major Feasts
Noble Street, Brighton, SA 5048
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)
Mass of Glory and Praise (Paul Mason – Publisher:
Mass Shalom (C. Smith arr. Mason –
Publisher: Willow Publishing.
Available from www.liturgicalsong.com)
Missa Cantata (Chant Mass) (arr. Geoffrey Cox –
Publisher Catholic Truth Society www.stpauls.com.au)

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 Recessionals** (* Masses with Children*)

- Chosen and Sent: LCC
- Do What Jesus Did*: GLM
- Hearts on Fire: SHOF
- Let’s Go*: TWB
- Live God’s Dream: LCC
- Love God, Love Each Other*: LCC
- Sing New Songs of Joy: FWS/CWBI
- Taking it to the Streets: TWB
- Till the End of Time*: TT
- True Colours Shine*: TCS

**COLLECTION CODES**

- LCC  *Let the Children Come* (2017)
- DOM  *Doors of Mercy* (2016)
- GLM  *1,2,3, God Loves Me* (2014)
- TWB  *This We Believe* (2012)
- MJC  *Mass Jubilee/Celebration* (2011)
- TWML  *That We Might Live* (2010)
- STAR  *The Star* (2007)
- TCS  *True Colours Shine* (2007)
- TT  *This is the Time* (2005)
- SHOF  *Setting Hearts on Fire* (2001)
- SYJ  *Sing Your Joy* (1993-97)

Ps 95:1

Come sing out our joy to God.

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