

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.

Easter Liturgy Timetable

Holy Thursday, 6th April

Mass of the Lord's Supper 7pm @ SFX, Montmorency

Good Friday, 7th April

The Way of the Cross 11am @ OLHC, Eltham

The Passion of Our Lord 3pm @ OLHC, Eltham

Holy Saturday, 8th April

Blessing of the Food 5pm @ SFX, Montmorency

Vigil of the Resurrection 7pm @ SFX, Montmorency

Easter Sunday, 9th April

Dawn Vigil of the Resurrection 6am @ OLHC, Eltham

Easter Mass 8:30am @ SFX, Montmorency

Easter Mass 10am @ OLHC Eltham



Palm Sunday - Passion Sunday - Peace Sunday

'Dear friends in Christ, for five weeks of Lent we have been preparing, by works of charity and self-sacrifice, for the celebration of our Lord's paschal mystery. Today we come together to begin this solemn celebration in union with the whole Church throughout the world. Christ entered in triumph into his own city, to complete his work as our Messiah: to suffer, to die, and to rise again. Let us remember with devotion this entry which began his saving work and follow him with a lively faith. United with him in his suffering on the cross, may we share his resurrection and new life.' (Introduction to Holy Week 2022 Catholic Missal)

Dear Friends of St. Francis Xavier MONTMORENCY and Our Lady Help of Christians ELTHAM,

Over the past 40 days since Ash Wednesday we have truly entered into the spirit of Lent, and this year - unlike any other year in the modern era, we have had the people of Ukraine and Russia in our prayers along with the many thousands of Australians who have continued to suffer through the destructive heavy rains in New South Wales & Queensland. 'War' and 'Water' have occupied our thoughts and prayers at this sacred time along with our own journey of conversion. The season of Lent calls for a personal reflection and attempts at conversion as well as a communal desire to seek healing and transformation through the compassion of God in the life of Jesus Christ.

We can all 'be' better people and 'do' better in our responses to life's challenges, from an individual perspective and as a society. Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into this Sacred time in the desert and we have followed this journey again in 2023.

To all those who attended these weeks of solemn prayer leading up to Holy Week, thank you for your prayers and active participation in our Lenten Season.

Michael

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 or 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

Parish Office

all correspondence to:

86 Mayona Road,
 Montmorency Vic 3094
 9435 4742

eltham@cam.org.au
montmorency@cam.org.au

Kate Kogler:

Parish Secretary
 Tue-Fri 9am-3pm

Peter Williams:

Child Safety Officer
SFX&OLHC.ChildSafety@cam.org.au

Kerry Mash:

Volunteer
 Wed & Fri 10am-3pm

Websites:

www.pol.org.au/montmorency
www.pol.org.au/eltham

Facebook:

[St Francis Xavier Parish Montmorency](#)

Monty & Eltham Newsletter & Facebook items:

eltham@cam.org.au

Schools

St Francis Xavier Primary School

Principal: Philip Cachia: 9435 8474
principal@sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au
www.sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

Holy Trinity Primary School

Principal: Vince Bumpstead: 9431 0888
principal@htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au
www.htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School

Acting Principal: Mark Pinkerton: 9439 7824
school@olhceltham.catholic.edu.au
www.olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

RECONCILIATION

available half an hour before
 any weekday or weekend Parish Mass.

Collections: 12 & 19 Mar 2023

	OLHC	SFX
Thanksgiving	\$857.00	\$801.00
Presbytery	\$977.35	\$570.90

Stewardship Offering

Month	OLHC	SFX	Total
December	\$6,257.77	\$11,796.00	\$18,053.77
January	\$7,248.10	\$8,760.60	\$16,008.70
February	\$5,345.56	\$8,405.00	\$13,750.56

Monty & Eltham Calendar of Events

Saturday 1 April

12:00pm Baptism: Isabelle, Harvey, Adeline, & Grace Montmorency
 6:00pm Mass Montmorency

Sunday 2 - Palm Sunday

8:30am Mass Montmorency
 10:00am Mass Eltham
 12:00pm Baptism: Toby, Willa Eltham

Monday 3

12:30pm Funeral: Robert Bakewell Montmorency
 7:00pm Easter Liturgy Music Rehearsal Montmorency

Tuesday 4

9:30am Mass & SFX Grade 3 Montmorency
 10:00am Craft Group Montmorency
 11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry Eltham
 7:00pm Easter Liturgy Music Rehearsal Montmorency

Wednesday 5

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 6 - Holy Thursday

11:30am SFX School Stations of the Cross Montmorency
 7:00pm Mass of the Lord's Supper Montmorency

Friday 7 - Good Friday

11:00am The Way of the Cross Eltham
 3:00pm The Passion of Our Lord (Mass) Eltham

Saturday 8 - Holy Saturday

5:00pm Blessing of the Food (Easter Blessing) Montmorency
 7:00pm Vigil of the Resurrection (Mass) Montmorency

Sunday 9 - Easter Sunday

6:00am Dawn Vigil of the Resurrection (Mass) Eltham
 8:30am Easter Mass & Baptisms Montmorency
 10:00am Easter Mass Eltham

Tuesday 11

9:30am Mass Montmorency

Wednesday 12

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

Thursday 13

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Montmorency
 2:00pm Mass St Vincent Care, Eltham

Friday 14

9:30am Mass Eltham

Saturday 15

6:00pm Mass Montmorency

Sunday 16

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

Tuesday 18

9:30am Mass Montmorency
 10:00am Craft Group Montmorency

Support Montmorency Parish by giving with CDFpay

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





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

Montmorency

For the recently deceased:

Arturo Bacani, Robert Bakewell

For those whose anniversaries are at this time:

Eugene Collins, Teresa Pfeil

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

Gay, Gayle, Helen, Maurice, Rita Bevanda, Maria Bredle, Kim Brisbane, Pat Collins, Debbie Edgley (nee Vanderwert), Alana Foulds, Bob Fraser, Melanie Lam, Lita Lee, Yvonne Mee, Cindy Morrissey, Andrew Pighin, Aguatha Spina

Eltham

For those whose anniversaries are at this time:

Peter Donnellan

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

Violetta, Shannon Donahoo, 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.

Please Note:

**all correspondence to the Parish Office :
86 Mayona Road, Montmorency Vic 3094**

eltham@cam.org.au

ph: 9435 4742

montmorency@cam.org.au

**Kate is in the office
Tuesdays to Fridays from 9am to 3pm.**



Congratulations to all who celebrated their sacraments during January:

Saturday 1 April

St Francis Xavier, 12:00pm

Isabelle Grace Colbert

Harvey Kutny

Adeline Lecia Plant

Grace Catherine Toohey

Baptism

Baptism

Baptism

Baptism

Sunday 2 April

Our Lady Help of Christians, 12:00pm

Toby Timothy Davern

Willa Morton

Baptism

Baptism

URGENTLY NEEDED ITEMS



1. Honey
2. Tinned vegetables
3. Sweet / Savoury biscuits
4. Olive oil - 750ml
5. Tuna in oil - 400g
6. Dried fruit / Unsalted nuts
7. Tomato paste
8. Laundry liquid / Dishwashing liquid
9. Tinned beans / Chickpeas
10. Spices small bags turmeric, chilli flakes/powder, coriander, cummin

Please note, we do not need baked beans, tinned soup or tinned spaghetti



Prayers of the Faithful for 2 April 2023 - Palm Sunday

Leader: God our Father, you have made yourself known to us through your Son, Jesus Christ, may we be confident in your everlasting love for us as we place our prayers before you.

As we carry the palms today and follow Christ in jubilation, may we prepare to follow him in his suffering and to look forward to his glorious Resurrection. *Let us pray to the Lord.* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For the whole Church: that as we approach the end of our Lenten journey and as we prepare for the great Easter celebration, may we experience a sense of the power and beauty of Christ's presence. *Let us pray to the Lord.* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For all Christians throughout the world, especially those who are preparing to be received into the Church at Easter: that they will continue to be inspired by the Spirit to enter more fully into the life of the faith community. *Let us pray to the Lord.* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For all those who suffer persecution for their faith, for those who fight against tyranny, and for those who suffer as a result of disasters: that they will be given the strength to deal with their plight. *Let us pray to the Lord.* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For all those who are poor, homeless or marginalized: that people of faith will reach out to them and strive to help them in practical ways. *Let us pray to the Lord.* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For all those who are ill in mind or body, especially those listed in our bulletin, that they will be comforted by the healing power of Jesus who shares their suffering. *Let us pray to the Lord.* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For those who have died recently, especially *Arturo Bacani & Robert Bakewell*, and those whose anniversaries occur at this time, including *Eugene Collins, Peter Donnellan, Teresa Pfeil*. May they rest forever in the loving arms of Jesus. *Let us pray to the Lord.* **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Leader: Loving Father, who gave his only Son to die for us, hear these prayers humbly offered to you through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen



CULTIVATING A BEGINNER'S MIND
Adopting a Beginner's Mind

Jesus shows that children can teach the rest of us how to adopt a “beginner’s mind.” Richard Rohr writes:

Jesus calls us to exactly what Zen masters call their students. I once stayed in a Zen monastery in Japan. The master was calling monks who had been there for years to have what they named “beginner’s mind.” Similarly, one of Jesus’ favorite examples is a child. Every time the disciples are tempted to get into their heads, into their religious smugness, or to settle the dust before they’ve learned its lessons, Jesus brings a child in front of them.

In Matthew 18:3, and I’m paraphrasing, Jesus says, “I’m telling you once and for all, if you do not go back to square one and start over like a child, you will never be able to see the new reality.” In other places, similar advice follows on the disciples’ rather heady discussion around divorce. It is at that point Jesus brings out a child (Mark 10:15). Another time the disciples are discussing the possibility of celibacy. Their conversation is only on the theoretical level, and Jesus brings a little child out (Matthew 19:14). Notice when Jesus counsels the beginner’s mind. Every time he welcomes little children, it’s when the disciples are discussing topics that to this day lend themselves to heady, ideological discussions. One group can come down as right and the other group can come down as wrong. Basically, Jesus says it’s a waste of time. He’s telling them, “You’re not seeking truth; you’re seeking to be in control.”

Jesus says the only people who can recognize and be ready for what he’s talking about are the ones who come with the mind and heart of a child. It’s the same reality as the beginner’s mind. The older we get, the more we’ve been betrayed and hurt and disappointed, the more barriers we put up to the beginner’s mind. We move further away from the immediate delight and curiosity of small children. We must never presume that we see, and we must always be ready to see anew. But it’s so hard to go back, to be vulnerable, and to say to our soul that “I don’t know anything.”

Try to say that: “I don’t know anything.” We used to call it *tabula rasa* in Latin. Maybe we could think of ourselves as an erased blackboard, ready to be written on. By and large, what blocks spiritual teaching is the assumption that we already know, or that we don’t need to know. We have to pray for the grace of beginner’s mind. We need to say with the blind man, “I want to see” (Mark 10:51).

Spirituality is about seeing. It’s not about earning or achieving. It’s about relationship rather than results or requirements. Once we see, the rest follows. We don’t need to push the river, because we’re in it. The life is lived within us, and we learn how to say yes to that life.



CULTIVATING A BEGINNER'S MIND
Be Present as a Child

Father Richard describes how a beginner’s mind opens us to awe, wonder, and true presence with God and others:

Let me try to sum it up and describe it in this way. Beginner’s mind is a readiness to always be in awe, to always be excited. We see it in children and in people who don’t filter everything through the brain. Beginner’s mind is one’s mind before the hurts of life have made us cautious and self-protective. We can still be excited, we can still be in awe, we can still expect tomorrow to be different than today. Mostly, beginner’s mind is someone who’s not *in* their mind yet. That’s the freedom. They can still experience naked being apart from filtering it through mental categories. That’s what it comes down to. And I think those people are capable of what Catholics would call “Real Presence.” Presence cannot be defined. Presence can only be experienced. We tried to define the Eucharist, how Jesus was in the bread and wine, and we divided churches over these mental categories. But the only people who can experience “Real Presence” are those who are vulnerable and don’t have any ego boundaries to defend.

Author Cole Arthur Riley identifies the freedom available to us when we return to childlike awe and wonder:

Children are made of awe. We have much to learn from them, but we seldom aim to. When we encounter the freedom of a child, we can choose to participate in their liberation, or we can grow to resent the freedom in them. The words *childish* and *juvenile* are made derogatory as we become overly concerned with the serious. It is a feigned superiority. The tragedy is that as we distance ourselves from the delight of our youth, we become increasingly prone to disillusionment. Wonder and beauty are not precise cures for disillusionment, but they certainly can stave off the despair of it. To reclaim the awe of our child-selves, to allow ourselves to be taken by the beauty of a thing, allows goodness to take up the space it’s often denied in our interior worlds....

As we grow older, the “serious” becomes a simulacrum for wisdom and even honor. Impoverished by the honor withheld from us in childhood, we become very willing participants in a kind of spiritual maturation that honors the profound and grave, even at the expense of the simple and beautiful. In fact, the path to wonder is not sophistication or intellect or articulation; it is a clock wound backward....

My faith is held together by wonder—by every defiant commitment to presence and paying attention. I cannot tell you with precision what makes the sun set, but I can tell you how those colors, blurred together, calm my head and change my breath. I will die knowing I lived a faith that changed my breathing. A faith that made me believe I could see air.



TERESA OF ÁVILA
Let Nothing Frighten You

Let nothing disturb you. / Let nothing upset you. / Everything changes. / God alone is unchanging. / With patience all things are possible. / Whoever has God lacks nothing. / God alone is enough. —Teresa of Ávila

In CAC's Turning to the Mystics podcast, Father Richard shares what drew him to Teresa of Ávila:

I first opened her *Book of My Life* when I was in college, and it just seemed like gobbledygook. I was nineteen or twenty years old; I just had no real inner experience. I conveniently shelved her, and only came back in my early years here in New Mexico. Realizing I had much more to learn if I was going to present myself as a teacher of contemplation and action, I had to go to the best in the field, and she was there. And I found what I once thought was so abstruse was now striking home again and again.

Richard describes the gifts of mystical experience, particularly those Teresa emphasizes:

Mystics always bring this message in some form: "Do not be afraid."

They know that it is all okay and will be finally okay, too! They want to tell us so that we can stop fretting and fearing and enjoy divine union now. *Enjoy* is the operative word. Mystical experience allows us to enjoy our own lives and to stop creating enemies and thinking we need to be afraid of certain people; to stop fearing nations and races we feel we have to punish and kill.

Where can we expect to go in life if we follow this way of perfection? What are its fruits? When we are enjoying deep union, we won't need to create divisions, mistrust, and separation.

True spiritual encounter changes our politics, our attitude toward money, our use of time, our relationships toward foreigners and the weak, our attitude toward war and nationalism. We are citizens of God's Big Kingdom now (see Philippians 3:20). Be prepared to have a very different lifestyle afterward.

If you are not ready to change, don't seek out God. Once we have one sincere moment of divine union, we will want to spend all our time on the one thing necessary, which is to grow deeper and deeper in love every chance that we get.

Talk to those who have had a near-death, or nearing-death, experience. They all agree: it's all about love. It's all about union.

Saint Teresa of Ávila and her *Way of Perfection* are time-tested, reliable guides to this life:

Of love, nonattachment, and humility.

Of letting go, entering luminous darkness, and being ambushed by the Lover of the Cosmos.

Of recognizing union on the other side of fading dualisms.

Teresa herself reminds us:

Remember: if you want to make progress on the path and ascend to the places you have longed for, the important thing is not to think much but to love much, and so to do whatever best awakens you to love.



TERESA OF ÁVILA
A Heartfelt and Humble Prayer

In this heartfelt prayer from Teresa of Ávila, we witness her concern for the whole world, her desire to speak truth to power, and her willingness to risk everything in order to be of service. Here is CAC friend Mirabai Starr's translation:

Blessed be the soul the Lord brings to an understanding of the truth! If only world leaders could enter this exalted consciousness. It would be so much more worthwhile for them to strive for this state of prayer than for all the power in the world. What righteousness would prevail in a nation like this. What atrocities would be avoided.

Any man who reaches this stage has such unshakable love of God that any fear of risking his honor or his life falls away. This is an especially great blessing for someone who has the obligation to lead his community....

O Lord, even if you were to give me the authority to proclaim these truths publicly, no one would believe me.... But at least it would satisfy me to have a real voice. I would count my life as nothing if it meant that I could clearly communicate even one of these sacred teachings to the world....

I keep having these irresistible impulses to speak the truth to political leaders. But since I do not have access to these men, I turn to you, my Lord, and beg you to make all things right. You well know that I would gladly forfeit all the blessings you have given me and transfer them to these rulers.... If they could experience what I have experienced, I know that it would be impossible for them to allow the violations they have been condoning.

O my God! Please help world leaders understand the magnitude of their responsibilities....

I sincerely pray for our leaders, and I would like to be of some help to them. Such an urge makes a soul reckless. I would gladly risk my life to gain what I believe in....

Once a soul has attained this level of prayer, she does not merely desire to serve God; his Majesty [*a name Teresa uses for God*] gives her the strength to manifest the desire. The soul would not hesitate to try anything that might be of service to him. Any sacrifice for his sake feels like nothing, because she knows that anything other than pleasing him means nothing....

Here is my life. Here is my honor. Here is my will. I give them all to you. I am yours. Use me as you will....

The soul is his soul. He is in charge. He illuminates her. It seems that he is guarding her against offending him. He helps her to wake up in service of him....

As long as she receives God's favors with humility and gratitude, always bearing in mind that the Beloved gives them and that she herself does almost nothing, she will retain her equanimity.

**Roster for THIS WEEKEND: 01/02 April 2023
PALM SUNDAY**

Bacani, Brian	W6:00
Capuana, Marisa	W6:00
Dhanasen Family	PRSE
Haines, Geoff	E10:00
Haines, Jan-Marie	E10:00
Hall, Vali	ASE
Iliffe, Yvonne	E10:00
McEwen, Christopher	R10:00
McKinley, Michael	W8:30
Nolan, Mike	PRYR
Ramsdale, John	W8:30
Reardon, Peter	E10:00
Scully, Greg	C10:00
Smith, Neil	E10:00
Taylor, Colin	H10:00
Taylor, Trish	H10:00
Taylor, Trish	R10:00

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

Lent and Easter Pamphlets

Our Lenten journey for 2023 is coming to an end and Easter is just one week away.

The Montmorency conference of SVDP have some booklets that may be of interest to parishioners that will assist us in celebrating and preparing for Easter and Pentecost. Pamphlets are in the front foyer near the entrance doors. Some of the pamphlets include:

- What is the Triduum
- Mini Meditations for the Easter Season
- Easter and Pentecost Prayers for Seniors
- These Fifty Days of Easter

We hope that you enjoy the selection. Please feel free to browse all the pamphlets. A gold coin donation in the poor boxes located at the front and side entrances will help defray costs.

Are you interested in becoming a volunteer with St Vincent de Paul through our conference? Two of our members are on the sick list and another has left our parish. If so, please contact John on 0410 128 821 or the Parish Office (9435 4742).

If you need assistance, call 1800 305 330 Monday to Friday between 10am and 3pm.

A MESSAGE FROM A VINCENT CARE RESIDENT.

Hello Dear Friends.

My name is Diako and I am one of the refugees from Vincent Care who needs to find a new home. Vincent Care is suggesting I move away from Eltham. But this is my story:

I escaped from Iran as a young man. I had been in prison and tortured. I lived for many years in Adelaide but when the manufacturing industry started closing down, I lost my business and my home.

When I moved to Melbourne I couldn't see a future. I was very depressed. But I believe God opened the way for me to come to Vincent Care in Eltham. It changed my destiny and gave me a new life. Last Easter I became a Christian at OLHC Eltham. You are my family. I want very much to remain near you all.

I am also worried about the many single women who are being asked to move. Many of them come to OLHC church. There are Rima, Hannah, Sueard, Hani and then Jaqueline, Ayla, Mona and Margurite have their husbands with them.

And so my dear friends, I am asking you from the bottom of my heart, if you know of anyone who has a bungalow in their back yard, or a self-contained unit in their home or an affordable house to rent, could you please think of us?

Diako Aghee



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.



**Sixth Sunday of Lent - Palm Sunday
1 & 2 April 2023**



Every day, more than 200 million children miss out on school, around 690 million people go hungry and 2.2 billion people cannot access clean drinking water. In recent years, COVID-19 has also devastated vulnerable communities already living in poverty, with the health and economic impacts to reverberate for years to come.

It's through the generous support of people like you that we are able to continue to help lift vulnerable communities out of poverty - support that is needed now more than ever.

Thank you for your continued support for Project Compassion - past, present and future. Together, we can help vulnerable communities face their challenges today and build a better tomorrow **For All Future Generations.**

Please donate to Project Compassion 2023 to help continue empowering vulnerable communities around the world to lift themselves and their communities out of poverty.

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/envelopes available from your parish, by visiting caritas.org.au/project-compassion, or by calling 1800 024 413.



Restored to friendship

A lesbian who found herself falling in love with the Catholic Church struggled with conversion, betrayal and separation from her loved ones / **By Eve Tushnet**

I don't remember when I first learned that the Wednesday of Holy Weeks is traditionally called "Spy Wednesday", but I know it sent a little thrill up my spine. I love all these days ornamented with special names: Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday (even better: Passion Sunday), Maundy Thursday. But "Spy Wednesday" was special. I'd been preparing for it for a long time.

The spy in Spy Wednesday is Judas, since on this day he agreed to betray Jesus to the Sanhedrin for 30 pieces of silver. But it also made me remember being a little girl, alone in our backyard or the alleys between home and school, playing fantasy games where I was an exile or a criminal - or a spy. The spy is a figure of divided loyalties. The spy hides a terrible secret. The spy is double-minded, embedded in two worlds and two moralities at once; the spy speaks in code, and knows things he can't reveal even to his friends. (The spy was "he", too - I followed the conventions of 1980s children's literature in basically never giving this intriguingly creepy role to girl.) The spy thinks he's on one side, but inevitably gets caught up in doing things for the other side to maintain his cover, and so the spy is a figure of guilt as well as secrecy and shame.

I don't know why I loved to pretend to be these kinds of characters. When I came out of the closet in my early teens, I discovered that this hidden, coded, double-minded and masked persona is a commonplace of twentieth-century gay culture. I interpreted my early play as a way of expressing the intangible difference I felt from my peers, which had now proved to be good old-fashioned lesbianism. This was a gently interpretation (I was not raised Christian, so coming out was not a traumatic realization for me), and one which let me slip easily into the brazenly criminal-identified queer culture of the 1990s. But this interpretation also narrowed the meaning of the spy, diminished it in some way, made it too wholesome. When I finally met Christians who could present their faith in terms that

resonated with me, I began to see more in the spy.

That early feeling of exile and inner division that I played out again and again now seemed like it might be the story of the Fall. Maybe I *had* lost my homeland. I was divided within myself because all people are internally divided, double and triple agents in what St Paul calls the "war" between the law of God and that of sin.

I found myself falling in love with the Catholic Church, enraptured by a way of life that would separate me from my loved ones far more profoundly than coming out had. Some people seek refuge from their old life in the Church; I wanted to preserve as much of my old life as I could, I wanted continuity as well as rebirth. But every conversion is also a betrayal. Most pointedly, I struggled to understand how I could be on the Catholic side and the queer side at the same time. How to be myself and Christ's.

The poet Dunstan Thompson wrestled with this same question. During the Second World War he rose to minor celebrity with scandalous poetry about gay liaisons, including between men in uniform. It can get quite racy if you like self-loathing and enjambment! The romantic misery of these poems sometimes reflected Thompson's Catholic upbringing: the lover's body as desecrated altar. Friends appear again and again in these poems, but they are false friends, fatal friends, fleeting friends. The friend is Judas; which means the self, in its longing for love, can only be Judas.

Then Thompson met his partner, Philip Trower. He discovered domestic happiness; gradually, first he and then Trower came to the Catholic Church, accepting the end of their sexual relationship but only deepening their lifelong love. Thompson began to write devotional poetry - poetry still alive to male beauty and same-sex love, but no longer tormented. Where Thompson's early poems pitted his Catholic upbringing against his queer experience, the later poems reconcile them.

Thompson's early poetry included many of the self-lacerating tropes of early gay culture: Narcissus, mirrors, poisonous flowers, love that murders and friends who betray. And those poems are great, no shade to our traditions. But the only image that recurs as often in the later poems as in the earlier ones is the figure of the friend. Thompson's devotional poems overflow with images of friendship - no longer the false friendship of Judas but the love Thompson shared with Trower, the love that fills Heaven, and the love that links us to Jesus, our "only ever faithful friend".

The gospels offer two iconic figures of betrayal. There's Judas, our Wednesday spy. And then on Friday there's Peter, who betrays Jesus not once but thrice. Both of them, it seems, regret their actions. But only Peter returns, and so only Peter gets the chance to present himself to what he must fear will be the scouring gaze of the risen Christ. Jesus asks Peter three times: "Do you love me?", allowing Peter to reverse his denial by proclaiming his love.

I learned from the gay, celibate author Ron Belgau that Jesus and Peter use two different Greek terms for love in this dialogue. Jesus first asks about *agape*, sometimes translated as charity, and Peter replies that he loves Jesus with *philia*, or deep friendship. At last, Jesus asks about *philia*, and Peter affirms, once more, that he does love Jesus with *philia*. *Agape* is a term used for love in many contexts in the Gospels, but, notable, it's the love we're commanded to bear toward our enemies. Belgau suggests that *philia* is more mutual, requiring a "union of wills". It's as if Jesus is saying: Yes, you were my enemy, you were one I had to love with *agape*. But now, you are restored to friendship. Your double-agent days are over. In unconditional surrender, discover peace.

Eve Tushnet is the author of *Tenderness: A Gay Christian's Guide to Unlearning Rejection and Experiencing God's Extravagant Love*, published by Ave Maria Press. She lives in Washington DC.

Gospel: Matthew 21:1-11

When they were near Jerusalem and had come in sight of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village facing you, and you will immediately find a tethered donkey and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you are to say, "The Master needs them and will send them back directly.'" This took place to fulfill the prophecy:

Say to the daughter of Zion: Look, your king comes to you: he is humble, he rides on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.

So the disciples went out and did as Jesus had told them. They brought the donkey and the colt, then they laid their cloaks on their backs and he sat on them. Great crowds of people spread their cloaks on the road, while others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in his path. The crowds who went in front of him and those who followed were all shouting:

'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest heavens!'

And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil. 'Who is this?' people asked, and the crowds answered, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

Reflection:

The procession with palms in commemoration of the Lord's entry into Jerusalem (along with other features of our paschal liturgies) can be traced back at least as far as 4th century Jerusalem. Pilgrims flocked to the holy city after the peace of Constantine. One of them was a devout lady, perhaps a Spanish nun, named Egeria. Keen to share her experiences with her circle of friends, she kept a diary of her stay in Jerusalem around 384-385. It contains invaluable descriptions of the liturgies in which she took part.

On Palm Sunday afternoon, she reports, the faithful gathered with palms on the Mount of Olives and processed down to the city to the place of Jesus' resurrection (now the Church of the Holy Sepulchre), chanting on their way. Over 1700 years later, a procession with palms and chants still takes place on this day in churches around the world.

All four gospels contain a great deal of material for the period between Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and his betrayal. They testify to the growing tension that eventually reaches crisis point. This in-between time is ignored by the liturgy, making today's transition from "Hosanna" to "Crucify him" shockingly abrupt. It's reminiscent of what happened in the synagogue in Nazareth where Jesus "won the approval" of his townsfolk only to have the swiftly become enraged and murderous (Lk 4:22-30). In each case, the time frame has been condensed but the trajectory of Jesus' reception remains truthfully reflected..

Break Open the Word 2023



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE
OF MELBOURNE



Melbourne Archdiocese
Catholic Schools

Appointment of Executive Director, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools We are delighted to announce the appointment of Dr Edward Simons as Executive Director of Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) and Executive Director of Education for the Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Dr Simons has served as the acting Executive Director of MACS since October 2022, providing important continuity of leadership following the announcement of the separation of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria from MACS.

Dr Simons was previously MACS Director of Governance and Strategy, where he led the design, development and early delivery of our bold and ambitious inaugural strategy, MACS 2030: Forming Lives to Enrich the World.

Prior to this, he was the Director of Governance, Strategy and Digital Transformation at Catholic Education Western Australia, having also completed his Doctorate of Education and Masters in Educational Management at the University of Western Australia.

His deep understanding, commitment and passion for education has been built over twenty years of working in the sector across the UK and Australia, and includes roles as a classroom teacher, principal and various senior and executive roles in education, including in government.

With a strong commitment to his Catholic faith, Dr Simons is an active member of his Parish, along with his young family. As a

proud MACS parent, Dr Simons brings with him insights and perspectives that will strengthen the mission of Catholic education in the Archdiocese.

This appointment follows an extensive recruitment campaign, managed by international executive recruitment firm, Korn Ferry. MACS is the largest Catholic education entity in Australia, and recognised as one of the most prominent across the world, educating over 110,000 students within 300 schools, and employing over 16,000 dedicated staff. The role attracted significant interest from a large number of impressive candidates, both nationally and abroad, reflecting the importance of the role and the strength of MACS as an organisation.

Dr Simons will officially commence as Executive Director today. We warmly welcome his innovative leadership and engagement-focused management style, and his continued focus on the implementation of MACS 2030 and strengthening of Catholic education across the Archdiocese.

Together, we congratulate Dr Simons on his appointment and wish him every success as he continues to serve MACS, and our broader community with faith, hope and love.

Most Rev Peter A Comensoli (Archbishop of Melbourne) & Gerard Dalbosco (Chair, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools)