

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

LOCKDOWN - Victoria

Stage 4 restrictions are now in place because of the terrible rise in COVID-19 cases and unfortunately many deaths. I think that we can all understand this strong initiative by the State Government and Health Authorities is totally appropriate, but the toll on us and our daily movement and mental health is now becoming a crucial issue for our community. **Be Gentle - Go Slow** and care for yourself and your local neighbours!

At no stage have we been asked to dig more deeply from our human and spiritual reserve to be calm during these up-coming 6 weeks!

This War, against an invisible virus, is now at a critical time in our society and we are all asked to share in this terrible burden. Stay at home, and isolate from those whom we normally socialise with on a daily basis. Wearing a mask or appropriate face covering is now our legal responsibility as well as the normal regulations of washing hands and social distancing at all times! These are very difficult days - and our thoughts and Prayers are with you! This is our **CROSS** that we carry together, like Simon of Cyrene - spiritually we are asked to help Jesus carry this cross for others too.

- My thoughts and prayers reach out to the Medical and Nursing professionals along with the Ambulance and Emergency services - Police women and men - who are all charged to serve and support our Victorian population at this time. These are our front-line workers, who are under terrible strain at this time!
- My thoughts and prayers go out to the many families and staff involved in caring for those people in Nursing Homes throughout our State. This specific area of care has been devastated by Coronavirus. The crisis in our aged care sector is so difficult to fathom, and my heart bleeds for those residents and family members experiencing such terrible trauma at this time!
- My thoughts and prayers surround the people of Beirut after the surprise explosion that rocked this Ancient Capital City with the force of a large Earthquake. The Lebanese community in Australia is a wonderful group of people whose contribution to our modern way of life has been important to us, so in solidarity, we stand with them at this difficult time!
- My thoughts and prayers for the people of Japan as they remember the 75th anniversary of the Atomic Bomb upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki - 4 days apart. This is naturally a solemn time to reflect when the world's first nuclear weapon was dropped on civilian people - and thus we hope and pray, never again!

And finally, Our Official and only Australian Saint, Mary MacKillop, who died in North Sydney on 8 August 1909. Her date of death becomes, in church tradition, the date of Mary's public remembrance and Sainthood. Thus it is totally appropriate to conclude this weekend's reflections with a prayer to our Nations only Saint.

Michael

*Ever-generous God,
You inspired St Mary MacKillop to
live her life faithful to the Gospel of
Jesus Christ and constant in
bringing hope and encouragement
to those who were disheartened,
lonely or needy.
With confidence in your generous
providence, and joining with St
Mary MacKillop, we ask that you
grant our request for healing in
this time of COVID-19, especially in
Victoria.*



*We ask that our faith and hope be
fired afresh by the Holy Spirit so
that we too, like Mary MacKillop,
may live with courage, trust and
openness.
Ever-generous God, hear our
prayer.
We ask this through Jesus Christ.
Amen*

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 Priests

Terry Kean - Pastor in Solidum

terry.kean@cam.org.au

Michael Sierakowski - Moderator

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Barry Caldwell

Parish Office

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9435 2178

Mon - Fri 9am-3pm

montmorency@cam.org.au

Kate Kogler:

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Pastoral Worker &
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gina.ang@cam.org.au

Peter Williams:

Child Safety Officer

SFX&OLHC.ChildSafety@cam.org.au

Website:

www.pol.org.au/montmorency

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

Schools

St Francis Xavier Primary School

Principal: Mr Philip Cachia: 9435 8474

principal@sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

www.sfxmontmorency.catholic.edu.au

Holy Trinity Primary School

Principal: Mr Vince Bumpstead: 9431 0888

principal@htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

www.htelthamnth.catholic.edu.au

Our Lady Help of Christians Primary School

Principal: Mr Chris Ray: 9439 7824

school@olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

www.olhceltham.catholic.edu.au

MASS LIVE – STREAMING

Live-streaming Masses are scheduled for:

This Sunday, 9 August @ 10:00am

Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham

please keep an eye on the

'Calendar of Events' for dates and times

Link: <https://bit.ly/2ZNZxaE>



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

Montmorency

For the recently deceased:

Peter Leyden

For those whose anniversaries are at this time:

Brian Lappin, Elvie Taylor

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

*Baby Kylie, Sriyani Algama, Nikki Attwood, Robert Baker,
Justine Best, Ray Bowman, Kristina Brazaitis,
Desmond Deehan, Renee Eastwood, Debbie Edgley,
Julian Forrester, Gennie Hannon, Samuel Hauser (Kyabram),
Val Hayes, Colleen Hussin, Jim Hussin, Tina Inerra,
Adrian Jones, Glenn McKay, Erin McLindon, Hasti Momeni,
Therese Moore, Patricia Mulholland, Montagna Mustica,
Graham Neal, Geoffrey Nyssen, Mercy Ocon, Ron Pfeil,
Susan Phelan, Andrew Pighin, Terry Said, Anthony Salvatore,
Mary Salvatore, Maria Schroeders, Jeanette Steward,
John Tobin, Bruno Treglia, Isaac Treglia, Aldo Viapiana,
Sheryn Zurzolo.*

Eltham

For the recently deceased;

For those whose anniversaries are at this time;

Marie Zavadil

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

*Robyn Atherton, Hugh & Iris Azzopardi, Baby Harriet Banks,
Ray Bowman, Elaine & Geoff Bunton,
Andrew & Lucinda Collier, Albina Croce, Jon D'Cruz,
Claire Dakwar, Ruth Decker, Marlis Dopheide,
Maria George, Dennis Goddard,
Luke Hawthorne-Smith, Mary Irani, Diana Jackson,
Jeanette Jenkins, Maureen Jenkins, Baby Finley McPartlin,
Simone Owen, Jo Porter, Barry Scully.*

To include an anniversary please contact Parish House

9435 2178 or eltham@cam.org.au.

**For anyone required to attend church
premises for cleaning, especially after a
live-stream mass or funeral, please
contact Michael or Kate via the office
to have a Worker Permit issued.**

RECONCILIATION

**Saturday, 10:30am Monty ~ Terry
1/2 hr prior to any mass said by Michael**

Collections last weekend: 2 August 2020

Community	Thanksgiving	Presbytery
Eltham	\$250.00	\$55.00
Montmorency	\$900.00	\$455.00

Please note the above figures are monies banked &
do not include visa/mastercard or direct debits.
Thank you so much for your contributions.

CDFPay: (alternate thanksgiving options)
Montmorency - <https://bit.ly/MontyCDFPay>
Eltham - <https://bit.ly/ElthamCDFPay>



Eltham & Montmorency Catholic Parishes During Lockdown



9435 2178 / montmorency@cam.org.au / eltham@cam.org.au

Dear Parishioners,

Over the next few weeks we are all asked to stay at home & stay local when movement is necessary. With this in mind, I just wanted to update you on our availability & ministry within our 2 parishes - as we are still OPEN to serve and help you as best we can.

It is my intention to continue to provide our Parish Bulletin - Online & Hard Copy.

To celebrate a weekly Live Stream Mass - each Sunday morning.

Terry and I will be available for Funerals where possible.

Terry will now Quarantine himself at his home in North Caulfield for the next 6 weeks.

Michael will now move into a unit at Our Lady Help of Christians in Eltham.

Kate has taken a 'parish computer' home and will do most administration and secretarial duties from home, while producing our parish bulletin too.

Direct contact with us will hopefully be by phone calls and emails.

Please do not hesitate to call the parish office and leave a message on: **9435 2178**, we will endeavour to return your call within a few hours.

Email either address: montmorency@cam.org.au / eltham@cam.org.au

Warmest thanks and love during these difficult days, **Michael F. Sierakowski, Moderator**

Prayers of the Faithful for 9 August 2020 Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (John Davidson)

Celebrant: Loving God, You proclaim peace to all who will listen and Your salvation is near to all who fear You.
With confidence that You hear us, we lift our prayer to You.

For the Church and its leaders: that they may have the courage to risk everything in seeking the reign of God.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For all who are seeking, wandering, or fleeing: that God will open new doors for them where they can find meaning, purpose and acceptance.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For all suffering physically, emotionally, spiritually or financially as a result of the new COVID-19 restrictions, may they find help to rebuild their lives.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For all who are working to relieve the suffering of those afflicted with coronavirus, for health-care workers, aged-care workers, scientists seeking a cure or a vaccine, strengthen them to continue to work for the good of others.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For politicians and ourselves: that we will speak up for those who have no voice, those who have lost work and lack a means to support themselves and their families and those who are seeking refuge in Australia.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For those who struggle with sickness, doubt or uncertainty: bring them closer to you so they can experience peace and protection in your love.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those who have died, especially Peter Leyden; and those whose anniversaries occur at this time, including Brian Lappin, Elvie Taylor & Marie Zavadil; may they rejoice in the Kingdom of God.
Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Celebrant: Loving Father, so many people in this world cry out like Peter: "Lord, save me". Inspire us to gently reach out to our brothers and sisters who need Him so desperately. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Mother Teresa was always clear about her identity as an Albanian-born Roman Catholic. But her near-silence about her family and private life was partly to block a painful memory / BY GEZIM ALPION

The roots of a saint



"By blood and origin I am all Albanian. My citizenship is Indian. I am a Catholic nun. As to my calling, I belong to the whole world. As to my heart, I belong entirely to the heart of Jesus."

Mother Teresa's speech to the world media in Oslo after she had collected the Nobel Peace Prize in December 1979 was a rare acknowledgement of her ethnic background. In his book about her, Malcolm Muggeridge hastily concluded that "the wholly dedicated like Mother Teresa do not have biographies" because "biographically speaking, nothing happens to them." Mother Teresa herself is partially responsible for the superficial treatment of her background in her many biographies. Some have argued that her life-long reticence about what she would call "private matters" was simply because she wished to attribute her achievements to God alone, and to deflect attention away from herself and her own story towards those who mattered most to her: the poor.

But there is more to the story of what led a young Albanian girl from Skopje into becoming one of the most loved and most hotly debated spiritual and humanitarian icons of modern times than self-imposed amnesia. While Mother Teresa - canonised on 4 September 2016 - was unaware of several things about her roots, all the indications are that she was a proud, albeit silent, Albanian. But her primary identity was "Christian", and she understood this identity not as exclusivist or divisive but as all-encompassing and harmonious. For her, each person is loved by God, is precious and is of equal dignity. This was the only category of "person" that she felt she truly belonged to.

Gonxhe Agnes Bojaxhiu was born in Skopje (now the capital of North Macedonia, then part of the Kosovo vilayet of the Ottoman Empire), on 26 August 1920. She was the third child of Nikolle and Drandafile (also known as Roza) Bojaxhiu; a sister, Age (Agatha), had been born in 1906, and a brother, Lazar, in 1908. The young Gonxhe's life was turned upside down at the age of nine, when in 1919 her father died a painful death from poisoning. This was most likely a political assassination carried out by Slav nationalists keen to eliminate "incorrigible" Albanian patriots opposed to the annexation of Albanian territories by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This had been set up in 1918, and plans had been hatched at the Paris Peace Conference to eliminate the young Albanian state that had emerged following the declaration of independence in 1912.

The claim that the Yugoslavs were implicated in Nikolle's murder were first made public by Mother Teresa's brother, Lazar, in 1979. Despite his insistence that she speak out about this and discrimination against Albanians across the Yugoslav federation, Mother Teresa maintained her silence till her death on 5 September 1997. Though she knew that Enver Hoxha's government in Albania had mistreated her mother and sister partly because of her growing fame, she remained equally reticent about the brutal persecution of Christians - including Catholic priests and faithful - in Albania through the period of communist rule.

The details surrounding the death of Mother Teresa's father will probably always remain murky. But her life-long silence about her father's death was also partly a determination to block a deeply painful memory. By her own admission,

her father "remained" with her forever. I believe she never recovered from this inconsolable loss. Even if she had been sure that Serbian nationalists were behind her father's murder, Mother Teresa would still not have condemned the killers. Forgiveness was fundamental to her. And her silence was also dictated by her loyalty to the Vatican. Knowing how important she had increasingly become to the Church following the foundation of her Missionaries of Charity in 1950, and her growing international profile, especially in the wake of the Nobel Peace Prize, Mother Teresa was aware that any loose remark from her on Balkan politics could have repercussions for the Vatican's sensitive relations with Yugoslavia, and with the Serbs in particular.

But I have learnt that Mother Teresa chose to ignore the subject of her father's death for another reason. Shortly after he was murdered, nine-year-old Gonxhe lost her maternal uncle, Mark, and six members of his family, who had lived close by the family home in Skopje. They all died in the Spanish flu pandemic which raged between 1918 and 1920. The only person to survive from her uncle's family was six-year-old Filomena, who was adopted by Mother Teresa's mother, Roza. Filomena became Gonxhe's closest friend. They shared the same bedroom in the family home until 1928, when Gonxhe left Skopje to travel to Dublin to join the Sisters of Loreto at Loreto Abbey in Rathfarnham. After six weeks she embarked on a long voyage to India to fulfil her dream of becoming a missionary. She arrived in Kolkata in 1929.

Mother Teresa did not see Filomena again for 41 years, when they met in 1969 in Melbourne, where Filomena had

been living with her family since 1952. After that, the two cousins stayed in touch until Filomena's death in 1979. Filomena's children and grandchildren shared with me during two visits to Australia in 2011 and 2013 what she had told them about her life with her beloved cousin Gonxhe in Skopje. Filomena's recollections, even at second hand, fill several gaps in the story of Mother Teresa's childhood and teenage years. They are especially important in understanding the impact of bereavement on her calling.

Mother Teresa lost her maternal grandmother Drane in 1922. In less than three years she had lost nine people very dear to her. It was in this same year that she received what she called the "first call" from God. It was at this time of grief and loss that Mother Teresa grew increasingly attached to Jesus, and it is not unreasonable to speculate that he became an omniscient surrogate paternal authority to her. The mourning may also have triggered a lifelong "dark night of the soul". Her decision to become a missionary and the choice of India as a destination were motivated by the desire to serve Jesus by assisting "the poorest of the poor". This life-changing decision was by her own admission undertaken primarily "for the sake of her soul".

The depth of Mother Teresa's spiritual darkness was revealed when *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light: The revealing private writings of the Saint of Calcutta* was published in 2007. These very personal diaries and letters suggest that the seeds of her lifelong spiritual aridity were sown during the formative years in Skopje. Mother Teresa would talk about her dark night of the soul only to her spiritual advisors; as her public profile grew she became increasingly unwilling to discuss it.

Mother Teresa's reluctance to talk about her painful childhood is understandable; her near-silence about her ancestors, especially on her mother's side, reflects how little she knew about them. She was annoyed when Malcolm Muggeridge wrote in 1971 that "she comes of peasant stock". She became more sensitive to remarks regarding her rustic roots as her fame grew, sometimes expressing her displeasure at this "misrepresentation". Asked by her friend and biographer Eileen Egan in 1986 if "her people had been mountain people", she had retorted: "No, they were not. As far as we can know, they were city people. They say that we were peasants, but that is not true."

Mother Teresa was right about her paternal relatives, who had lived for generations in the city of Prizren in Kosovo. On her mother's side, however, her ancestors were of peasant origin. They were originally from Mirdita in Albania, arriving in Kosovo in search of a better life around the middle of the nineteenth century, an example of Albanian internal migration traceable since Illyrian antiquity. Cases of forced evictions of Albanians from their lands were recorded throughout the Ottoman rule, sometimes carried out with the help of the Albanians' Slavic neighbours. A significant number of the people driven out were relocated in neighbouring Albanian territories, including regions in present-day Albania like Puka, Tropoja and Mirdita. This is one of the reasons why family connections between the population of these regions with Kosovo, especially its southwestern part, Dukagjin, were maintained for centuries.

This ancient connection explains why the Bardhis, Mother Teresa's maternal ancestors, moved to Gjakova, which is part of the Dukagjin region in Kosovo. I have traced their involvement in the blood feud phenomenon: at least three members of the family, including Mother Teresa's grandfather, lost their lives for vendetta-related reasons. In the wake of her husband's death, Mother Teresa's grandmother Drane and her two young children - her daughter Roza (Mother Teresa's mother) and Mark (her uncle) - left the region of Gjakova and relocated in Skopje. Once they arrived there, Drane changed the family name and never mentioned her husband to the two little children. Mother Teresa grew up never hearing anything about her maternal grandfather or other paternal relatives. The only people she knew on her mother's side were Mark and his family, all of whom except for grandmother Drane and cousin Filomena perished during the pandemic.

In the lives of the saints, as in the lives of all celebrity-heroes, what the protagonists would prefer not to be known about them - and what they themselves are unaware of - is sometimes the key to understanding what drove them to achieve remarkable things.

Gezim Alpin lectures in sociology at the University of Birmingham. *Mother Teresa: The Saint and Her Nation* is published this week by Bloomsbury Academic.



YOUR MOB

Enable Culture | Facilitate Reconciliation

YOUR MOB LEARNING is an all-in-one knowledge platform for effective engagement with Indigenous Australians

To help in these confusing times, we wanted to extend a **SPECIAL OFFER** to you! This year is the first time we are offering our **ONLINE Indigenous Cultural Awareness Course Bundle Plus**. Because we know of the resource constraints found in the industry right now, we are **offering to Community & Health Providers** a massive **85% DISCOUNT**.

This online course bundle comes with **UNLIMITED USERS** within your organisation AND unlimited access for 12 months. The course bundle includes:

- Indigenous Cultural Awareness Foundations Course
- Indigenous Cultural Awareness Work Ready Course
- Access to our new "Your Indigenous Library"
- Access to our Indigenous Infographics Package
- Access to our Online Indigenous Calendar

This **Course Bundle Plus** will give your staff and organisation the knowledge, resources and tools to be culturally aware and competent when engaging with Indigenous Australians.

The total cost of the Course Bundle Plus, with this offer is \$649, discounted heavily from \$5000. This offer is for **Community and Health Providers**.

We look forward to helping you on the journey of reconciliation in Australia. For more information visit www.yourmoblearning.org or click the button below.

Yours sincerely
Jermaine Alberts

YOUR MOB LEARNING - Founder

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW OFFER](#)



Prayers of the Faithful

Dear Parishioners of OLHC & SFX, we would like to invite you to consider helping on a roster with Prayers of the Faithful. Our evidence suggests people love reading these important prayers. So if you would like to participate on a roster, please give us a call (9435 2178) and leave a message, and we will endeavour to get back to you asap.



National Vocations Awareness Week 2020

This week we celebrated the Feast of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop. Our first Australian born canonised saint. St Mary took bold new directions in education and care of children. We know her saying *'Never see a need without doing something about it'*. We pray this week that many young people in our communities may embrace this spirit in response to the call of the Lord to serve as priests or consecrated religious.



Eltham's Top Shelf

A new addition to the Top Shelf is a very challenging read:

'I Have a Voice' - Trafficked Women - in their own words'

Sr Angela Reed, an Australian Sister of Mercy, completed her PhD in 2014. Her topic and research was about hearing and giving young women in the Philippines a voice and an opportunity to tell their stories following their being trafficked and suffering sexual exploitation. As you read the 'voice' of the women as shared with Sr Angela, it is hard to believe what one human being will do to another. Poverty in many cases is the motivator, the need to assist the family and themselves. So many are led to believe they are going to do different work until they arrive at the place of operation. We need to know that this is happening in so many countries. We must be a voice for children and women who suffer and are oppressed.



CatholicCare Sunday Appeal

This weekend is the CatholicCare Sunday Appeal. Donations from our parish community will help CatholicCare to support the most vulnerable people in our community.

Please donate to CatholicCare Sunday Appeal. Your support and generosity will help break barriers to social inclusion and strengthen families and communities to live life to the full.

You can donate online at
www.ccam.org.au/SundayAppeal
or call (03) 9287 5513.

All gifts of \$2 and above are tax deductible

Calendar of Events

Sunday, 9 August

10:00am	Eltham	Mass - live-streamed (https://bit.ly/2ZNZxaE)
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Sunday, 16 August

8:30am	Montmorency	Mass - live-streamed (https://bit.ly/2ZNZxaE)
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Sunday, 23 August

10:00am	Eltham	Mass - live-streamed (https://bit.ly/2ZNZxaE)
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Sunday, 30 August

8:30am	Montmorency	Mass - live-streamed (https://bit.ly/2ZNZxaE)
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Rosters - 15 & 16 August

Montmorency

McKinna, Jane	PRYR
Vander/Mitcham Family	CLNR

Eltham

Dunell, Linda	Altar Society
Saltalamacchia, Carmel	Altar Society
Zavadil Family	Pilgrim Rosary Statue

Live-Stream Masses

Now we have entered stage 4 restrictions, it is more important than ever that we keep in touch in the best ways we can and reach out and remind each other we are all still close and just where we were before this whole pandemic started all those months ago. To this end, we are able to continue to offer live-streaming Masses each week for the next six weeks. We hope this helps you feel connected and able to join in prayer with and for each other. A world in crisis needs our prayers now more than ever.

We leave the steps below in case you still require them to help stay connected:

1. Go to www.google.com, type: olhc sfx youtube (click search)
2. OLHC SFX YouTube will appear (click on it)
3. You will see the thumbnail of Masses already streamed
4. You will see somewhere on the screen 'subscribe' (red box) (click it)
5. Then click on any of the Masses or watch the live-streaming of Mass of the day

So we continue to pray and hold each other in our hearts and invisible arms, knowing we are all held in the heart of our loving God. Blossoms begin to appear, daffodils are seen, days are a little longer, Spring is breaking in. The Light will shine once again in every heart and eye, even brighter than before! God is very near.

Patsy & Team (0429 439 675)

19th SUNDAY OF THE YEAR 2020

It was March 27th this year in St Peter's Square, Rome. The virus, COVID-19, was wreaking havoc in Italy. Thousands were dying. The only sounds in St Peter's square were the church bells mixed with ambulance sirens and the voice of Pope Francis speaking these words, into a completely empty St Peter's Square. Nobody was there.

"For weeks it has been evening. Thick darkness has gathered over our squares, our streets and our cities; it has taken over our lives, filling everything with a deafening silence and a distressing void that stops everything as it passes by. We feel it in the air, we notice in people's gestures, their glances give them away. We find ourselves afraid and lost."

These words of Pope Francis are so poignant for us today as we find ourselves in Melbourne in Lockdown 4 with a night curfew at 8pm. Empty streets and plazas, a city abandoned during the night. In our walks, we wear our masks and seek to socially distance as we pass by without a smile. Can't see a smile when wearing a mask. We too can say yes, many of us are afraid and lost. The virus is causing so much pain and anxiety.

On that same night of 27th March, Pope Francis also spoke these words into the empty St Peter's Square:

"We have realized that we are on the same boat, all of us fragile and disoriented, but at the same time important and needed, all of us called to row together, each of us in need of comforting the other. We are all of us on this boat."

We hear about a boat in today's Gospel. It's 3am in the morning, the fourth watch of the night, and the disciples of Jesus are in the boat, battling a heavy sea, for there was a headwind. Jesus came to them, walking across the water, saying, "Courage it is I. Do not be afraid." Peter said, "Lord if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water." Jesus answered, "Come". Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. Jesus put out his hand and held him and they both got into the boat and they all reached safety.

What a fantastic story for us to ponder as we battle the heavy seas of the coronavirus and we are all in the boat trying to reach safety. For that matter, many of us have other worries, crises, griefs, dramas in our lives in addition to the coronavirus. There sure is a headwind in our lives and we may well feel we are not making any progress.

The gospel story today would have us look beyond the literal story of Jesus walking on the water and holding Peter by the hand to save him from sinking into the abyss. It opens up to us our own story of life today, to name the heavy seas.

And the gospel story would have us look with the eyes of our faith story. To recognise the Risen Jesus coming to us and taking us by the hand, holding us from sinking in fear and anxiety.

Let's stay with this in our prayer today. Do we need to make space in our silences to listen and sense the presence of this Risen Jesus coming to us? Imagine we are like Peter or even one of the disciples. We too have our fears and anxieties.



And let's remember that beautiful moment in the Gospel when Jesus took Peter by the hand and they got into the boat with all the others and they came to safety together.

How reassuring for us if we can sense the Risen Jesus taking us by the hand and getting into the boat with us. For that is surely where we find the Risen Jesus today. In our midst at this time, in the boat with us, helping us to row together against the headwinds to find calm and safety.

Terry

Gospel: Matthew 14:22-33

Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he would send the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now far out on the lake, was battling with a heavy sea, for there was a head-wind. In the fourth watch of the night he went towards them, walking on the lake, and when the disciples saw him walking on the lake they were terrified. 'It is a ghost' they said, and cried out in fear. But at once Jesus called out to them, saying, 'Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid.' It was Peter who answered. 'Lord,' he said, 'if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.' 'Come' said Jesus. Then Peter got out of the boat and started walking towards Jesus across the water, but as soon as he felt the force of the wind, he took fright and began to sink. 'Lord! Save me!' he cried. Jesus put out his hand at once and held him. 'Man of little faith,' he said 'why did you doubt?' And as they got into the boat the wind dropped. The men in the boat bowed down before him and said, 'Truly, you are the Son of God.'

Reflection

The gospel story contains a succession of episodes: Jesus' prayer, his appearance on the lake, his challenge to Peter, and the disciples' confession of faith.

The text follows directly on from last Sunday's story of the feeding of the crowd. Matthew reminds us of Jesus' practice of prayer, often alone and through the night. He implies a connection between Jesus' solitary communing with God and the divine power with which he masters the storm-tossed sea.

The evangelists make no bones about the frailty of the disciples' faith; stories of this kind are to be found throughout the gospels. The appearance of Jesus only terrifies them further. His reassuring words to them - "Courage! It is I! Do not be afraid" - invite them to identify him with the God whom Moses encountered mysteriously on the holy mountain (Exodus 3:14).

Peter, as impulsive as ever, throws caution to the wind and heads toward Jesus, only to sink in doubt. In this Peter plays a representative role; he stands for all the disciples. Jesus' rebuke - "Man of little faith, why did you doubt?" (in the NRSV, "you of little faith") - is a hint of the denials that are to come. The whole reading challenges the church to come to robust faith in the Son of God.

Break Open the Word 2020



Please email the office
if you would like a copy of
the bulletin emailed to you
on Friday afternoon.

montmorency@cam.org.au

eltham@cam.org.au