

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.

Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone. There in their presence he was transfigured; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Lord,' he said 'it is wonderful for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.' When they heard this, the disciples fell on their faces, overcome with fear. But Jesus came up and touched them. 'Stand up,' he said 'do not be afraid.' And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but only Jesus.

As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order. 'Tell no one about the vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.'

Reflection:

Matthew introduced Jesus as a new Moses at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. Moses went up Mt Sinai to receive the Law, then came down from the heights to deliver it to the people. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus goes up a mountain (rather than a hill) to present his authoritative interpretation of the Law to the people. With the story of the transfiguration, Matthew makes the comparison more explicit. Aspects of the transfiguration such as the mountain, the voice from heaven, the cloud and a glorious appearance all feature in the stories of Moses in the book of Exodus (eg 34:29-35).

But the transfiguration reveals much more about Jesus' identity. He is the heavenly Son of Man who is prophesied in Daniel (7:13) and affirmed in the book of Revelation (1:13). He is re-affirmed as the Beloved Son of God, the words with which he was addressed at his baptism.

This episode is rich with other biblical allusions. In the Old Testament there's the mysterious figure of Elijah, the tent of meeting on the exodus journey, and the suffering servant. In the New there's the role of Peter, James and John in other events such as the agony in the garden. Jesus' rebuff of Peter's desire to stay on the mountain brings to mind the hymn from Philippians (2:6-11). Jesus did not cling to heavenly glory but accepted earthly death, even on the cross.

This marvelous and mysterious event deserves a faith-filled proclamation. Its blend of narrative, dialogue and action offers the minister of the word the opportunity to lead the assembly into the disciples' luminous experience.

Break Open the Word 2023



FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

- **The Parish of Eltham will welcome Archbishop Peter Comensoli at 10am Sunday Mass, 19 March.**
- Every weekday Mass during Lent the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick will be a part of each Liturgy, so please let people know in the Parish who might like to be anointed.
- The Parish Communal Rite of Forgiveness, including grade 4 students and parents from our schools, will be held on Monday 20th March at 7pm at Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham.
- The Sacrament of Reconciliation is available a half hour before weekday and weekend masses.
- **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.

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

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

Facebook: [St Francis Xavier Parish Montmorency](https://www.facebook.com/StFrancisXavierParishMontmorency)

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 Feb 2023

	OLHC	SFX
Thanksgiving	\$417.00	\$1,021.00
Presbytery	\$1,032.85	\$772.30

Stewardship Offering

Month	OLHC	SFX	Total
November	\$6,056.61	\$8,746.00	\$14,802.61
December	\$6,257.77	\$11,796.00	\$18,053.77
January	\$7,248.10	\$8,760.60	\$16,008.70

Monty & Eltham Calendar of Events

Saturday 4

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

Sunday 5

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

Tuesday 7

9:30am Mass & SFX Grade 2 Montmorency
 10:00am Craft Group Montmorency
 11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry Eltham

Wednesday 8

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

Thursday 9

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Montmorency

Friday 10

9:10am SFX School Lenten Liturgy Montmorency
 9:30am Mass Eltham
 11:00am Funeral : Patricia North Montmorency

Saturday 11

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

Sunday 12

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

Tuesday 14

9:30am Mass & SFX Grade 4 Montmorency

Wednesday 15

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

Thursday 16

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Montmorency

Friday 17

9:10am SFX School Lenten Liturgy Montmorency
 9:30am Mass Eltham

Saturday 18

6:00pm Mass Montmorency

Sunday 19

8:30am Mass Montmorency
 10:00am Mass Eltham
 12:00pm Baptism: Poppy, Lara Montmorency

Monday 20

7:00pm Sacrament of Reconciliation Eltham

Tuesday 21

9:30am Mass & SFX Grade 1 Montmorency
 10:00am Craft Group Montmorency
 11:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry Eltham

Wednesday 22

6:30am Meditation Montmorency
 9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Eltham

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:

Patricia North, Melina Tenaglia

For those whose anniversaries are at this time:

Val Carrigg, Terry Dearsley, Remy Vulich

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

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

Eltham

For those whose anniversaries are at this time:

Josephine Marie Landy

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

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

To include an anniversary please contact Parish Office
9435 4742 or eltham@cam.org.au.



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.

Lent and Easter Pamphlets

We have seen the shops stocking their shelves with Easter Eggs and Hot Cross Buns and last week Ash Wednesday signalling the start of our Lenten and Easter journey.

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:

- Family Prayer Traditions for Lent
- Lent and Me
- Lenten Family Graces
- 10 Creative Things Kids can do for Lent
- Family Meal Prayers for Lent

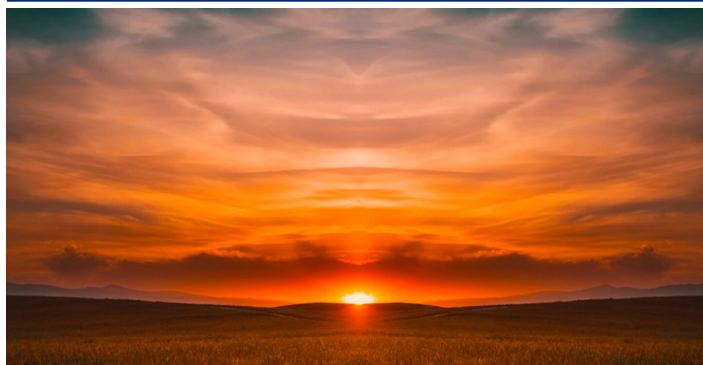
We hope that you enjoy the selection. Please feel free to browse all the pamphlets. A gold coin donation in the poor boxes located at the front and side entrances will help defray costs.

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 Mike on 0417 221 245 or the Parish Office.

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



St Vincent de Paul Society
good works



**Second Sunday of Lent
4 & 5 March**



Tereesa is a Gamilaroi woman from Western Sydney who struggled with homelessness while raising her four children. At just 16 years old, she had to leave school after falling pregnant with her first child. A single mother struggling with homelessness, Tereesa's only concern was finding stability for her children.

Seeking a better future for her family, Tereesa joined Baabayn Aboriginal Corporation's Young Mums and Bubs Group, supported by Caritas Australia. Baabayn helped Tereesa access housing and psychological support. Today, Tereesa is studying a certificate in Community Services so that she can strengthen her skills and give back to her community.

Tereesa now works at Baabayn, providing support to young mothers and mentoring the next generation of young people.

Please donate to Project Compassion 2023.

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



You can donate through Project Compassion donation boxes/envelopes available from your parish, by visiting caritas.org.au/project-compassion, or by calling 1800 024 413.

Photo: Richard Wainwright/Caritas Australia

After spending a summer in Sussex, Olena and Yuri returned to their 'beautiful Ukraine' four months ago. Now, exhausted yet defiant, they hear that more Russian troops are on their way and a spring offensive is in the offing / by Sue Gaisford

The wound in my soul

One of the first Ukrainian refugees to come to our village was Klara. She and her daughter had driven out of Mariupol under fire, then all across Europe to Dover and eventually to the Sussex home of her hosts. She is a strong, brave, resilient woman, who hopes to put down roots in England and never to go back home. But the terrible fact is that she has no home. There is virtually nothing left of Mariupol.

Olena and her son Yuri arrived with us a little later, after two months of exhausting negotiations with the Home Office. They were touchingly delighted to have their own domain at the top of our house. Yuri was made very welcome at the village school, and during the long, light evenings they would get together with other Ukrainians in a big meadow by the playground, where the mothers would chat and the children lark about.

One evening Olena met Klara there, with her little girl. She came home that night in tears, appalled by the whole story of their flight. She told us all about it, but the full effect on her of Klara's experience only came out earlier this month, in an anguished email.

Despite her obvious happiness here, as the summer went on, Olena began to worry more about her mother, who was still in the Donbas, in Kramatorsk. Although the shelling of that city had stopped, nobody knew when it would begin again. Eventually she decided to take advantage of the lull. Before school began again in September, she and Yuri would go back to Ukraine; with her husband, she would fetch her mother and take her to Kyiv. It went well, but then she faced the difficult decision as to whether to come back to us. Perhaps it just seemed too hard to leave them again; perhaps she felt that it was wrong to be living in peace and security when her beloved country was undergoing so much. Besides, Kyiv was peaceful and life seemed - well, almost normal.

But of course it wasn't. Before long, in early October, the shelling began again, at first, bizarrely, every Monday morning and then at less predictable times. She would text me while running for an underground shelter and, later, from their rented apartment on the twenty-second floor, which shuddered and shook. They had taken



PHOTO: ALAMY/SOPA

National Flag Day in Kramatorsk, Ukraine

to sitting out the bombing all together in the bathroom - following, she told us, the "rule of two walls". When bombs are falling, it's safest to have at least two walls between the people and the street: the outside wall takes the main force of the explosion, while the second absorbs shrapnel. Or so they hope.

Before long, she said, even these repeated attacks began to seem less frightening. A friend of ours who had served in Northern Ireland was familiar with that: it seems that human beings can get used to almost anything, if they have no choice. Her real terror was overtaken by a necessary pragmatism. Her old boss had plenty of online work for her - she is a bookkeeper - and Yuri was doing distance learning from school (she joked that he wouldn't learn new English words as it might, apparently, "strain his memory"). A sister-in-law had been to their old house in Kramatorsk and sent her a video of it. "I cried when I saw the house, our courtyard," she wrote. "There are no words, one continuous wound in my soul." However, she followed that by writing: "But I am very grateful to the Lord that everything is whole and our city is not in occupation."

A new spirit of defiance was rising in Kyiv, typified by an anonymous message she forwarded to us in December. It detailed all the ways in which citizens hold on to their old life. Generators bring coffee shops back

into business; portable UV torches allow manicurists to dry nail varnish for the girls to look their best at Christmas; and even when there is no light, no water, no heat and no internet - all at the same time - there is fresh bread in the shops, the garbage is cleared and the snow is swept. Some day, asserts the anonymous blogger, history books will write about a nation in which not only did the warriors beat the barbarians, but the citizens managed to remain civilised in barbaric conditions. And, writes Olena, "It's true!"

But even Olena's brave spirit is weakening. Her most recent message included pictures of the shocking bomb damage done to Kramatorsk at the beginning of this month, as the front line advanced through the Donbas towards her home. A shell landed, she writes, on a hospital 10 metres from her mother-in-law's house. It reminded her of hearing about Mariupol from Klara: then, she had been comforted by the thought of her own home. Now, she says, she is "broken... I had so many plans. I dreamed of travelling, of giving Yuri a good education, and now I will have to work mercilessly for who knows how many years, to buy some small apartment, somewhere... When I start thinking about it, I feel so hurt and sad, my hands drop... We hold on, but already the war lasts a year and we are all very tired."

And more Russian troops are on their way, and a spring offensive is in the offing. Last week, an episode of BBC Radio 4's excellent time-travel series, *The Long View*, considered earlier spring offensives, those of 1918 and even of 1356, before the Battle of Poitiers. The parallels are numerous, and profoundly depressing. No wonder poor Olena despairs. It is as if humankind has learned nothing from history. The last lines of Wilfred Owen's great sonnet "Futility", written in 1918, come irresistibly to mind. The poet questions the very purpose of Creation, when the power of the sun had brought life to a sterile planet, only for so many people to be pointlessly killed before their time: "Was it for this the clay grew tall?" he asks - "O what made fatuous sunbeams toil/To break earth's sleep at all?"

Sue Gaisford is a former library editor of *The Tablet*. The names of the Ukrainian families have been changed.

A wisdom that speaks heart to heart

The Uluru Statement from the Heart co-chair Pat Anderson AO

Wisdom is not about cleverness, but the integration of our wounds, says Sarah Bachelard. In the following homily, which was given at the service for the opening of the Australian Parliament on 6 February 2023, Dr Bachelard invited the parliamentarians, including Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, to respond to Australia's first nations people, and their heartbreak, borne out of a long and continuous suffering, with a wisdom that comes from the heart. This year Australia is due to hold a referendum on whether a First Nations Voice to parliament should be enshrined in the constitution. The Voice proposal was part of the Uluru Statement of the Heart, a profound cry from the heart, produced in 2017 by a convention of 250 representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.*



Every week in religious communities around Australia, prayers are offered for those charged with leadership and the government of peoples. “Give wisdom to those who have responsibility and authority in every land”, so the Anglican version goes, “that we may share with justice the resources of the earth, and work together in trust”. It’s a theme as old as human community. The recognition that nurturing just and life-giving relationships between peoples, negotiating competing desires and interests in a world of gift and limit, while caring for the very conditions of existence, is no straightforward matter. To those of you who commit to this service, these difficult responsibilities, on behalf of us all – thank you.

For as I’m sure I don’t need to tell you, real leadership in the face of this complexity is demanding. It involves many elements – good intentions, good information, the willingness to nurture relationships and build consensus, and sheer hard work. There’s something else needed too, as the prayer I cited above suggests. Something absolutely vital. We call it wisdom.

Wisdom is the quality of those we relate to as elders, of those who speak with authority, whether or not they have positional power. It has to do with judgement, discernment, seeing a bigger picture. Of course, like every human quality – wisdom can be corrupted or reduced by self-interest. Guile and cunning are its debased expressions. True wisdom, though, is different. The wise perceive and connect to the depth dimension of reality and so enable creative, compassionate engagement with the fuller truth of things. Wisdom is a form of what the great Australian poet, Les Murray, called “whole-thinking”. [1] As one contemplative teacher has put it, “wisdom is not knowing more things. It’s knowing with more of ourselves”. [2]

For the wisdom traditions of the world this capacity for “whole thinking”, fuller knowing, is connected to the “heart” – where “heart” refers not to feelings alone, but to the centre or soul of a person. Wisdom is an integrated, attentive, compassionate responsiveness. It embodies what Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr, former Senior Australian of the year, calls “dadirri” – “inner deep listening and quiet still awareness”. [3]

“Give wisdom to those in authority”. But where does wisdom come from? How does any of us grow in it, amidst the messy, busy and often overwhelming circumstances of politics, work and life?

Strangely enough, experience teaches that our access to this integrated, heart’s knowing is usually by way of the heart’s breaking. And maybe you know this for yourself. A time, perhaps, when a disappointment, failure, betrayal or profound grief threw you out of the life you’d known and had tried to fashion for yourself. A time when your ways of making sense faltered, and you found yourself unable to go on as before.

Almost none of us undergoes heart-break willingly. Yet the great paradox is that if we can abide in this broken space without closing ourselves off by becoming bitter or repressed, we wake up at a different level. As the grip of our egoic illusions and fantasies of control loosens, we discover ourselves rooted in deeper ground. And gradually, we come to know ourselves more fully part of an interconnected, interdependent whole, capable of being responsible to the whole. Which is the beginning of wisdom.

This has nothing to do with valorising suffering or deprivation; licensing a society to neglect the vulnerable and dispossessed, or to fail to redress injustice. It’s simply the recognition that we don’t attain to “whole-thinking” by cleverness, but through the integration of our wounds. We cannot acquire wisdom as a possession – it grows within us as we are opened at the level of the heart. This is what Jesus means by poverty of spirit. And as he says ... it’s the poor in spirit ... those who have touched the tears of things ... those who walk humbly on the earth ...who are blessed. For they are connected to the fullness of life and so are capable of truthful vision, of mercy and of making peace.

And this speaks directly to a matter which you, Prime Minister, have identified as central to the work of this current Parliament. Our nation has received the great gift of a Statement from the Heart of the first peoples of this land. This is a wisdom text. Born of heartbreak – of long and continuing suffering, yet marked by an extraordinary generosity of spirit open to the possibility that the wounds of our history might be reconciled for the good of all – the Statement from the Heart can only truly be heard and enacted when those to whom it is addressed make contact with and listen from their own heart.

This is its gift and challenge to us all. The call for a First Nations Voice to be enshrined in the Constitution is thus not just another policy proposal, to be debated at the level of strategy and argument. As well as a condition of lasting justice for Australia’s first peoples, it’s an invitation to our nation as a whole to grow in wisdom’s way.

At a time when petty factionalism is tearing at the fabric of national and international communities, and the crises of our age escalate, the necessity for wisdom in the government and among the peoples of the world is urgent. May this Parliament, this nation – all of us – grow in wisdom, that we may share with justice the resources of the earth, and work together in trust.

Dr Bachelard is the Founder of the Benedictus Contemplative Church in Canberra, Australia.

For more information, see: <https://benedictus.com.au/>

Roster for THIS WEEKEND: 4/5 March 2023	
Azzopardi, Michael	E10:00
Ballenger, Nima	C10:00
Beckford, Peter	PRYR
Capuana, Marisa	W6:00
Foxley, David	R10:00
Haines, Jan-Marie	E10:00
Hall, Vali	ASE
Hannon, Genni	ASRC
Hannon, Kevin	ASRC
Jones, Marion	W6:00
Leahy, Colin	H10:00
Leahy, Michelle	H10:00
McKinley, Michael	W8:30
Milwain, Gianna	ASE
Northrop, Greg	E10:00
Ramsdale, John	W8:30
Reardon, Kathy	E10:00
Ryan Family	PRSE
Scully, Greg	E10:00
Roster for NEXT WEEKEND: 11/12 March 2023	
Armstrong, Miranda	E10:00
Armstrong, Miranda	H10:00
Beckford, Peter	C10:00
Dopheide, Marlis	H10:00
Dunell, Linda	E10:00
Edwards, Elisabeth	E10:00
Kenny, Michael	W6:00
Kulkens, Mark	W6:00
Reardon, Kathy	E10:00
Said, Marie	ASRC
Said, Mike	ASRC
Scannell Family	PRSE
Smith, Neil	E10:00
Sullivan, Frances	W8:30
Williams, Anne	PRYR
Williams, Peter	PRYR
Wood, Marie	W8:30
Zylstra, Diane	R10:00
	ASE
	ASE

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

Melbourne Catholic News:

www.melbournecatholic.org/news



CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE
OF MELBOURNE

In the life of faith, we are called to look back as well as forward. During Lent, we're drawn back to basics, back to the earliest stories of the Bible as a way of preparing for what's to come: the mystery of Easter.

This week we also look back at significant milestones and anniversaries, all as a way of finding courage and inspiration to live as disciples of Jesus Christ now and into the future.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the 40th International Eucharistic Congress, hosted by Melbourne. This Congress attracted global media attention, not least because it was the first time a Catholic liturgy was celebrated incorporating Aboriginal symbols and spirituality. We remember what happened and reflect on what it meant for Aboriginal Catholics.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/ancient-and-new-remembering-the-first-aboriginal-catholic-liturgy-50-years-on>

Last Friday, large crowds gathered to pray for peace in Ukraine on the first anniversary of Russia's invasion. Led by Bishop Mykola Bychok CSsR, and joined by bishops, politicians and representatives of communities across Victoria, hundreds gathered to pray at Sts Peter and Paul's Cathedral before many proceeded to Federation Square for a candlelight vigil. In his homily, Bishop Mykola encouraged people not to lose faith but to see that 'God is there suffering with us.'

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/god-is-suffering-with-us-prayer-for-peace-in-ukraine-draws-crowds>

And on Sunday, at St Patrick's Cathedral, many of those converting to Catholicism celebrated an important milestone at the Rite of Election. With 200 catechumens and candidates, and over 50 parishes represented, it was the biggest Rite of Election since the pandemic began.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/the-journey-to-easter-catechumens-and-candidates-celebrate-the-rite-of-election>

Earlier this month, Melbourne farewelled Pasquale 'Pat' LaManna OAM, a much admired Melbourne businessman and philanthropist. Devoted husband for more than 60 years, and beloved father and grandfather, his beautiful legacy of courage, service and generosity continues to inspire. During his funeral, his family spoke about the man himself and how he chose 'a life that matters'.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/pat-lamanna-choosing-a-life-that-matters>

Finally, Catholic Mission share with us the story of a grade 4 student from Melbourne's south whose artwork has been sent to the Vatican for possible perusal by the Pope.

<https://melbournecatholic.org/news/melbourne-students-illustration-may-catch-popes-eye>

As the journey of Lent continues, we pray it remains a graced season for you, a time for looking back and looking forward to the joy of Easter



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RING: 02 9560 5333 or 0422 472 567. WEB: www.palms.org.au



A season of joy

For most of his life, this week's contributor to our Lent series thought it was 40 days of doom and gloom. It may be painful, but this is a time of liberation and life in abundance /

By RICHARD LEONARD

As a priest, I have often had the honour of being invited into people's homes for a family meal. It's almost always a very enjoyable experience. Mind you, things have changed in many homes and, these days, on arrival at the table, when I am invited to say grace before the meal, an assertive adolescent sometimes says to his father, "Why are we saying grace? We never say grace. Why are you putting on a show for the priest?" To which I reply, "We're saying grace because 16,000 kids your age or younger will die today from no food, so let's ask that this meal gives us the strength to make the world a more just place for all God's children." I don't actually say that, but I really want to.

I was once invited to another home for dinner. This family had a 13-year-old daughter who was going through a particularly rebellious stage. The young woman was not happy with the vegetables her mother served at dinner and so she refused to eat them. The uneaten vegetables became the staging ground for an adolescent conflict. Trying to coax her child into eating all the food in front of her, her mother calmly used a line I'd heard before: "There are starving people in the world who would be grateful for what you don't want." With that the girl jumped up and left the dining room. A few minutes later she returned with an oversized envelope. She tipped the plate of food into the envelope and angrily declared, "Send it to them!" and walked out. At that moment I looked at my watch and said, "Is that the time? I have a very early morning Mass," and all the way home I thanked God for celibacy.

Lenten fasts are not meant to be dietary in nature, as good as it may be to lose a few pounds. A fast is aimed at enabling us to become aware of our hunger for God. Fasting from food is but one way to embody this process but it is not the only one. For

some, fasting from pride, greed, envy, anger, lust, sloth and power might be more fruitful. It comes down to dealing well with our appetites in all their forms.

The word "appetite" comes from the Latin word *appetitus*, meaning natural desire, so a fast is about regulation: minimizing our destructive desires and indulging the desires that bring us closer to light, to love, to God.

Appetites demand regular attention. Physical appetites tell us that we need nourishment, hydration, exercise or sleep. We've learnt to read our body's needs or we'd die. We also have emotional appetites, where we need affection, acceptance and a listening ear. If we ignore these signs, our mental health deteriorates and our quality of life is compromised. And we also have spiritual appetites. These are the needs we have for God, for community, meaning and purpose, for faith, hope and love. If we ignore these appetites, we can forget where we came from, where we are here and where we are going.

Appetites and cravings are closely linked. A good Lenten question is: "What is it we crave? Is the pursuing of it healthy for us and others?" If not, then Lent is the time to fast from our cravings and assert the self-control needed to regulate our appetites.

In Lent we have two universally mandated occasions for fast and abstinence for Catholics: Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. On these days we are asked to have only one major meal, without meat, so as to focus our mind, body and spirit on the important season we are entering and on commemorating the day Jesus died. Although we must avoid the bad spirit's handiwork called scrupulosity, the nature of these days doesn't include one big banquet of fine seafood.

The demand that we have two fast days from food makes more sense than ever before. Food is one of the narcotics of modern living. Some people eat to dull the pain. Like pain relief, it doesn't fix the root problem but gives us a hit for a while. When it wears off or passes, we are left to confront the causes of our distress again.

Fasting, however, also makes a social claim on us. While all of us have been hungry, most of us have never known real hunger, so it can be hard to fully appreciate how wasteful our developed world must appear to those who watch their families die of starvation. If fasting from food enables us to confront a world where people die each day because they lack food, clean water and the diseases this brings, then that is an entirely good outcome. By being mindful, changing our priorities and calling for similar changes in our nation's priorities - we spend more on bombs than on starving babies - we show we are not finished with this venerable practice yet.

Jesus' big challenge in regard to all acts of penance, fasting included, is to do it with joy. In fact it's striking that at Mass in the Preface of Lent I we hear, "Each year you give us this joyful season." For most of my life, I thought it was 40 days of doom and gloom. Lent, however, is about liberation, about staring down those things that stop us being free to follow Christ. The process may be painful but the end point is life, and life abundantly. By controlling our cravings, desires, appetites and thirsts, we come to also rejoice in the simpler life. It's no coincidence that this Lent we will hear Jesus say to the crowd after calling Lazarus out of his tomb, "Unbind him and let him go free." We are Lazarus.

In this joyful season, may we also recommit to doing on earth what is done in Heaven, where the hungry are welcomed and fed, the banquet of eternal joy and justice knows no end, where the need to fast will be no more, because we have all been set free in Christ.

Richard Leonard SJ's latest book is *The Law of Love* (Paulist). He is a parish priest in North Sydney, Australia.

Türkiye / Syria

Plea for lifting of sanctions as devastating quake takes its toll

ELLEN TEAGUE

The death toll from the two devastating earthquakes that hit Türkiye and Syria on 6 February is continuing to grow, with at least 37,000 (xxx as at 17 Feb) dead and tens of thousands injured.

In Türkiye, Bishop Paolo Bizzeti, apostolic vicar of Anatolia, said the huge numbers of buildings crumbling and the frantic attempts to rescue survivors presented “an opportunity to rethink our lives together”. Charity networks including Caritas are all helping the affected communities.

Bishop Bizzeti reported that Iskenderun’s cathedral had collapsed and Syrian Orthodox and Orthodox churches had been destroyed. Antakya, the heart of Turkish Christianity, is largely destroyed. It is also home to one of southern Turkey’s oldest Jewish communities, and a synagogue was damaged in the quake.

In Syria, Chaldean Bishop Antoine Audo of Aleppo said that, after 12 years of war, “this is a new tremendous bomb, lethal and unknown”.

Many people are living on the streets or in their cars, afraid of further tremors. He said: “Melkite Greek Catholic Archbishop Georges Masri of Aleppo has been pulled out alive but his vicar is still under the destroyed building.”

The Middle East Council of Churches called for the immediate lifting of sanctions against Syria and for access to all resources. Archbishop of Westminster Cardinal Vincent Nichols has offered prayers and “sincere condolences” to members of Chaldean Catholic Church, which has substantial numbers of members in both Syria and Türkiye.



BISHOP ROBERT RABBAT'S

SYRIAN EARTHQUAKE APPEAL

PLEASE DONATE NOW

The recent Syrian earthquake has hit people who were already displaced in a region that has been devastated by more than a decade of civil war. Yet again, we are seeing people fleeing and desperate for shelter in freezing winter conditions. We want to help provide that light in the deepest darkness, to get through this devastating disaster.

MCF DGR ACCOUNT

Ref: Syrian Appeal
BSB: 062784
Account: 100011493

All donations are Tax Deductible.
For a receipt please email
mcf@melkite.org.au
or contact on (02) 9750 5514

Melkite
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Prayers of the Faithful for 5 March 2023 - Second Sunday of Lent

Leader: God our Father, hear the prayers of your people and have mercy on us.

For the Church: that all the nations of the Earth will hear the word of the Lord, preached boldly and in freedom from persecution.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For our Parish Communities: that we will continue through Lent in harmony, with charity and mercy for one another.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the World: we pray for people in the grip of war, disaster and suffer. We pray for leaders who will choose paths of wisdom, peace and justice.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For Faith Communities: that the Lord in his steadfast love will bless and keep those who praise and worship his name, and that those who like Abram follow his ways will be kept in his mercy.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for all those who are sick and whose names are in our bulletin. Let them experience the bright healing light of Jesus.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who have died recently, including *Patricia North & Melina Tenaglia*, and for *Val Carrigg, Terry Dearsley, Josephine Marie Landy & Remy Vulich* whose anniversaries occur at this time. May they rest in the eternal peace of the Lord.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Loving Father, you are our help and our shield. May your love be upon us as we place our hope in your that our prayers will be answered. Through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

All: Amen