



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.

Homily

One of the most difficult tasks for any couple preparing for their wedding is ‘who to invite’. There are a limited number of places and it’s a very expensive party to host. Where to draw the line?

I listen to couples agonise over this as they put limits around who can come. One of the most contentious decisions often involves children. The couple decide they cannot afford, or there’s not enough room at the reception, for children to come. And there can be fights over this and some guests may even choose not to come to the Wedding themselves because their children are not invited.



And then there’s the question of where to sit people at what table. There can be all sorts of potholes here, particularly if some people are known not to get along with each other.

Perhaps corona virus makes it easier for couples to marry because the Wedding is limited to 10 people as of the next easing of restrictions. I have two Weddings later this month but I’m sure both couples would have much preferred to have a Wedding with many guests.

Why talk about Weddings in this reflection today? Well the Gospel is about a king who gave a feast for his son’s Wedding but the guests refused to come. He invited them again in the hope they would change their mind, but no, the guests were not interested and some maltreated and even killed the servants who had invited them.

So the king reacted, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he asked the servants to invite everyone from the highways and byways of life, good and bad alike. The Wedding Hall was filled with guests but the king noticed a guest who was not wearing a wedding garment. When asked why, the guest was silent and so the king had him thrown out of the Wedding Hall into the darkness outside.



What do you and I make of the story? What a strange Wedding and what does it all mean? It’s another of those stories from Matthew’s Gospel that is an allegory, a story overlaid with all kinds of symbols and metaphors and not meant to be taken literally.

Is it a story that Jesus addressed to the chief priests and elders that named their refusal, and the refusal of Israel, to come to the wedding feast of the kingdom of heaven?

Is it a story that Matthew sees as what happened to the people of Israel when Jerusalem was massacred in the year 70 of the common era? The Roman army brutally murdered the people and destroyed their town. Remember Matthew’s Gospel was written somewhere around 15 years after this terrible disaster.

Is it a story about the king’s invitation for everyone to come to the banquet, good and bad alike and could it be interpreted as the invitation from the most gracious host of all in God inviting everyone to join in the feast of the kingdom of heaven? Everyone is invited.



Could the guest that was thrown out into the dark be someone who accepted the invitation but he didn’t really want to be part of the kingdom of heaven? He was not clothed with the right intentions.

We can probably say, yes, the Gospel is about all of these meanings and much more. But maybe for you and I, we can dwell on the invitation for us all to be part of the kingdom of heaven and to realise that God has invited us.

Even and especially in these corona virus times, we are to see where God is inviting us. Have we joined in the feast of the kingdom of heaven in becoming more kind, compassionate, generous people? Are we wearing the wedding garment of love in our interactions with people? Corona virus is not where we want to be, but even in this painful, difficult time, we can be clothed in the garment of Jesus Christ’s presence. It is an invitation for us to accept. **Terry**

EMAIL ALERT: Please be aware that there is a SCAM email going around asking for money from Terry or Michael.

Please note: Terry’s and Michael’s email addresses end in @cam.org.au

DO NOT open or respond to any email from ‘Terry’ or ‘Michael’ if it DOES NOT end in @cam.org.au

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



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

OUR PEOPLE & OUR CONTACT DETAILS



Parish Priests

Terry Kean - Pastor in Solidum

terry.kean@cam.org.au

Michael Sierakowski - Moderator

michael.sierakowski@cam.org.au

Barry Caldwell

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86 Mayona Road

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Mon - Fri 9am-3pm

montmorency@cam.org.au

Kate Kogler:

Parish Secretary

eltham@cam.org.au

Gina Ang:

Pastoral Worker & Caring Group Co-Ord—**Eltham**

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

RECONCILIATION

Saturday, 10:30am Monty ~ Terry

1/2 hr prior to any mass said by Michael

Collections last weekend: 4 October 2020

Community	Thanksgiving	Presbytery
Eltham		
Montmorency		

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>

Montmorency

For the recently deceased;

For those whose anniversaries are at this time;

Madge Warrillow

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

Baby Kylie, Sriyani Algama, Nikki Attwood, Robert Baker, Justine Best, Fr Glen Bourke, Ray Bowman, Kristina Brazaitis, Desmond Deehan, Renee Eastwood, Debbie Edgley, Julian Forrester, Gennie Hannon, Samuel Hauser (Kyabram), Val Hayes, Colleen Hussin, Jim Hussin, Tina Inserra, Adrian Jones, Kate Lagerewskij, 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;

Stuart Hendrie

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

Robyn Atherton, Francisco Azarcon, Hugh & Iris Azzopardi, Ray Bowman, Geoff Bunton, Andrew & Lucinda Collier, Albina Croce, Eileen Culbertson, Jon D'Cruz, Claire Dakwar, Ruth Decker, Marlis Dopheide, Maria George, Dennis Goddard, Luke Hawthorne-Smith, Mary Irani, Jack Issai, Diana Jackson, Jeanette Jenkins, Maureen Jenkins, Moira Lyons, Val McDonough, Baby Finley McPartlin, Simone Owen, Jo Porter, Kath Wheelahan.

To include an anniversary please contact Parish House

9435 2178 or eltham@cam.org.au.

Live-Stream Masses

The clamour in our hearts to get back to celebrating around the Table of Eucharist, when we first went into lockdown, now seems to have given way to a sense of resignation and a feeling of being 'stuck' with this way of living for the time being.

So, let us celebrate what we still do have. It does not heal the longing inside us for real connection, presence and Eucharist, but let us use the power of our minds, imagination and prayer, to connect with each other at 10am Sundays as we 'tune in' to live-stream Mass. Fr's Terry & Michael are still around, we are still around, and God we know is very near, holding us in His loving arms as we travel together on this unfamiliar, yet hopeful path ahead. Let us pray.

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

Patsy & Team (0429 439 675)

**Prayers of the Faithful for 27 Sep 2020
Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Peter & Anne Williams**

Celebrant: Lord, you prepared a banquet for us. Set a table, and invited us to come, to this table of plenty. In response to this invitation we pray.

For the Church: that we all may hear God's invitation to life and enter wholeheartedly into the banquet that he has prepared for us.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For our parish communities: that we may have the grace to listen. That we may hear the voice of Christ in our prayers, and in our relationships, so that we may respond more fully to God's ever present invitation.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For peace in our world: that God will help us to understand the pain of those who have suffered injustice and give us the courage to work for reconciliation.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For ourselves: may God's love and light shine in and through us today. In a way that no mask can hide. Let our eyes dance with laughter and joy, replacing the hidden smile. Our actions of care and concern speak louder than our muffled voices ever could.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For all who suffer from the coronavirus: may they receive the comfort of your healing presence. May our caregivers and their families be shielded from the virus. Protect and guide them all as they work to combat the disease and restore communities to wholeness and health. Let them know that, as they care for others, God cares for them and holds them tenderly.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

For those who are ill: especially those listed on the sick list in our parish bulletin, and for all who are suffering in mind, body or spirit. We pray that they will experience the healing touch of Christ.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who have died recently. We also remember Stuart Hendrie & Madge Warrillow whose anniversaries occur at this time. May they be cradled in our Lord's loving embrace.

Lord, hear us. **Lord, hear our prayer.**

Celebrant: Father help us to continue to grow in faith and nourish us with your grace. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.



Victoria 2020 virtual
Walk to Remember

Please join us
Sunday 11 October at 10.30am
for an online service
after which we encourage you to
go on your own personal
family and friends' Walk
to Remember, reflect and
take the steps our babies could not.

Register via www.sands.org.au/events



Help for marriages under stress:

The BreakThrough Online Course created by SmartLoving will enable you to identify your conflict triggers, learn strategies to de-escalate an argument and find constructive ways to re-establish connection. Restore hope for your relationship's future.

Visit: www.smartloving.org/breakthrough



YOU ARE WARMLY INVITED TO THE
Victorian Pregnancy & Infant Loss Remembrance Service
"Our Love Lives On"

Thursday 15 October, 7.00pm
A Virtual Service via Zoom

Join other bereaved families from across Victoria on International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day to honour and acknowledge your baby. This online service has been developed by bereaved parents for those who sadly know the grief associated with pregnancy and infant loss.

RSVP online: bit.ly/remembrance-service

Please RSVP by 8am (AEDT) 14 October 2020
To receive an Order of Service booklet by post, please RSVP by 8am (AEDT) 30 September 2020
For further details: admin@sands.org.au / (03) 8595 2400

The blessing that is mental health

Fr Andrew Hamilton SJ | 01 October 2020

In the early days of response to the threat of coronavirus people looked to the good of the whole society. We encouraged our leaders to act boldly and to serve the public good, taking pride in the quiet heroism of people working at risk, and recognising the gift that people in menial occupations were to society. We realised that the health and prosperity of Australians depended on self-sacrifice for the greater good.

We should keep that spirit in mind when reflecting on [World Mental Health Day](#) (10 October). It is certainly embodied in the recent [Catholic Social Justice Statement To Live Life to the Full](#).

In discussing mental illness, it emphasises the gift that each human being is, and the blessing that is mental health. It is not to be taken for granted as an entitlement but accepted and nurtured as a gift. The Statement represents a Christian vision of life lived to the full, and the network of respectful and compassionate relationships that it entails.



DEEP CONNECTIONS

In this vision people are deeply connected with one another and with the world around them. They care for and help one another in hard times. People who suffer from mental illness will find respect, support, and hopefully healing.

Mental illness brings terrible pain and bewilderment to those who suffer from it. It puts great pressures on the relationships that connect them to one another and to their world, causing hopelessness and lethargy and leading to withdrawal from friends, family, social life and work. Their friends and families might feel defeated and withdraw from them at a time when they need most support. All might withdraw into shame and silence.

This is the stigma that attaches to mental illness. Because it so affects people's lives and is so mysterious, others can fear and flee from it. They keep silence about it with friends who suffer from it at a time when they lack the energy and the words to describe what they are suffering. It can lead to a deadly silence, as people feel blamed, ashamed and excluded. Both they and those close to them live a shadow life that is anything but life to the full.

PUBLIC PREJUDICE

Stigma does not simply affect personal relationships. It can also poison public attitudes to mental illness. People associate it with fear-laden images of people who are not like us, who behave strangely, are violent and unpredictable, are not persons but alien powers. They are to be protected from and excluded, not protected.

This prejudice perhaps helps to explain the familiar cycle of public neglect of the needs of people who are mentally ill, of outrage at the discovery that they are neglected, of public enquiries, and of continued neglect by governments. Society and governments alike turn their eyes away from people who suffer from mental illness.

Mental illness is not just a medical condition. It is linked to a network of personal and social relationships that inhibit life. A child who grows up in a violent and impoverished home, is ostracised at school and unable to learn, had no access to home care, cannot find work, lives in an environment where drugs and alcohol are abused, and lacks models of healthy personal relationships, is likely also to suffer from anxiety, depression or other forms of mental illness.

INCLUSIVE RESPONSE NEEDED

The Social Justice Statement insists that we all need to be involved in the response to mental illness. Governments need to address the disadvantage that contributes to it, and we need to change from seeing people with mental illness as a problem to see them as a gift.

The emphasis of the Statement on living life to the full rests on the light that shines in darkness, particularly in the people who live courageously within these places, and in the many people who visit them in their need: engaging prisoners in conversation, supporting refugees and inviting them into nurturing communities, and supporting our Indigenous fellow Australians in their demand for respect.

People who live with mental illness are not marginal in our society, and ought not be treated so. They are a gift which, if received, will bless society. They call on us to notice, listen to them, and to draw on our compassion. We, our family, our friends or our children may well find ourselves among them.

Image: depositphotos.com

Article: [Australian Catholics — The blessing that is mental health](#)

THE TABLET

THE INTERNATIONAL
CATHOLIC WEEKLY
FOUNDED IN 1840

FRATELLI
TUTTI
WHY 'I'
MUST
BECOME
'WE'

What is it that modern civilisation most lacks? What are the fundamental deficiencies that ultimately could undermine it? Pope Francis has come up with a profound answer that seems at first glance too insubstantial, even naïve, to save the world from itself. Not a major source of new energy or fresh food supply; not even a cure for cancer. What the world needs is the realisation that every member of the human race is brother or sister to every other member, no matter how distant or unfamiliar.

In his latest encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* - the phrase is from the writings of his namesake St Francis of Assisi - the Pope closely argues an increasingly convincing case that social division, fragmentation and the friction they cause are the primary threats that human kind has to fear. That includes the possibility of unprecedentedly destructive wars, but is not limited to it. The entire environment is at risk. And the cause is the absence of a sense that human beings all belong to the same family, and hence to one another. "We need to think of ourselves more and more as a single family dwelling in a common home."

This is not some unreal utopia, however, where differences melt away in a warm wash of togetherness. Identity is local, and local loyalty matters. To use an English expression that Pope Francis is probably unfamiliar with, charity does indeed begin at home. But it ends at the ends of the Earth. Local identity is necessary and good, but is also a trap if it labels the others, those not of that tribe, as less than human. He analyses at length the parable of the Good Samaritan, and uses it to show that no one is an island but each of us is a piece of the human continent. All are neighbours to all' all are therefore covered by the injunction "love thy neighbour as thyself".

"No one can face life in isolation ... Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travellers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same Earth, which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice - brothers and sisters all."

The Pope's choice of title was much criticised before publication of his text. The word *fratelli* is a male noun and "fraternity" itself, the word he uses to describe the encyclical's pivotal idea, is not gender inclusive. In the first paragraph, the Pope uses the inclusive style "he or she"; in the second paragraph, he refers to "brothers and sisters"; and he uses both terms throughout. But no women are cited in the encyclical, which makes frequent use of terms like "brotherhood" to describe the human family. Some of the negativity around the document could have been defused with a wiser choice of title.

In the Vatican press conference to introduce it, Professor Anna Rowlands of Durham University aptly described the encyclical as a "devastating challenge to our ecological, political, economic and social life". It is above all "a proclamation of an ineradicable, joyful truth, presented here as a wellspring for a fatigued world". The encyclical urges the way of dialogue as the means by which humanity could negotiate to heal its disagreements and divisions, and Professor

Rowlands later urged dialogue within the Catholic Church over issues such as inclusive language.

Pope Francis underlines some of the key themes of the 2009 encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, concerning the limitations and dangers inherent in free-market economics. And as other popes before him have done, he emphasises the importance of the United Nations and other world bodies. What is new is his fundamental questioning of the just war doctrine, part of traditional Catholic teaching on warfare. "We can no longer think of war as a solution, because its risks will probably always be greater than its supposed benefits. In view of this, it is very difficult nowadays to invoke the rational criteria elaborated in earlier centuries to speak of the possibility of a just war. Never again war!"

Every war leaves our world worse than it was before, the Pope says. And he urges a negotiated end to nuclear deterrence as a means to keep the peace. Francis is not unaware of the difficulties when nations pursue their own interests rather than those of the universal common good. Not every politician believes in "fraternity", and conflicts will happen. So the Pope is open to the criticism that he is promoting an idealised view rather than a realist one. Just war theory was never in favour of war, but was a way of limiting its excesses. He is right, however, that just war theory has often been dishonestly invoked to provide a pretext for power grabs and the pursuit of partisan interests.

Pope Francis is passionate in his defence of the rights of migrants of all kinds, and this is probably where the encyclical will encounter most resistance among politicians. But it follows inescapably from the principle underpinning the document that we are all members of the same human family. "Migrants are not seen as entitled like others to participate in the life of society, and it is forgotten that they possess the same intrinsic dignity as any person," he writes. "No one will ever openly deny that they are human beings, yet in practice, by our decisions and the way we treat them, we show that we consider them less worthy, less important, less human."

There are two kinds of moral truth - those that remain on paper, and those which enter into the soul and change human character. Pope Francis is operating in the space between them. On the one hand are high-sounding moral propositions, many of which can be found in this encyclical, which nobody would really deny but which few take on board and change course accordingly. On the other, he is urging the world to make the immense moral effort to change its underlying philosophy, from self-interested individualism to the model of the interior life of a family, where in place of the words "I" and "me", the use of the words "we" and "us" is second nature.

In so far as a world in which we live in solidarity and with a shared care for the good of our neighbour is what most people yearn for, Pope Francis can expect an attentive hearing. In so far as the world's leaders are really pursuing power and personal ambition rather than the common good, then, sadly, he can expect to be ignored. But water, dripping on even the hardest stone, will eventually wear a hole in it.



A biblical milestone birthday of three score and ten will be celebrated on **Monday, 12 October** by long time Teacher at CLC, Eltham, (Retired 2017) & SFX parishioner, **Mary-Anne Mannix**
 Congratulations & best wishes.

Calendar of Events

Sunday, 11 October

10:00am	Montmorency	Mass - live-streamed (https://bit.ly/2ZNZxaE)
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Sunday, 18 October

10:00am	Eltham	Mass - live-streamed (https://bit.ly/2ZNZxaE)
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Sunday, 25 October

10:00am	Montmorency	Mass - live-streamed (https://bit.ly/2ZNZxaE)
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Rosters - 17 & 18 October

Montmorency

Andreatta, Brenda	CLNR
Boyd, Mary	PRYR
Roy, Yvonne	CLNR

Eltham

Dhanasen Family	Pilgrim Rosary Statue
Hall, Vali	Altar Society
Milwain, Gianna	Altar Society



**Speed Date a Sustainability Expert
 Sunday 18 October 2:00pm - 4:30pm**

RE-think ways to make your home more sustainable. Here's your chance for free, personalised advice from the experts in home sustainability. Ask about windows, sustainable building materials, building design, gardens, EVs, heating and cooling, solar, batteries, insulation, energy and water efficiency and more. Places are limited so see the list of experts and book your free, online, 20 minute appointments [here](http://sdse.ata.org.au/sdse_event/nillumbik-2/)
[\(http://sdse.ata.org.au/sdse_event/nillumbik-2/\)](http://sdse.ata.org.au/sdse_event/nillumbik-2/)

**Nillumbik Electric Vehicle Forum
 Thursday 29 October 7:00pm - 8:30pm**

The future is already here with electric vehicle sales growing and charging stations proliferating. Answer all your questions on range, charging and the smoothest of rides at the Nillumbik Electric Vehicle Forum. Hear from Australian Electric Vehicle Association expert, Bryce Gatton about all aspects of electric vehicles, their advantages and limitations, and how much fun they are to drive!
 Register [here](https://www.cleanenergynillumbik.org.au/events-1/nillumbik-electric-vehicle-forum) now.
<https://www.cleanenergynillumbik.org.au/events-1/nillumbik-electric-vehicle-forum>

How to shop online for ASRC Foodbank

1. Go to shop.coles.com.au
2. Login or create an account
3. Select 'choose a collection time'
4. From the menu that appears, select 'choose another collection location nearby'
5. Type in postcode 3023
6. From the dropdown menu, select 'Coles Asylum Seeker resource Centre Donation'
7. Select next available **collection** window (although listed as a click & collect, your groceries will be delivered to us)
8. Select 'bag my groceries'* (the only option during C-19)
9. Start shopping!





URGENTLY NEEDED ITEMS



1. tuna in oil 400g
2. tinned tomatoes 400g
3. tinned vegetables: peas, carrots, corn
4. tinned pulses chickpeas, beans etc
5. coconut cream
6. sweet & savoury biscuits
7. deodorant
7. toothbrushes adult single or twin pack
8. dishwashing detergent
9. conditioner
10. soap bars








Please note that we do not require baked beans, tinned spaghetti, or tinned soup.
 Inquiries 9326 6066 foodandgoods@asrc.org.au

Online grocery orders for the ASRC Foodbank: TROUBLESHOOTING



- 1. All the time slots except Thursday show not available.**
 We have a special arrangement with Coles based on a click & collect model. Our supporters' orders are collated, picked and packed at Coles Deer Park and delivered to us each Thursday. Other time slots are not available.
- 2. The Thursday time slot shows SOLD OUT.**
 Coles has capped the number of orders that can be placed through this portal at 50 per week. SOLD OUT means we have reached the maximum. The window for the following week's orders opens at midnight Thursday. The best time to place your order for the following week is Friday.
- 3. There is a delivery fee unless my order is over \$80.**
 You have accidentally clicked *delivery* instead of *click & collect*. Return to click & collect and select *Coles Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Donation*.

Margins Create Liminal Space

Theme: *Mystics and the Margins*

Sunday, September 27, 2020

Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM

When we are content and satisfied on the inside of any group, we seem to suffer from a structural indifference. We do not realise that it is largely a belonging system that we have created for ourselves. It is not until we are excluded from a system that we are able to recognise its idolatries, lies, or shadow side. It is the privileged “knowledge of the outsider” that opens up the playing field. *People can be personally well-intentioned and sincere, but structurally they cannot comprehend certain things.* In his ministry, Jesus quotes the call of Isaiah to describe this collective social disregard: “You will hear and hear again, and not understand, see and see again and not perceive ...” (Isaiah 6:9; Mark 8:18). Insiders are by nature dualistic because they divide themselves from the so-called outsiders.

I believe it is for that reason that so many saints and mystics and even everyday people have chosen to live their entire lives at the edges of most systems. They take their small and sufficient place in the great and grand scheme of God by “living on the edge of the inside.” They build on the solid tradition (“from the inside”) but from a new and dynamic stance (“on the edge”) where they cannot be co-opted by a need for security, possessions, or the illusions of power.

People such as Francis and Clare of Assisi try to live on the margins so they will not become enamoured by the illusions and pay-offs of prevailing systems. They know this is the only position that ensures continued wisdom, ever-broadening perspective, and even deeper compassion. Such choices may be seen in the lives of monks, nuns, hermits, or Amish communities. There are softer forms, too, like people who do not watch TV, people who live under the level of a taxable income, people who make prayer a major part of their day, people who deliberately place themselves in risky situations for the greater good. It is ironic that we must go to the edge to find the centre, but that is what prophets, hermits, and mystics invariably do.

I want to acknowledge that there is a difference between *being marginalised* - forced (usually by prejudice and systemic discrimination) out of the common benefits and goods that come from living in mainstream society - and *choosing* to live on the margins. Both can be privileged places for spiritual growth and transformation. This week we will offer examples from the broad tradition of Christian mystics and communities who sought or accepted their location on the margins as a place of creativity and interior freedom. Through their insights, writings, rituals, and art, these men, women, and movements inspire us to cease protecting the surfaces of things and fall into the core of our own souls and experiences.

A Church on the Margins

Theme: *Mystics and the Margins*

Monday, September 28, 2020

Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM

We’ve tended to soften Jesus’ conflict with the system, or the established powers, but Jesus’ ministry took place on the margins! In the year 313 AD, with the Edict of Milan, the Church dramatically changed sides and Christians officially became the Church of the establishment. Before that decree, the Church was by and large of the underclass. It identified with the poor and the oppressed, and the Church itself was still being oppressed and persecuted. The early Church read and understood its history from the catacombs - literally from underground. Such a position will always give us a different perspective than that “found in palaces” (see Matt 11:8).

I’m sure the Emperor Constantine thought he was doing Christians a favour when he ended official persecution and made Christianity the established religion of the empire. Yet it might be the single most unfortunate thing that happened to Christianity. Once we moved from the margins of society to the centre, we developed a new film over our eyes. After that, we couldn’t read anything that showed Jesus in confrontation with the establishment, because we *were* the establishment, and usually egregiously so. Clear teaching on issues of greed, powerlessness, nonviolence, non-control, and simplicity were moved to the sidelines, if not actually countermanded. These issues were still taken seriously by those who fled to the deserts of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and Cappadocia. Their practices grew into what we now call “religious life” as observed by monks, nuns, hermits, and anchorites who held onto the radical Gospel in so many ways.

As long as the Church bore witness from the margins in some sense, and as long as we operated from a minority position, we had greater access to the truth, to the Gospel, to Jesus. In our time we have to find a way to disestablish ourselves, to identify with our powerlessness instead of our power, our dependence instead of our independence, our communion instead of our individualism. Unless we understand that, the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) isn’t going to make any sense.

We see in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus intended for us to take the low road. He intended us to operate from the position of “immoral” minority much more than the moral majority. When we’re protecting our self-image as moral, superior, or “saved” persons, we always lose the truth. The daring search for God - the common character of all religion - is replaced with the search for personal certitude and control.

As soon as people are comfortably enjoying the fruits of the established system, they don’t normally want any truth beyond their comfort zone. Yet those who are not enjoying those benefits, those who have been marginalised or oppressed in any way, are always longing and thirsting for the coming of the Kingdom, for something more. The Gospel always keeps us in a state of longing and thirsting for God. Grace seems to create a void inside of us that only God can fill.

Gospel: Matthew 22:1-14

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people: 'The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a feast for his son's wedding. He sent his servants to call those who had been invited, but they would not come. Next he sent some more servants.' "Tell those who have been invited" he said "that I have my banquet all prepared, my oxen and fattened cattle have been slaughtered, everything is ready. Come to the wedding." But they were not interested: one went off to his farm, another to his business, and the rest seized his servants, maltreated them and killed them. The king was furious. He dispatched his troops, destroyed those murderers and burnt their town. Then he said to his servants, "The wedding is ready; but as those who were invited proved to be unworthy, go to the crossroads in the town and invite everyone you can find to the wedding." So these servants went out onto the roads and collected together everyone they could find, bad and good alike; and the wedding hall was filled with guests. When the king came in to look at the guests he noticed one man who was not wearing a wedding garment, and said to him, "How did you get in here, my friend, without a wedding garment?" And the man was silent. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen.'



Reflection

It isn't clear whether we have one or two parables today. Most, if not all, of the reading is the parable of the wedding feast. The final part of the text (verses 11-14) may be seen as an extension of the original parable or as a separate additional parable. For the sake of simplicity let us assume the former.

This is the third in the series of parables Jesus tells in the tense atmosphere of his final days in Jerusalem. Opposition to him has gathered momentum. Rejection and condemnation lie ahead. The lines of battle have been drawn. All this is reflected in the accusing tone of the parables. Judgement is being passed on those who had the responsibility to listen and to lead.

The gist of the parable is obvious enough. The "chief priests and elders of the people" to whom all three parables are addressed are those accused of refusing to accept the king's invitation. The guests who fill the wedding hall are the despised nobodies who are not righteous observers of the Law. Like its predecessors this parable has continued to sound a warning to self-righteous religious leaders in every age.

There are some disturbing notes. The behaviour of the king is modelled on the ruthless tyrants of the ancient world; this makes it difficult to simply equate the king with God. The final section (or additional parable) is also puzzling. On the face of it the guest without the wedding garment is harshly treated. Presumably this served as a warning for community members not to become complacent.

Break Open the Word 2020

Next weekend our parish will be holding the annual Catholic Mission Church Appeal. This year we are invited to partner with the Church in Cambodia, which is reaching out to those who have been affected by disability and giving them hope and support to live a fulfilling life.

Chen was just 16 years old when he lost both his legs in a landmine accident. Knowing that his life would never be the same, he felt hopeless, until he and his family were approached by the Arrupe Centre. Led by Bishop Enrique Figaredo Alvargonzalez, the Arrupe Centre provides children like Chen with support and opportunities they may not access otherwise.

Next week you will be offered the opportunity to personally partner with the Church in Cambodia as a monthly giving partner, with all gifts specifically directed to support community and child-focused programs in Cambodia. Please come prepared to give generously.

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