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## Anzac Day - 25 April 2024

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# 25 April 2024

## Angela Marquis

Reflection by Angela Marquis

### Introduction

On this day, we recollect the sacrifice of the hundreds of men who lost their lives on the shores of Gallipoli, and the hundreds of thousands of women and men who have given the same sacrifice in the ensuing 109 years. Our readings remind us that their lives have not been truly lost. Tested and found true, these brothers and sisters, have laid down their lives for their friends. Like grains of wheat, their death yields a rich harvest of memories as they live on in the hearts of all those who knew and loved them.

*(Editor's note: there are a selection of readings for Anzac Day. The reflections and introductions are only for the readings chosen by Angela Marquis)*

### Penitential Act

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

Lord Jesus, you are the true source of peace. Lord have mercy.

Through your death you bore much fruit. Christ have mercy.

You are our salvation. Lord have mercy

### First Reading

#### Wisdom 3:1-9

Death is not the final chapter. Wisdom teaches that while those who mourn cannot see past the disaster of absence and grief, the worthy have proven themselves, and will now live in God, live in love, and understand truth.

### Responsorial Psalm

#### Psalm 114(115):5-6; 115(116):10-11, 15-16

*I will walk in the presence of the Lord.*

Our God is compassionate and just, a protector of the simple, and saver of the helpless. The faithful who die are precious in the eyes of the Lord.

### Second Reading

#### Ephesians 2:13-18

In his death, Christ destroyed division and hostility. His Cross brought all together into one body and one spirit, united and reconciled with God.

## Gospel Reading

### John 12:23-28

In Jesus' last meal with his friends, he reminds them of his mission and purpose. To lay down our lives in service is the ultimate call of the Gospel: This is the call of Christ.

## Reflection

Our relationship with death is complicated. Some fear it, others loathe the thought of it, some wonder about the possibilities of the afterlife. For some death comes as a friend, for others it looms as a dark and painful shadow. It is always a mystery. Our microscopic lives on this small planet in the midst of a myriad of solar systems, might be seemingly worthless in the grand scheme of things, yet for us they are filled with meaning. Humanity is rich with possibility yet ordered by time, drawn to compassion yet driven by desire, commanded by love yet bound by its own mortality. For Christians, the hope of eternal life with God might humble even death, yet regardless of our common creed, the meaning of these words is as diverse as the number of people on the planet. Do we believe that this eternal life is somewhere out there? Does this sentiment simply comfort the ill or the bereaved? Or might we understand this concept as our souls living on in the hearts of those we leave behind?

In 1975, Eric Bogle wrote *The Green Fields of France* as a protest song in the wake of the IRA bombings in the 1970s and the anti-Irish racism that followed.<sup>1</sup> Bogle's intention was a subtle reminder that the Irish also fought in the trenches alongside the Brits and in service of the Empire, and the ballad is one of his trilogy of songs about the first World War. While *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda* is specifically directed at the ANZACs, both these songs, along with the third, *All the Fine Young Men*, speak to all who lost their lives in battle, regardless of their heritage. Bogle asks Willie McBride, the subject of *Green Fields*, and on whose grave he is sitting, if his comrades who lie with him know why they died. What drove these soldiers to *lay down their lives*? Did they understand the implications? Were they given a choice? Did they go into battle with their eyes open, in full knowledge of what lay before them? "When they answered the call," asks Bogle, "did they really believe that this war would end wars?" (*Green Fields*, Verse 4). This retrospective question places the heroic deeds of these men (and the countless human beings who have perished in wars thereafter), in a tragic sphere, for as Bogle laments, "the sorrow, the suffering, the glory, the pain, the killing and dying were all done in vain, for . . . it all happened again, and again, and again" (Verse 4). The futility of war, as captured by his words, is breathtaking.

Yet, their sacrifice guaranteed the protection of those homelands they had left behind, providing safety, freedom and access to the comforts and lifestyle that we often take for granted. Their lives became the perishing seeds in the soil that would eventually provide shade and shelter for future generations. All of us continue to reap the "rich harvest" of their sacrifice (John 12:24).

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<sup>1</sup> See McGreevy, R (2015). <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/music/green-fields-of-france-written-to-tackle-anti-irish-prejudice-1.2108217>

On the evening prior to the Passion narrative in John's account, Jesus is troubled as he sits with his friends. Faced with the prospect of imminent death, he perhaps laments that his mission is drawing to a close, that he has not had the time to do what he wanted to do, that his disciples do not yet understand everything he had set out to explain. They sense in him the trepidation with which he now speaks yet still struggle with the concept of a Messiah who, contrary to their expectation, is not destined to rise with power and glory and free them from their oppressors. They remain the "unwise" disciples: their eyes have now seen that Jesus is destined to die and his "going looked like a disaster" – his leaving them, an "annihilation" (Wis. 3:2, 3).

Did Jesus truly understand everything that his future held? Could he envisage the suffering that was to come? While he prophesied that one of the twelve, who dipped his bread in the oil with him, would betray him (Matt. 26:23), and that Peter, one of his closest friends, would deny him (Matt. 26:34, Luke 22:34), could Jesus imagine the torment of the following day as he sat on the floor that night, washing the feet of his disciples? Could he foresee the anguish of his friends abandoning him, the torture he would endure at the hands of the soldiers, the agony of the cross, and the desolation felt in the moment of his death? While he appears to know exactly what he is doing, Jesus does not step into the dark night of his Passion with unmitigated understanding. Rather, he possesses absolute faith – faith that this road was his path – and with that faith, Jesus chose to go forth in love and offer his life as a ransom for many.

Australians have a particular understanding of *laying down one's life*. Henry Lawson wrote of *Mateship* in the early 1900s,

True mateship looks for no limelight. They say that self-preservation is the strongest instinct of mankind (*sic*); but I think the preservation of the life or liberty of a mate – man or woman – is the first and strongest. It is the instinct that irresistibly impels a thirsty parched man, out on the burning sands, to pour the last drop of water down the throat of a dying mate, where none save the sun or moon or stars may see.<sup>2</sup>

The ANZACs embodied this *mateship*, now iconic to our diggers. It is the laying down of life, not necessarily for country and those they have never met, but for that one alongside whom they fight, that I believe drives this willing sacrifice. Soldiers are "brought very close, by the blood of Christ. For he . . . has made the two into one and broken down the barrier which used to keep them apart" (Eph. 2:13-14). Jesus did not ensure peace in our conflicted world when he laid down his life – "sorrow, suffering, glory and pain" followed his death just as it did Willie McBride's. Jesus however, sowed the seed for those who came after through his promise of resurrection. His death did not end suffering but gave hope to those who suffered. Through his willingness to die, Christ offered us a glimpse of death's mystery, for while we now "see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12), in our death, we know that all will be revealed. Robert Binyon reminds us, those who have gone before us live on in us, "felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight, to the innermost heart of their own land they are known, as the stars are known to the night" (*For the fallen*). Lest we forget.

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<sup>2</sup> Lawson, H. (1911), *Mateship: a discursive yarn*. Lothian Melbourne <https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-2562644694>, pp. 29-30.

# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

People of God, we have had divine love lavished on us and so we confidently offer our needs and the needs of our world.

## Petitions

We pray for the Church and the leadership of Pope Francis. May we be unified in this joyous period of Eastertide as we pursue a synodal way of being the People of God.

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

We pray for bishops, priests and deacons who serve our community. May they be strengthened by the Holy Spirit to faithfully continue their vocation and live the gospel.

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

We pray for those who build and reorder our church spaces for Mass. May it be evident in their work that the Christ who was the stone rejected by the builders has become our cornerstone.

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

We pray for the leaders of our country that they respect the lives lost in war and always work towards peace and justice. May the work of the ANZACS always be respected in this country.

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

We pray for those in Australia who are carers for those in need; from babies to end of life care. May they be granted the strength and discernment to faithfully protect those in their care especially in this latter part of the pandemic.

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

We pray for those who have died. The psalmist tells us that faithful who die are precious in the eyes of the Lord. In faith we know they are with God.

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

## Conclusion

God of mercy, we bring you these needs and those unspoken in our hearts knowing that you hear us through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

**Amen.**

## Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Anzac Day (25 April 2023)

Title	AOV1	AOV2	CWB	CWBII	GA
A blessing hymn for Australia				655	
Advance Australia fair				656	
For Australia				545	
For the healing of the nations					513
God of peace		138		546	553
Help of Christians, guard this land			711	429	
Make me a channel of your peace		126	793	555	490
Nearer my God to thee		154			
No greater love				622	460
O God, our help in ages past	175		767	568	459
Peace I leave with you my friends			785		517
Peace with the Father				591	

## Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

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

	CWB	JOBA
Psalm 71	175	pg. 10

Psalm 114/115: *I will walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living.*

	CWB
Psalm 114/115	152a

## Music selections by Michael Mangan

**No greater love** (SYJ) [Gathering, Recessional]

**One body in Christ** (Esp V1) (TWB) [Communion]

**Peace for all time** (TCS) [Communion, Recessional]