

25th October 2020

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.
We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.
Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father, have mercy on us.
For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

FIRST READING *Exodus 22:20-26*

If you are harsh with the widow or the orphan, my anger will rage against you.

The Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell the sons of Israel this, “You must not molest the stranger or oppress him, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt. You must not be harsh with the widow, or with the orphan; if you are harsh with them, they will surely cry out to me, and be sure I shall hear their cry; my anger will flare and I shall kill you with the sword, your own wives will be widows, your own children orphans. “If you lend money to any of my people, to any poor man among you, you must not play the usurer with him: you must not demand interest from him. “If you take another’s cloak as a pledge, you must give it back to him before sunset. It is all the covering he has; it is the cloak he wraps his body in;

what else would he sleep in? If he cries to me, I will listen, for I am full of pity.”’

The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 17:2-4, 47, 51. R. v. 2

R. I Love you, Lord, my strength.

1. I love you, Lord, my strength,
my rock, my fortress, my saviour.
My God is the rock where I take refuge;
my shield, my mighty help,
my stronghold. The Lord is worthy of all praise:
when I call I am saved from my foes. R.
2. Long life to the Lord, my rock!
Praised be the God who saves me,
He has given great victories to his king
and shown his love for his anointed. R

SECOND READING *1 Thess 1:5-10*

You turned away from idols to serve God and await his Son.

You observed the sort of life we lived when we were with you, which was for your instruction, and you were led to become imitators of us, and of the Lord; and it was with the joy of the Holy Spirit that you took to the gospel, in spite of the great opposition all round you. This has made you the great example to all believers in Macedonia and Achaia since it was from you that the word of the Lord started to spread – and not only throughout Macedonia and Achaia, for the news of your faith in God has spread everywhere. We do not need to tell other people about it: other people tell us how we started the work among you, how you broke with idolatry when you were converted to God and became servants of the real, living God; and how you are now waiting for Jesus, his Son, whom he raised from the dead, to come from heaven to save us from the retribution which is coming.

The word of the Lord.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 14:23

Alleluia, alleluia!
All who love me will keep my words,
and my Father will love them and we will come to them.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Mt 22:34-40

You shall love the Lord your God and your neighbour as yourself.

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees they got together and, to disconcert him, one of them put a question, ‘Master, which is the greatest commandment of the Law?’ Jesus said, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also.’

The Gospel of the Lord.

CREED

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son,
our Lord,
(All bow during these two lines)
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again
from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

Jesus is put to the test. Today's Gospel (Matthew 22:34-40) contains the fundamental prayer of the "Shema," the Hebrew profession of faith: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord" (Deuteronomy 6:4). Just as we profess our faith with the Creed in Christian worship, the Jewish people profess their faith with the Shema in their synagogue services. The Shema is a summary of true religion: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."

Matthew 22:34-40 has a Marcan parallel (12:28-34), which is an exchange between Jesus and a scribe who is impressed by the way in which Jesus has conducted himself in the previous controversy, who compliments him for the answer he gives him, and who is said by Jesus to be "not far from the kingdom of God." Matthew has further developed that scene.

The scholarship of the Pharisees was the knowledge of the Law, which they regarded as the sum of wisdom and the only true learning. The position of scribe in the Jewish community was a respected place of leadership. At first glance, the scholar's question to Jesus appears to be very honest.

The teachers of the Torah (scribes and rabbis) had always argued about the relative importance of the commandments in the Old Testament. Scribes were the scholars and intellectuals of Judaism. The Pharisee identified 613 commandments in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). Of those 613, there were 248 positive commands -- "you shall" -- and 365 were negative -- "you shall not." The fundamental question "Which is the first of all the commandments?" offers Jesus an important teaching moment as he is "put to the test."

In his response, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and the verses of the Shema, recited daily by the Jews. Even though Jesus is asked for one commandment, he provides two in his response. In combining the two commandments, Jesus goes beyond the extent of the question put to him and joins to the greatest and the first commandment a second, that of love of neighbour (Leviticus 19:18). The double commandment is the source from which the whole law and the prophets are derived. Jesus does not discard other commandments. He explicitly adds: "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." The remarkable thing is that the "scholar" expresses agreement with Jesus by paraphrasing him without any hint of hostility or irony.

Love of God and neighbour not an original idea of Jesus. Love of God and love of neighbour as the fulfilment of the law is not an original idea of Jesus. It exists in very early Hebrew Scriptures. There is something unique, however, in Jesus' assertion that they are alike. Jesus teaches that we cannot have one without the other. Motivation to love our neighbour springs from our love of God; our love of God is demonstrated and strengthened by our love of neighbour. Love of neighbour is not only a love that is demanded by the love of God, an achievement flowing from it; it is also in a certain sense its antecedent condition. There is no real love for God that is not, in itself, already a love for neighbour; and love for God comes to its own identity through its fulfilment in a love for neighbour.

Teaching of Moses and Jesus. Moses teaches in the Shema (cf. Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:34) -- and Jesus reaffirms in today's Gospel that all of the commandments are summed up in the love of God and loving-kindness toward one's neighbour. Every time that Jews recite the "Shema Israel" and when Christians recall the first and second great commandments, we are, by God's grace, brought closer to each other. Whenever we make the sign of the cross, we are tracing the Shema upon our bodies as we touch our head, heart, and shoulders and pledge them to God's service.

ST PAUL'S PARISH

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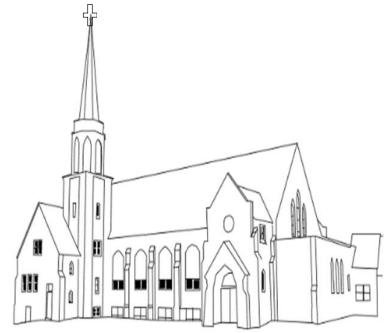
Parish Priest: Fr. Raymond Bugeja

Parish Secretary: Mrs Loretta Meilak

St Paul's School Principal: Mrs Maria Mercuri

School Tel: 9354-8970

St Paul's Parish strives to create an environment where children are safe, respected and cared for.



PARISH OFFICE HOURS:

Mon - Friday: 10.30am to 3.30 pm.

MASSES:

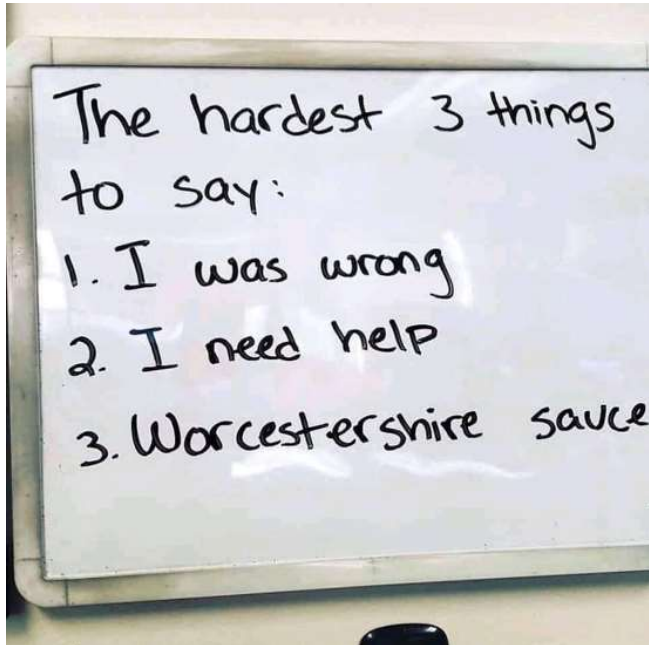
Weekends: Saturday: 6:00 pm (vigil),
8.00pm (Neo Catechumenate)

Sunday: 9:00am, 10.30am (Italian),

Weekdays: Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri: 10.00 am.

CONFESSIONS: Saturdays - 11am and 6.45pm

JOKE OF THE WEEK



THANKSGIVING – DIRECT DEPOSIT BANK DETAILS

BSB: 083-347

Account Number: 67541 0884

Account Name: St Paul's Catholic Church.

SEPT THANKSGIVING OFFERING: \$2606.43

Presbytery: \$539.00

Works done recently: Presbytery roof: \$40,000

Painting of presbytery inside: \$12,400

Thanks for your support in these challenging times.

WE PRAY FOR

We pray for those in our local community who are **sick** and vulnerable: may they see in us the followers of a God who heals and serves.

Let us pray for those who have died recently, Francesca Bueti, Domenico Adamo, and those whose anniversaries we remember at this time, that they may enter the peace of God.

STEWARDSHIP:

"You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind." - MATT 22:37

Do you put other "gods" before God? Is your love of money, power, status or some personal possession greater than your love for God? Do you really recognize that everything you have and everything you are is a gift from God? The good news – it's not too late to put God first in your life in all things.

REFLECTION: Compassion & Welcome

You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. You shall not wrong any widow or orphan. If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry.

Exodus 22:20-22

This passage provides an illuminating backdrop to the continuing debate in the United States about how to respond to the immigrants and refugees among us. That discussion, Scripture reminds us, is not just a matter of public policy or academic discussion—God will hold us accountable for our response. Because Jesus points out that we must love our neighbour as ourselves, it might be helpful to imagine how we would like to be treated as newcomers to a country, assuming that we cannot remember our own family's immigrant experiences. If circumstances like natural disaster or civil unrest forced you to find a new home, how would you like to be received? I would like to find compassion, first of all, some understanding of my predicament and a willingness to help.

Accordingly, that seems the least I can offer now.

Mark Neilsen

QUOTE OF THE WEEK – St Teresa of Calcutta

"The fruit of silence is PRAYER. The fruit of prayer is FAITH. The fruit of faith is LOVE. The fruit of love is SERVICE. The fruit of service is PEACE.

People of faith deserve hope, not exile:

Archbishop Comensoli

Sunday was not a great day for people of faith in Victoria, but it should have been.

In announcing the next step of Victoria's COVID-19 road map, the government eased some restrictions. People were ready for glimmers of hope, but there was not much hope offered to people of faith.

We weren't expecting a great opening up of every sector. However, it was noticeable that additions to step two restrictions allowed for a return to pet groomers, swimming pools and locations 25km from your home, but no return to your place of worship in any meaningful sense.

Presently, in step two of the COVID-19 road map, Melbourne's doors of faith are closed. Churches, synagogues, temples and mosques are shut, pending a government announcement that they can open again.

These are not places of mere formality, but of lively and attentive care to vulnerable people, and of support to those facing sickness, loneliness, grief and death. They are places of hope and wellbeing, and of spiritual friendship.

Sadly, what is worse is that when we look ahead to step three there is very little for faith communities. Parity with other sectors seems denied even when we reach COVID-normal. The spectre of our places of worship remaining closed except for "private prayer" leaves our people feeling exiled and pushed outside.

And frankly, given our weather sometimes, Victorian people of faith aren't too pleased at being forced to stand outside the doors of their sacred places to celebrate the most important dimensions of their fundamental beliefs and commitments.

If they are gathering outside in the wind and rain, looking over at their locked doors, it's pretty hard to explain why the doors of the cafe across the road are invitingly open.

People of faith have joined in the common work of co-operation with COVID restrictions at every stage this year. We've proven ourselves to be fair-minded and civil, patient and prepared.

We've worked closely with the health department, local police, government authorities and other faith leaders to be safe and responsible. We have been publicly recognised for these efforts.

Churches may not be licensed premises, but they are highly regulated spaces, especially during times of worship.

It is now seven months since people of faith have been able to gather together in prayer. Like every other sector of life, this has had a major impact on the wellbeing of a very large sector of our community. For many of those who are affected, this is one of their principal opportunities for social interaction and personal activity.

Why would pool water shared by 30 swimmers at a time be considered safer than baptism water poured over one infant child?

Why would sitting down without a mask and socialising informally with up to 40 strangers inside an eatery be considered less risky than the formalised, masked and appropriately spaced gathering of a faith community?

Why would public health advisers tell the government that religious worship is an inherently higher risk than other sectors?

It is a relief for all of us that our places of sporting, hospitality and community gathering are being allowed to open. It is just that none of this passes the pub test (literally!) when it comes to places of worship remaining closed.

I have been inundated with calls for accountability on the COVID road map and of answers to obvious questions. Profoundly, some of the loudest voices in my own archdiocese have been from our young people.

While our elderly and more isolated parishioners have suffered from being closed out of their churches, young people have been speaking on their behalf, concerned for their wellbeing, requesting that the government show us a measure of fairness and equality in each step of restrictions.

Our young people and young priests are looking to the future, and they can see that closing off churches is cutting off a source of spiritual care that cannot be overlooked, and of social and mental health supports that nobody else can provide.

For us, prayer with others is essential. It is a powerful help in our troubles that has nothing comparable in the secular and medical parallels of a visit to the doctor, however important that is.

If there really is health advice suggesting places of worship are inherently riskier, I respectfully request to see it.

If there is data that backs up the suspicion being thrown on communities of faith in this pandemic, I am only too pleased to sit down and talk it through with experts. We can manage all the steps required to be COVID-safe.

The quiet and patient prayers and hopes of people of faith have been constant this year.

But now they deserve the opportunity to step forward hopefully.

+Archbishop Comensoli
Archbishop of Melbourne

This piece originally appeared in the Herald Sun (19 October 2020).