

# Monty & Eltham

The Catholic Parishes of  
St Francis Xavier & Our Lady Help of Christians



We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people who are the traditional custodians of this land and pay respect to the elders past, present and emerging of the Kulin Nation.

## FYI...

- The Parish of Eltham is anticipating a visit from Archbishop Peter Comensoli for 10am Sunday morning Mass, 19th March. All Welcome.
- Every weekday Mass during Lent the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick will be a part of each Liturgy, so please let people know in the Parish who might like to be anointed.
- The Parish Communal Rite of Forgiveness, including grade 4 students and parents from our schools, will be held on Monday 20th March at 7pm at Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham.
- Over this weekend ashes are available to all parishioners who wish to start the Lenten journey and who did not participate on Ash Wednesday.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available a half hour before weekday and weekend masses. Please avail yourself of these opportunities.
- This weekend marks the first anniversary of the war in Ukraine started by Russia.



## Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, and the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.' But he replied, 'Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said, 'throw yourself down; for scripture says: He will put you in his angels' charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.'

Jesus said to him, 'Scripture also says: You must not put the Lord your God to the test.'

Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 'I will give you all these,' he said, 'if you fall at my feet and worship me.' Then Jesus replied, 'Be off, Satan! For scripture says: you must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.'

Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.

## Reflection:

In a sense Matthew gives the game away right at the start. Jesus, he writes, was "led by the Spirit into the wilderness". This is the Spirit who has just descended on the newly baptised Jesus. Matthew is assuring his readers that, whatever is to follow, it will occur under the power of the Spirit.

There's a second connection between Jesus' baptism and the temptations. A voice from heaven has just testified, "This is my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on him". It is in accord with this declaration that Jesus deals with the devil's enticements. He responds as God's beloved Son, in contrast to the Chosen People who repeatedly lost confidence in God's covenant love on their forty-year journey out of Egypt.

Many details of this story - the number forty, the fasting, the three temptations, the scripture quotations - evoke the exodus and Moses. One of Matthew's concerns in his gospel is to present Jesus as the new Moses. Here Jesus draws on the Torah to rebuff the devil. A little later in the gospel, when Jesus delivers the Sermon on the Mount, he will give his own authoritative interpretation of the Law and the Prophets.

As familiar as it may be, the story of the temptations retains its capacity to engage. Once the scene is set, the interactions between Jesus and his antagonist are charged with energy. The story gathers momentum until the duel comes to its peaceful resolution.

**Break Open the Word 2023**

*This parish has a commitment to ensuring the safety of children and vulnerable people in our community.*

*For more information visit [pol.org.au/eltham](http://pol.org.au/eltham) or [pol.org.au/montmorency](http://pol.org.au/montmorency).*

*We support the recommendations of the Royal Commission into institutional abuse and pray for all the survivors.*



## PARISH TEAM & INFORMATION

### OUR PEOPLE & OUR CONTACT DETAILS



#### **Parish Priest**

**Michael Sierakowski - Moderator**  
[michael.sierakowski@cam.org.au](mailto:michael.sierakowski@cam.org.au)

#### **Parish Office**

86 Mayona Road  
 9435 4742  
 Tue - Fri 9am-3pm  
[montmorency@cam.org.au](mailto:montmorency@cam.org.au)

**Kate Kogler: Parish Secretary**  
[eltham@cam.org.au](mailto:eltham@cam.org.au)

**Peter Williams: Child Safety Officer**  
[SFX&OLHC.ChildSafety@cam.org.au](mailto:SFX&OLHC.ChildSafety@cam.org.au)

Website: [www.pol.org.au/montmorency](http://www.pol.org.au/montmorency)  
[www.pol.org.au/eltham](http://www.pol.org.au/eltham)  
 (pol stands for Parish OnLine)

Facebook:  
[St Francis Xavier Parish Montmorency](#)  
 Monty & Eltham Newsletter & Facebook items:  
[eltham@cam.org.au](mailto:eltham@cam.org.au)

#### **Schools**

**St Francis Xavier Primary School**  
 Principal: Philip Cachia: 9435 8474  
[principal@sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au](mailto:principal@sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au)  
[www.sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au](http://www.sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au)

**Holy Trinity Primary School**  
 Principal: Vince Bumpstead: 9431 0888  
[principal@htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au](mailto:principal@htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au)  
[www.htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au](http://www.htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au)

**Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School**  
 Acting Principal: Mark Pinkerton: 9439 7824  
[school@olhceltham.catholic.edu.au](mailto:school@olhceltham.catholic.edu.au)  
[www.olhceltham.catholic.edu.au](http://www.olhceltham.catholic.edu.au)



## Monty & Eltham Calendar of Events

### **Saturday 25**

11:00am Baptism: Orlando Montmorency  
 6:00pm Mass Montmorency

### **Sunday 26**

8:30am Mass Montmorency  
 10:00am Mass Eltham  
 12:00pm Baptism: Josiphina Eltham

### **Tuesday 28**

9:30am Mass Montmorency  
 7:30pm Small Church Community Montmorency

### **Wednesday 1 March**

6:30am Meditation Montmorency  
 9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Eltham  
 10:30am ASRC Food Collection Montmorency  
 1:00pm Small Church Community Montmorency  
 7:30pm Small Church Community Montmorency

### **Thursday 2**

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Montmorency  
 2:30pm Mass Calvary Lower Plenty Garden Views

### **Friday 3**

9:30am Mass Eltham

### **Saturday 4**

2:00pm KADASIG General Meeting Montmorency  
 6:00pm Mass Montmorency

### **Sunday 5**

8:30am Mass Montmorency  
 10:00am Mass Eltham

### **Tuesday 7**

9:30am Mass Montmorency  
 10:00am Craft Group Montmorency  
 11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry Eltham

### **Wednesday 8**

6:30am Meditation Montmorency  
 9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Eltham  
 10:30am ASRC Food Collection Montmorency

### **Thursday 9**

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Montmorency

### **Friday 10**

9:30am Mass Eltham

### **Saturday 11**

12:00pm Baptism: Nicoletta, Louie, James Montmorency  
 6:00pm Mass Montmorency

### **Sunday 12**

8:30am Mass Montmorency  
 10:00am Mass Eltham

### **Tuesday 14**

9:30am Mass Montmorency

### **Wednesday 15**

6:30am Meditation Montmorency  
 9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Eltham  
 10:30am ASRC Food Collection Montmorency  
 1:00pm Small Church Community Montmorency  
 7:30pm Small Church Community Montmorency

### **Thursday 16**

<b>RECONCILIATION</b>			
available half an hour before any weekday or weekend Parish Mass.			
<b>Collections: 12 &amp; 19 Feb 2023</b>			
	OLHC	SFX	
Thanksgiving	\$417.00	\$1,021.00	
Presbytery	\$1,032.85	\$772.30	
<b>Stewardship Offering</b>			
Month	OLHC	SFX	Total
November	\$6,056.61	\$8,746.00	\$14,802.61
December	\$6,257.77	\$11,796.00	\$18,053.77
January	\$7,248.10	\$8,760.60	\$16,008.70

**Support Montmorency Parish by giving with CDFpay**

Simply scan the QR code with your mobile phone and in a few easy steps, you can securely give to your parish.



**Support Eltham Parish by giving with CDFpay**

Simply scan the QR code with your mobile phone and in a few easy steps, you can securely give to your parish.





*Let us pray for all those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith ...*

**Montmorency**

For those whose anniversaries are at this time:

*Carmelina Alberti, Antonio Chincarini Snr, Jim Deehan, Maree Hall, Vernon & Ena Rodrigo*

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

*Gay, Gayle, Helen, Maurice, Arturo Bacani, Rita Bevanda, Kim Brisbane, Debbie Edgley (nee Vanderwert), Alana Foulds Bob Fraser, Melanie Lam, Lita Lee, Frances McDonald, Yvonne Mee, Cindy Morrissey, Andrew Pighin, Aguatha Spina, Melina Tenaglia*

**Eltham**

For the recently deceased:

*Will Bodycoat (9 years old), Alex Grgurovic*

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

*Violetta, Jade McAlear, Fiona Rogers, Rosemary Scully, Ian Sturman, James Sutton, Sarah Thompson*

To include an anniversary please contact Parish Office 9435 4742 or [eltham@cam.org.au](mailto:eltham@cam.org.au).



**Congratulations to all who celebrated their sacraments during January:**

**Saturday 25 February**

*St Francis Xavier, 11:00am*

Orlando Preston Rowe

Baptism

**Sunday 26 February**

*Our Lady Help of Christians, 12:00pm*

Josiphina Mariana Mesic

Baptism



**Thank You** to all who gave so generously to the **Eltham Vinnies Christmas Appeal**. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.



**We have an urgent request for housing for a mature-age solo parent with a 9 year old child.**

Due to the current difficulties in the rental market, and lack of social housing available, if anyone has or knows of any suitable accommodation in the Eltham or Montmorency areas, please contact the Parish Office on 9435 4742.

"We are quiet, respectful and considerate. I do not smoke, drink or have parties, and we do not own a pet. We will look after a property and keep it clean and in good order."

Please help if you can.

**HELP SYRIA.** *Aid to the Church in Need* (ACN) has launched an emergency appeal for the people in northern Syria desperate for help following the devastating earthquakes. ACN is begging for funds to support their long-time local project partners on the ground in Syria. To read more about what ACN is doing and to make an offering please visit [www.aidtochurch.org/syriaearthquake](http://www.aidtochurch.org/syriaearthquake).



Laxmi, 16, lives in Jajarkot, a remote district in Nepal where almost half of the population live below the poverty line. Tragedy struck when Laxmi was 10 years old and her father passed away. Her father worked hard to pay for his children's education and after losing him Laxmi was at risk of falling further into extreme poverty.

With the support of our partner Caritas Nepal, Laxmi joined a child's club at her school where she was encouraged to resume her education. Through the child's club, Laxmi developed the skills and confidence to become a leader, advocating for clean water taps at her school.

Laxmi is now excelling in her studies and working towards her dream of becoming a civil engineer. She continues to be involved in the child's club, serving as an advisor and mentoring the next generation of young leaders at her old school.

**Please donate to Project Compassion 2023.**

Together, we can help vulnerable communities face their challenges today and build a better tomorrow **For All Future Generations.**

You can donate through Project Compassion donation boxes and envelopes available from your parish, by visiting [www.caritas.org.au/project-compassion](http://www.caritas.org.au/project-compassion), or by calling 1800 024 413



# THE CATHOLIC DILEMMA ON UKRAINE

Is the Catholic Church once more in danger of failing to meet one of the great moral challenges of the age? For all their good intentions, Pius XII during the Second World War and Benedict XV during the First have not impressed historians with their moral leadership. Pope Francis has to be careful that his papacy, apparently still hopeful of playing a neutral peacemaker between Russia and Ukraine, does not once again blur the distinction between good and evil. Crimes are being perpetrated that cry out to Heaven for vengeance, but these cries must be heard to be heeded. The duty of the Holy See, if it has a claim to be the moral leader of humanity, is to be that voice. Impartiality in the face of evil is not Christian. There is no moral equivalence between Russia and Ukraine.

Take the ancient city of Aleppo in north-western Syria. To capture it from the rebels, Russian forces pounded it by artillery and air strikes until it looked as if an earthquake had hit it. These were the tactics Russia used in Grozny, capital of Chechnya, and last year in Mariupol, southern Ukraine. Now a real earthquake has arrived to compound Aleppo's torture. And Russia's malign role in reducing Syria to a failed state captive to Moscow's interests is the primary reason why essential aid to the people of Aleppo and many other destroyed towns and cities, especially in the rebel-held areas of Idlib province, has arrived so inadequately and so late. Many more will die as a result.

The world's reaction to the two earthquakes that hit Syria and Türkiye, possibly the worst for centuries and affecting some 17 million people, has shown humanity at its best and most compassionate. The leadership of the World Health Organisation has been exemplary and courageous. An appeal to the British public raised £30 million in the first 24 hours, and the picture is similar elsewhere. But what has happened and is happening in Ukraine shows humanity at its worst. Russia is currently launching a new offensive that is as merciless towards the people of Ukraine as it is to the Russian conscripts forced to fight in this most unholy of wars - and as merciless as Russia's actions in Syria and Chechnya. There is a strong connection.

Yet, in the Catholic Church, "Blessed are the peacemakers" seems to have eclipsed "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness". That thirst lies behind the long-standing Christian tradition of the just war that has instructed moral thinking in this area in the absence of any other guidance. It lies behind the conventions of international law that govern all armed conflicts; and behind the charter of the United Nations that condemns unjust aggression between nations in the light of the two most obvious historical examples, the two world wars.

If those just war foundations of moral analysis regarding armed conflict are to continue to bear the weight put on them, however, the tradition must be sustained and renewed. Instead of being sharpened and made more precise as conditions change, it has been left fallow, answering questions no one is asking - such as what are the peaceful alternatives to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, as is Vladimir Putin might be induced to settle the matter over a chessboard. Pope Francis has even suggested that the just

war tradition is no longer relevant.

Armed aggression by one nation state against the territorial integrity of another is always unjust. Resistance to aggression is therefore just. But just war theorists usually insert the proviso of proportionality: measures taken in self-defence must be on a scale proportionate to the harm done. That sounds reasonable, but is the harm to be quantified in terms of human or material cost, in a utilitarian way, or is it at a higher moral level? Invaded countries react instinctively to an armed aggressor, and fight on even when the cause is hopeless. The Polish army resisted the Nazis in 1939, and the Belgians in 1940, even though they were inevitably overwhelmed and forced to surrender. Just war theory seems to place far too small a price on the absolute moral good of resisting an invasion of sovereignty even when resistance is unlikely to succeed.

Churchill's famous words from 4 June 1940 invoke that sense of an absolute good at stake: "We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender..." Many Americans thought Britain should seek peace on the best terms available. Given the inevitably huge cost of fighting on, was he morally wrong to say that?

If he was right, then it is not for the rest of the world to tell the people of Ukraine that they must look for peaceful solutions in order to limit the damage that Russia is doing to them; only they can decide those limits. Their defence of their country has to be regarded as justified, for as long as they remain committed to it. That is a crucial factor in the debate now taking place in the West about arms supplies to Ukraine. Is the West a stakeholder in the conflict with the right to withdraw its support if, for instance, Russia offered peace terms that Ukraine found unacceptable? On the other hand, should there be limits to what Ukraine can do to defend itself? What light can just war shed on that?

Is sovereignty such as absolute that any amount of damage, including civilian casualties, an acceptable price to pay for defending it? And to whom is the question addressed? What if the sovereignty to be defended is not one's own but that of an ally? Take Article 5 of the Nato treaty (to which Ukraine is not a party, but wishes to be): "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all ... and if such an armed attack occurs, each of them ... will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force."

This is a noble sentiment, but is it compatible with just war theory? Or, to put it the other way round, does just war theory need to develop to encompass such absolute commitments and declare them to be morally good? And would such developments remove the scope for ambiguity about the conflict in Ukraine, and clarify what the Catholic Church has to say about it?

Many find it impossible to square a belief in the infinite reach of God's mercy with the idea that some will be condemned to suffer punishment for all eternity / by **OLIVER RAFFERTY**

# An infernal paradox

**THE TURBULENT** Irish Jesuit George Tyrrell published in the *Weekly Register* in mid-December 1899 an essay on hell. With the boldness that was eventually to lead to his excommunication, Tyrrell gave it the title "A Perverted Devotion". Tyrrell suggested that Catholic belief in hell might be seen as a form of devotion to God's justice. The problem, as Tyrrell admitted, was that in the history of the Church the idea of hell had quickly deteriorated into hatred of wrongdoers, a human cruelty about the torments of the damned. Even Aquinas had believed that one of the blessings of the elect in Heaven was to see the sufferings of those in hell.

For Tyrrell, the idea of hell should be a perplexity to reason, a shock to the affections, a violation of our sentiments. He asserted that the doctrine of hell was both cruel and unjust. Tyrrell was conscious that he was writing at a time when belief in human responsibility was crumbling, giving rise to an "emasculated morality" & "a flaccid indifferentism, under the name of benevolence". Sounds familiar? We, too, live in an age where we constantly want to remake God in our image and likeness. We select from the Scriptures a narrative that conforms to our needs and desires and rejects the rest. We argue for modes of human flourishing which would have horrified our forebears in the faith.

Traditionally, the Church has taught the possibility of eternal punishment for those who, without repentance, violate God's commands. Today we live in a Church, which by and large, is offended by the prospect of hell. We find it impossible to square our belief in the passionate love of God for the humanity he has created with the idea that some of us will be condemned to eternal punishment. But what of Christ's teaching that he would return at the end of the ages to judge each one of us according to our deeds? It is clear that Christ believed that some of us would have eternal life and others eternal punishment. Was he wrong?

Evil is a reality in our world. Irrespective of who or what we might regard as evil, do we believe evildoers

who do not repent will enter the kingdom of Heaven? Of course, as St Paul tells us, "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God". As Pope Francis famously declared: "Who am I to judge?" But while human judgement is fallible and imperfect, the judgement of God knows no such limitations. The human sense of justice and mercy is not that of the infinite God. We do not know the limits of God's purpose for our world. But if we who do evil things know that at some level evil deeds should be punished, why should we think that God will act differently? This does not touch on the nature of *how* God will punish evil, or whether or not such punishment is eternal. My colleague Harvey Egan SJ once perceptively wrote that the gates of hell are locked from the inside. Hell may be something we do to ourselves.

If we reject the idea of hell, is there to be no eternal justice for those who escaped justice in this world? It is not being holier than thou to ask if those who escape punishment for child rape, mass murder, genocidal activity, the exploitation and swindling of the innocent, or those who live simply to inflict pain and cruelty on others, all share, like the saints, the beatific vision. We are right to hesitate to preach hellfire and brimstone. Fear of God cannot be an enduring basis for faith in the God of love. It is not given to us to know by what metaphysical process an individual comes to be separated from God in the after-life. But a persistent exercise of free will, whereby a person consistently turns away from God and others, is the foundation of the Church's teaching on hell. Perhaps our discomfort with the doctrine of hell tells us as much about ourselves as it does about God.

The just and the unjust will live forever. Justification - the process of becoming righteous, of being



Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Descent into Hell*, 1568.

ALAMY/THE ART COLLECTION

discharged from our sins - is something brought about in us by Christ. But what if an individual, for whatever reason, rejects the process of justification? The freedom which underlines such a rejection is not without complications. Origen taught that human freedom is never definitive. But constant use of our freedom to embrace sin must build up in the spirit a residue which makes it hard for even God to overcome.

Was Julian of Norwich right to think that "all will be well"? It is a matter of hope that all will be saved. Still, no less a figure than Hans Urs von Balthasar talked of the "appalling mystery" of hell. Towards the end of his life, Pope Paul VI, who had a tendency to be a bit morose, said something to the effect that he hoped his sins would not prevent him from realising eternal bliss; when it was put to him that God is merciful, Paul responded that one should not be presumptuous about God's mercy. Ignatius of Loyola observes: "If the enemy [the devil] gives me thoughts of justice, I will immediately think of mercy; if he gives me thoughts of mercy, I will counter with justice."

I began with some reflections from George Tyrrell. In the end Tyrrell maintained that we should hold a "temperate agnosticism" about the existence of hell. Agnosticism is not denial. Hardly the last word on the matter but worthy of meditation.

**Oliver Rafferty SJ** is professor of modern Irish and ecclesiastical history at Boston College, Massachusetts.

Roster for THIS WEEKEND: 25/26 February 2023	
Armstrong, Miranda	E10:00
Bacani, Brian	W6:00
Ballenger, Nima	E10:00
Bowyer, Darrell	ASRC
Bowyer, Rosemary	ASRC
Bylsma, John	H10:00
Bylsma, Zvonka	H10:00
Davidson, John	PRYR
Dopheide, Marlis	C10:00
Dunell, Linda	ASE
French, Jossie	W8:30
Haines, Jan-Marie	E10:00
Iliffe, Yvonne	E10:00
Jones, Marion	W6:00
Love, Philip	W8:30
McEwen, Christopher	R10:00
Reardon, Kathy	E10:00
Rough Family	PRSE
Saltalamacchia, Carmel	ASE
Roster for NEXT WEEKEND: 4/5 March 2023	
Azzopardi, Michael	E10:00
Ballenger, Nima	C10:00
Beckford, Peter	PRYR
Capuana, Marisa	W6:00
Foxley, David	R10:00
Haines, Jan-Marie	E10:00
Hall, Vali	ASE
Hannon, Genni	ASRC
Hannon, Kevin	ASRC
Jones, Marion	W6:00
Leahy, Colin	H10:00
Leahy, Michelle	H10:00
McKinley, Michael	W8:30
Milwain, Gianna	ASE
Northrop, Greg	E10:00
Ramsdale, John	W8:30
Reardon, Kathy	E10:00
Ryan Family	PRSE
Scully, Greg	E10:00

ASE = Altar Society @ Eltham; C = Commentator; E = Euch. Minister;  
H = Hospitality; PRSE = Pilgrim Rosary Statue @ Eltham;  
W = Minister of the Word; R = Reader



EXPERIENCE, SCRIPTURE, AND TRADITION  
How Did Jesus Approach Scripture?  
Thursday, February 9th, 2023

Just because you use Scripture, even in a God-affirming way, does not mean you are using Scripture for life and love, growth and wisdom - and for the sake of God or others. - Richard Rohr, *What Do We Do with the Bible?* Richard shares how he interprets Scripture by following Jesus' lead:

A "hermeneutic" is simply the methodology for biblical interpretation. If we do not have a clear hermeneutic or "lens", we can make any text submit to the whim of the moment. This is one reason that so much of the world does not take Christians seriously. People have seen us use Scripture whatever way we want to make the points that we already have decided to make!

William of Ockham (c. 1285-c. 1349), a medieval Franciscan scholar, espoused the idea of cutting away all excessive rationalisations and theories. This became known as "Ockham's razor". *The best answer is probably the simplest one.* I know this also has many dangers, but in this case I think we will find that Ockham's razor might have Christianity a very good shave.

My simple hermeneutic and razor's cut is this: *We should make use of Scripture the way that Jesus did.* I call it the Jesus hermeneutic. Historically, Christians have said that the whole Bible was to be interpreted "in the light of Jesus", but we understood that in a self-serving way, falsely believing that Christianity supplanted Judaism and thus made it irrelevant and merely an "old" testament. We went so far as to assume that Moses and Isaiah were warm-up acts for Jesus. That is not honest, not true, and not even fair to Jesus. He built on their wisdom rather than thinking "They are pointing to me!" We must make that clear mental switch.

Jesus is an ideal model as one who:

- Honors his own religious tradition wherever possible and does not react against it needlessly.
- Ignores (or even opposes) parts of his own Scriptures that were in any way punitive, imperialistic, exclusionary, or present God as the same.
- Successfully connects the dots, and finds where the trajectory is heading and building toward.
- Clearly concludes that the text is tending toward *inclusivity, mercy, and justice*. These Jesus sees as the clear intent and work of his God YHWH.

In this sense, we do indeed interpret the Bible "in the light of Jesus", not to prove he is the son of God but to follow his hermeneutic or lens!

Jesus' hermeneutic gives us a template for passages that can be ignored (Does he ever quote or refer to Joshua or Judges?); that can be openly disagreed with or improved upon ("Moses only let you do that because of your hardness of heart". Matthew 19:8); that must be seen as early groundwork for a further message ("The Law says; I say," repeated six times in Matthew 5:21-48); and a template for what can be firmly concluded from where the arc of grace and history is tending. <https://cac.org/daily-meditations/how-did-jesus-approach-scripture>

## Mission: Change their lives ... and yours.


Communities in Africa, Asia or the Pacific are seeking Australians from a variety of professions and trades to share their skills with those who have less opportunity to develop their talents.

Explore 35 positions by scanning the QR code below. On our website you can also see news including stories from those currently supported in Timor-Leste, Samoa, American Samoa and Thailand.

Please enquire further about potential assignments for you or someone you know:

**RING: 02 9560 5333 or 0422 472 567.**  
**WEB: [www.palms.org.au](http://www.palms.org.au)**



 Palms Australia

# There's a place for us

Our experience of the season of penitence and conversion in preparation for Easter changes over time. The first of six contributors to our Lent series looks back on her eager embrace of austerity as a young nun / By LAVINIA BYRNE

**My intensely** Catholic childhood was dominated by the Church's liturgical year. Advent, of course, had the better playlist. I have always loved carols and singing them as an alto in the school choir heralded the coming of the Christmas holidays. We were, after all, celebrating a birth. Lent is more tricky. Its playlist, including the *Matthew Passion*, meant thinking about death, indeed celebrating a death.

On Good Friday, as a child, I was put out into the garden and told to tend my little plot. My father went away for Holy Week. As an Old Gregorian, he attended the Holy Week retreat for former students up at Downside Abbey, returning with a couple of friends and some monks for a boozy Easter Sunday lunch. I learnt that each of the days of Holy Week has a special flavor. Palm Sunday was rowdy. Maundy Thursday, pretty. Good Friday, gory. Holy Saturday, dull. And then came the glory of Easter.

As a young nun, I would have used more sophisticated adjectives, but the meaning was the same. The language of the liturgical year appealed to all my senses. Lent reached its climax in the rustling of palms and shouts of Hosanna, in the heady scent of lilies and incense at the altar of repose, the yawning emptiness of the stripped altar, the glowing purple fabric laid back to reveal the wood of the Cross, the tabernacle doors flapping open on Holy Saturday. And all the time, the haunting musical refrain - garnered from the Good Friday Reproaches - "*Aut in quo contristavi te?*" ("How have I offended you?").

Words that flavoured all my Lents. For while they were attributed to the Lord and intended to be a recital of God's goodness to me, I experienced them as a reproach for my sinfulness, a questioning of my conscience, a labelling of my offences, of the ways in which I had offended. Hence the need for punishment and repression. Lent meant giving things up. From an early age I learnt that sugar and sweets had to go. No one suggested that I

might give up guilt and learn to rest in the forgiveness the season promised.

Again, as a young nun, I embraced the austerity the season bestowed. Scenes from the Passion of Jesus were revealed when the wooden panels above the altar, which ordinarily showed the Annunciation and Visitation, were folded inwards on themselves. Outside in the garden there were snowdrops and primroses, green shoots and pendulous catkins, but Lent stood in contrast to the effusions of springtime. Lent meant giving up.

Why? What was the underlying theology that underpinned Catholic practice in the 1950s and early 1960s? While not a full-blown Protestant theology of penal substitution, it nevertheless relied on a doctrine of expiation that required me to hunker down in imitation of my Saviour. Jesus suffered and so must I. My favourite hymn was "Soul of My Saviour" and I relied on the Passion of Jesus to be my "strength and protection".

What a change, then, to be confronted by the life-affirming ideas that emerged as I studied more deeply and began to reconstellate the theological landscape around me. I came to realise that the two great mysteries of our redemption need to be held together. The Incarnation redeems: the very fact of being born for us is as important as Jesus dying for us. Advent and Lent belong together after all.

What does this mean in practice? One of life's tasks is to embrace our own incarnation. In the words of Irenaeus, "The glory of God is to be fully alive". Negotiating the ups and downs of the human condition is a task worthy of each of us, an everyday task, not simply one for Lent, but especially appropriate for Lent.

As a member of an active religious community, I was actively formed by the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. Mary Ward, our foundress, had heard the words: "Take the same of the society" in a vision. Drill down into

Ignatian spirituality and you find you are called to served under "the banner of the Cross". I came to experience this as an enormous freedom - and every Lent brings a renewed quest for this freedom.

**This year**, lots of these threads have come together in my mind as I formed a new friendship with someone from the other side of the Catholic/Protestant divide in Northern Ireland. Jane McBride is a doctoral student at Leuven University. Her day job is as an interpreter at the European Commission, where she translates details of fishery reports and plant reproductive material from German, French and Dutch directly into the ears of European politicians. She is also a singer, of Irish folk music, European oratorio and British light opera. And now she is a co-author.

We have written a Lent book together called *A Place for Us*. The inspiration is the 2021 film of the musical *West Side Story*. In McBride's words there is an invitation here: "Take a fresh walk through the Gospels this Lent in the company of the cast of *West Side Story*, the lovers and the fighters. Consider your place and space and the difference your life makes to those around you. Take time for contemplation and then dare to act." I could never have written that, but echo her sentiments completely.

Our book gives me a sensible regime for Lent: our gaze went outwards as we considered the themes of belonging, otherness and difference, the gift of love, the promise of a place and the tragedy of betrayal. Theological and scriptural reflections are accompanied by questions for group or individual use. And there is poetry, written by a friend of McBride's, Phil Lane, the director of Oasis, Belgium. This is a worldwide agency that works with people who are also seeking a place, because they are refugees, displaced by war and famine, or trafficked women and children. In short, everything you need to prepare for Easter contained between the covers of a single book.

The backdrop: our own personal experiences of Lent, obviously, but also an invitation to go out into fresh territory and to find a new place, a new interpretation of timeless mysteries.

**Lavinia Byrne** is a broadcaster, writer and teacher. *A Place for Us* is published by Darton, Longman & Todd.

## Prayers of the Faithful for 26 February 2023 - First Sunday of Lent

**Leader:** Sisters and Brothers, God's call for us to act with justice is fundamental to the life of a Christian. Let us bring our prayers to God.

**For Pope Francis** in his ministry of calling the Church to be one with the poor: that he will bring justice with mercy to those in need.

*Let us pray to the Lord.*

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

**For the Church:** that we ponder over God's Word on our journey of conversion and renewal.

*Let us pray to the Lord.*

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

**For families touched by sorrow and tragedy this week:** may they know the support of a loving community and the healing grace of God.

*Let us pray to the Lord.*

**Lord, hear our prayer.**



**For leaders of nations:** that they ensure the world's food resources are shared fairly and that all people have sufficient quality food, each day.

*Let us pray to the Lord.*

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

**May the leadership of Ukraine and Russia** seek a just and lasting peace as we mark this first anniversary of the war, so that people can rebuild their lives and cities and be healed of their wounds and grief.

*Let us pray to the Lord.*

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

**May the people of New Zealand,** traumatised by cyclone and floods, along with the people of Türkiye and Syria, devastated by the recent earthquakes, receive the support which they so urgently need.

*Let us pray to the Lord.*

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

**For all the sick** and especially those mentioned in our bulletin: may they know the presence of Jesus in their lives and the grace of his healing touch.

*Let us pray to the Lord.*

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

**May those who have died** in the Ukraine war this past year, those in New Zealand as a result of the cyclone and those in Türkiye and Syria as a result of the earthquakes, find eternal peace in God. We remember those in our parish who have died, in particular *Will Bodycoat & Alex Grgurovic* and those whose anniversaries occur at this time *Carmelina Alberti, Antonio Chincarini Snr, Jim Deehan, Maree Hall, and Vernon & Ena Rodrigo.*

*Let us pray to the Lord.*

**Lord, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** Lord our God, hear our prayers and renew us in these Lenten days, that washed clean of sin, sealed with the Spirit, and sustained by the living Bread, we may remain true to our calling and serve you alone. Through Christ our Lord.

**All: Amen**



# St Vincent de Paul Society

*good works*

## CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

*The St Vincent de Paul Society is a lay Catholic organisation that aspires to live the gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.*

This certificate is presented in recognition of your contribution to the life and work of the Society

AWARDED TO

*Parishioners of St Francis Xavier*

*Our Montmorency Conference wishes to thank and acknowledge the SFX parishioners for their generous and thoughtful support over many years of our Annual and Christmas Appeals*

*January 2023*

*A. Quinn* President  
St Vincent de Paul Society Victoria Inc.