

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.

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.



Reflection:

Ministers of today's gospel are faced with a difficult choice. Either they proclaim the very long story of the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus in full, complete with apparent digressions on the place of worship and on the harvest of life, or they opt for the somewhat abbreviated version which omits some key elements such as her evangelizing mission to the villagers.

The shorter version still draws us into the woman's journey of faith. Jesus leads her step by step from each misunderstanding to new understanding. Her idea of water evolves: well water becomes running water and finally the spring-water of the Spirit. Her insights into Jesus likewise progress. She identifies him successively as an unfriendly Jew, as "sir", as a prophet, and finally as the Messiah, before he declares himself to her as "I am he". Her apparent alienation from the village folk is eventually replaced by their solidarity in faith with her.

The woman's journey of faith has been beautifully dramatized by John. It will have special resonance in communities where there are candidates (the "elect") in the final weeks of preparation for initiation at the Paschal Vigil. Even if the shorter text is chosen, the story needs telling with freshness, enthusiasm, sensitivity, and a keen understanding of its dynamic development if the assembly's attention is to be held. This is all the more so with the longer version.

Some communities may decide that the story is better told when there's a variety of voices taking the roles of narrator, the woman, Jesus and others. This will only be the case if each of the readers is capable of quality proclamation and all have rehearsed together to become an effective ensemble.

Break Open the Word 2023

Thanksgiving Envelopes 2023 are available now in the foyers of both churches

Please collect your envelopes.

We deeply value your support and financial contribution throughout the years.



We would also love your help in taking other envelopes to people you know to help us.

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: 26 Feb & 5 Mar 2023

	OLHC	SFX
Thanksgiving	\$217.00	\$998.00
Presbytery	\$661.65	\$840.55

Stewardship Offering

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

Monty & Eltham Calendar of Events

Saturday 11

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

Sunday 12

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

Monday 13 - Labour Day

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
 10:30am ASRC Food Collection Montmorency

Thursday 23

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Montmorency

Friday 24

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

Saturday 25

12:00pm Baptism: Elsie, Audrey Montmorency
 6:00pm Mass Montmorency

Sunday 26

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

Tuesday 28

9:30am Mass & SFX Grade 6 Montmorency
 7:30pm Small Church Community Montmorency

Wednesday 29

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

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Support Eltham Parish by giving with CDFpay

Simply scan the QR code with your mobile phone and in a few easy steps you can safely 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 those whose anniversaries are at this time:

Joyce Arundell, Lawrence Gatt, Joyce Jakubik, Margaret McKinley, Gianluca Salvitti, Benjamin Vincent

For those in need of healing, remembering especially:

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

Eltham

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.

Please Note:

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

eltham@cam.org.au

ph: 9435 4742

montmorency@cam.org.au

Kate is in the office

Tuesdays to Fridays from 9am to 3pm.



Congratulations to all who celebrated their sacraments during January:

Saturday 11 March

St Francis Xavier, 12:00pm

Nicoletta Maria Dilullo

Louie Francis Grech

James Joseph Walker San Martin

Baptism

Baptism

Baptism

A Small Pastoral Team



Would you like to be involved? You are invited to join a small group of people who currently care for the needs of others in our St Francis Xavier Community. This may involve bringing someone to Mass, dropping off a Bulletin, taking Communion to someone who is house bound, driving someone to a hospital appointment, or you may know someone who would like assistance. We are here to care for the needs of one another. Together we make up the whole Body of Christ.

Think about your availability and be in touch with Patsy: 0429 439 675 or Kate in the Parish Office: 9435 4742, if you are interested in helping out.

Good Friday Service

**3pm 7 April
and**

Easter Dawn Service

6am 9 April 9

at Our Lady Help of Christians, Eltham

In the gathering area at OLHC there are sign-up sheets for the specific roles in our services.

Please include a contact number.

Please note that you must have completed **all the requirements for Child-Safety** in order to take on a role.

Kathleen Nolan.



**Second Sunday of Lent
11 & 12 March**



Priscilla lives in the Hwange district in Zimbabwe with her husband, Charles, and their two grandsons. Climate change continues to bring unprecedented challenges for people living in the most vulnerable and remote communities in Zimbabwe.

With the support of Caritas Hwange, Priscilla learnt conservation farming skills to grow drought-resistant crops to support her family during the current food crisis. Priscilla was able to produce a bumper harvest in her first year of practising conservation farming. Priscilla used the funds from her harvest to start poultry farming, which enabled her to sell eggs to pay for her grandchildren's school fees, books and stationery. The poultry farming provides a safety net for Priscilla and her family during times of hardship, like the current drought.

While the situation in Zimbabwe and across eastern Africa remains dire, the work of Caritas Hwange means that Priscilla can learn the skills she needs to build resilience and support her family during this current food crisis.

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

Inspiration and Perspiration

Beethoven rose each morning at dawn and made himself coffee. He was fastidious about this: each cup had to be made with exactly sixty beans, which he counted out each time. He would then sit at his desk and compose until 2:00 pm or 3:00 pm in the afternoon. Subsequently he would go for a long walk, taking with him a pencil and some sheets of music paper to record any ideas that came to him on the way. Each night after supper he would have a beer, smoke a pipe, and go to bed early, 10:00 pm at the latest.

Anthony Trollope who as his day job worked for the Post Office, paid a groom to wake him every day at 5:00 am. By 5:30 am he would be at his desk, and then proceeded to write for exactly three hours, working against the clock to produce 250 words each quarter-hour. Through this method, he wrote forty-seven novels, many of them three volumes in length, as well as sixteen other books. If he finished a novel before the day's three hours were over, he would immediately take a fresh piece of paper and begin the next.

Immanuel Kant, the most brilliant philosopher of modern times, was famous for his routine. As Heinrich Heine put it, "Getting up, drinking coffee, writing, giving lectures, eating, taking a walk, everything had its set time, and the neighbours knew precisely that the time was 3:30 pm when Kant stepped outside his door with his grey coat and the Spanish stick in his hand."

These details, together with more than 150 other examples drawn from the great philosophers, artists, composers, and writers come from a book by Mason Currey entitled *Daily Rituals: How Great Minds Make Time, Find Inspiration, and Get to Work*. The book's point is simple. Most creative people have daily rituals. These form the soil in which the seeds of their invention grow.

In some cases they deliberately took on jobs they did not need to do, simply to establish structure and routine in their lives. A typical example was the poet Wallace Stevens, who took a position as an insurance lawyer at the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company where he worked until his death. He said that having a job was one of the best things that could happen to him because "it introduces discipline and regularity into one's life."

Note the paradox. These were all innovators, pioneers, ground-breakers, trail-blazers, who formulated new ideas, originated new forms of expression, did things no one had done before in quite that way. They broke the mould. They changed the landscape. They ventured into the unknown.

Yet their daily lives were the opposite: ritualised and routine. One could even call them boring. Why so? Because - the saying is famous, though we don't know who first said it - *genius is one per cent inspiration, ninety-nine per cent perspiration*. The paradigm-shifting scientific discovery, the path-breaking research, the wildly successful new product, the brilliant novel, the award-winning film are almost always the result of many years of long hours and attention to detail. Being creative involves hard work.

The ancient Hebrew word for hard work is *avodah*. It is also the word that means "serving God". What applies in the arts, sciences, business, and industry, applies equally to the life of the spirit. Achieving any form of spiritual growth requires sustained effort and daily rituals.

Hence the remarkable aggadic passage in which various Sages put forward their idea of *klal gadol baTorah*, "the great principle of the Tora". Ben Azzai says it is the verse, "This is the book of the chronicles of man: On the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God" (Gen 5:1). Ben Zoma says that there is a more embracing principle, "Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut 6:4). Ben Nannas says there is a yet more embracing principle: "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev 19:18). Ben Pazzi says we find a more embracing principle still. He quotes a verse from this *parsha*: "One sheep shall be offered in the morning, and a second in the afternoon" (Ex 29:39) - or, as we might say nowadays, *Shacharit, Mincha, and Maariv*. In a word: "routine". The passage concludes: The law follows Ben Pazzi.

The meaning of Ben Pazzi's statement is clear: all the high ideals in the world - the human person as God's image, belief in God's unity, and the love of neighbour - count for little until they are turned into habits of action that become habits of the heart. We can all recall moments of insight when we had a great idea, a transformative thought, the glimpse of a project that could change our lives. A day, a week, or a year later the thought has been forgotten or become a distant memory, at best a might-have-been.

The people who change the world, whether in small or epic ways, are those who turn peak experiences into daily routines, who know that the details matter, and who have developed the discipline of hard work, sustained over time.

Judaism's greatness is that it takes high ideals and exalted vision - image of God, faith in God, love of neighbour - and turns them into patterns of behaviour. Halacha (Jewish law) involves a set of routines that - like those of the great creative minds - reconfigures the brain, giving discipline to our lives and changing the way we feel, think, and act.

Much of Judaism must seem to outsiders, and sometimes to insiders also, boring, prosaic, mundane, repetitive, routine, obsessed with details, and bereft for the most part of drama or inspiration. Yet that is precisely what writing the novel, composing the symphony, directing the film, perfecting the killer app, or building a billion-dollar business is, most of the time. It is a matter of hard work, focused attention, and daily rituals. That is where all sustainable greatness comes from.

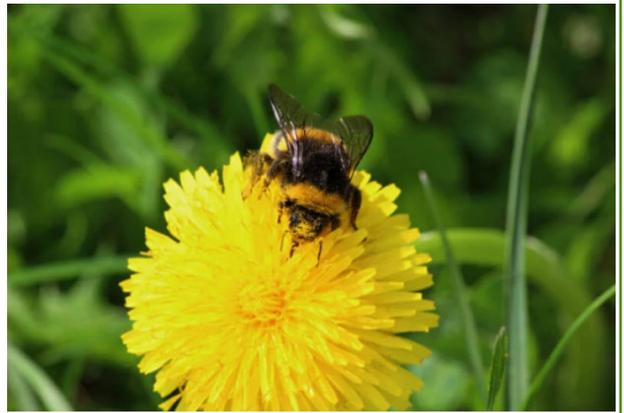
We have developed in the West a strange view of religious experience: that it's what overwhelms you when something happens completely outside the run of normal experience. You climb a mountain and look down. You are miraculously saved from danger. You find yourself part of a vast and cheering crowd. It's how the German Lutheran theologian Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) defined "the holy": as a mystery (*mysterium*) both terrifying (*tremendum*) and fascinating (*fascinans*). You are awed by the presence of something vast. We have all had such experiences.

But that is all they are: experiences. They linger in the memory, but they are not part of everyday life. They are not woven into the texture of our character. They do not affect what we do or achieve or become. Judaism is about changing us so that we become creative artists whose greatest creation is our own life.¹³ And that needs daily rituals: *Shacharit, Minchah, Ma'ariv*, the food we eat, the way we behave at work or in the home, the choreography of holiness which is the special contribution of the priestly dimension of Judaism, set out in this week's *parsha* and throughout the book of Leviticus.

These rituals have an effect. We now know through PET and fMRI scans that repeated spiritual exercise reconfigures the brain. It gives us inner resilience. It makes us more grateful. It gives us a sense of basic trust in the source of our being. It shapes our identity, the way we act and talk and think. Ritual is to spiritual greatness what practice is to a tennis player, daily writing disciplines are to a novelist, and reading company accounts are to Warren Buffett. They are the precondition of high achievement. Serving God is *avodah*, which means hard work.

If you seek sudden inspiration, then work at it every day for a year or a lifetime. That is how it comes. As a famous golfer is said to have said when asked for the secret of his success: "I was just lucky. But the funny thing is that the harder I practise, the luckier I become." The more you seek spiritual heights, the more you need the ritual and routine of halacha, the Jewish "way" to God.

<https://www.rabbisacks.org/covenant-conversation/tetzaveh/inspiration-perspiration/>



As Francis marks 10 years as Pope, conservatives confront post-Benedict era



VATICAN CITY, March 8 (Reuters) - Pope Francis marks the 10th anniversary of his election on March 13 having outlasted the conservative opposition that failed to bring him down and which is now at a crossroads, seeking new direction following the deaths of two of its figureheads.

The conservative-progressive divide has been a recurrent theme of the past 10 years, since Francis first appeared on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica in 2013 wearing a simple white cassock, shunning the red-and-gold coverings used for centuries.

Conservative cardinals and archbishops have accused Francis of sowing confusion by weakening rules on issues such as homosexuality and remarriage after divorce while focusing excessively on social problems such as climate change and economic inequality.

But events have left the conservative movement disoriented and, some experts say, rudderless.

Former Pope Benedict, who resigned in 2013 and became a standard bearer for conservatives who yearned for the return to a more traditional Church, died on Dec. 31 at the age of 95.

"The conservative world lacks a unifying vision, which is something that Benedict provided," said Sandro Magister, a veteran conservative author, journalist and blogger who has been critical of Francis.

"He (Benedict) has no real heir, no one able to inherit his legacy in a substantial way," Magister said.

A senior Vatican official, one of three high-ranking prelates who spoke on condition of anonymity, said many conservatives looked to Benedict "as a sense of security," even though, in the official's opinion, the former pope did not seek that role.

NETWORK

Conservatives also mourned the sudden death in January of Australian Cardinal George Pell, 81, who many had believed would succeed Benedict as chief conservative standard bearer.

Pell's apartment - in the building where Benedict lived until he became pope in 2005 - was a salon for visiting conservative Churchmen.

"In the last years of his life Pell was working to build a unifying network by meeting conservatives and also moderates. He wanted them to reflect on the central issues of the Church looking ahead to the choice of Francis' successor," Magister said.

Pell had written a memo in 2022 calling Francis' papacy a "catastrophe".

The senior Vatican official said: "He (Pell) networked and socialised with a lot of people and that made him a formidable force. Having that network collapse immediately one day probably has people disconcerted."

Two days after Pell's death, Italian bookstores began selling a memoir by Benedict's long-time personal secretary, Archbishop Georg Gaenswein. It included scathing criticism of another conservative icon, Guinean Cardinal Robert Sarah, exposing more internal fault lines on the right.

FRACTURED

The conservative opposition to Francis has become more fractured, in part because of what Magister says is a flourishing of divisive extremism in Catholic social media, which has scared off some once vocal protagonists.

Age has also taken its toll. Two of the four conservative cardinals who became celebrities on right-wing media in 2016 when they launched an assault on Francis' teachings have since died. The other two have gone quiet, possibly because of age and illness.

Another former celebrity of the right was Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, the ex-Vatican ambassador to Washington, who became a rallying point for many conservatives in 2018 when he published a broadside demanding that Francis resign.

Vigano has been largely discredited and kept at arm's length by many former backers, including some U.S. bishops, because of his support for political and COVID-related conspiracy theories.

"They (the conservatives) don't have anybody at the moment," said another senior Vatican official.

While most progressives within the Church have cheered Francis, 86, some have accused him of being too timid. In 2019 he held out the possibility of a married priesthood, albeit limited to remote areas in the Amazon with a shortage of priests, only to pull back.

Both sides appear to agree on one thing - that early in his papacy Francis underestimated the persistency of the Church's sexual abuse crisis, and was too trusting of bishops, particularly in Latin America, who tried to downplay it. They say he should have moved faster to implement stricter safeguards and penalties.

A survey of Catholic women in 104 countries taken by the University of Newcastle in Australia and released at the Vatican on Wednesday showed 80% of the more than 17,000 respondents said Church leaders were not doing enough to address sexual abuse and its cover up.

While the conservatives look for a new standard bearer to form a consensus ahead of the election of the next pope, Francis is forging ahead with his vision of a more inclusive and forward-looking Church.

He has now named about 64% of cardinals aged under 80 who would be eligible to elect a successor after his death or resignation. Church law puts a cap of 120 on the number of cardinal electors, although popes have gone slightly over the limit temporarily.

If Francis' health holds out, even for a few more years, he can appoint more electors, increasing the chances his successor will be someone who agrees with his vision.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/francis-marks-10-years-pope-conservatives-confront-post-benedict-era-2023-03-08/>



Roster for THIS WEEKEND: 11/12 March 2023	
Armstrong, Miranda	E10:00
Armstrong, Miranda	H10:00
Ballenger, Nima	E10:00
Beckford, Peter	C10:00
Dopheide, Marlis	H10:00
Dunell, Linda	E10:00
Edwards, Elisabeth	E10:00
Kenny, Michael	W6:00
Kulkens, Mark	W6:00
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

Roster for NEXT WEEKEND: 18/19 March 2023	
Armstrong, Miranda	R10:00
Castellanos, Rodrigo	E10:00
Cotter, Anne	W8:30
Croft, Mike	H10:00
Croft, Pat	H10:00
Davidson, John	W8:30
Furtado, Lorraine	C10:00
Haines, Geoff	E10:00
Haines, Jan-Marie	E10:00
Maynes, Phil	W6:00
McAleer, Peter	ASRC
Nolan, Kathleen	PRYR
Reardon, Kathy	ASE
Reardon, Kathy	E10:00
Rodriguez, Carlos	W6:00
Scully, Greg	E10:00
Scully, Helen	ASE
Stewart Family	PRSE

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

Throughout his time on earth, Jesus frequently took himself aside to pray and to spend time with the Father. For us, too, the way of the Gospel is the way of prayer.

Across the Archdiocese of Melbourne, our local communities of grace are [invited to unite for a weekend of prayer](#) from Friday 24 March to Sunday 26 March 2023. This weekend coincides with the Feast of the Annunciation, and Archbishop Peter A Comensoli has said that it ‘promises to be a moment of grace for the local Church, as together we meditate on Mary’s fiat, her total “yes”.’

Fr Cameron Forbes was announced as [the new rector of Corpus Christi College](#) last year. In the role now for two months, he shares with us some thoughts on his experience so far and the core elements of good formation. He also tells the story of his own calling to serve God. Being a priest, he says, is ‘an incredible privilege’.

This week we also hear from a woman whose life is dedicated to upholding the dignity of women and children. [Melinda Tankard Reist is a speaker, activist and founder of Collective Shout](#), a grassroots organisation committed to raising awareness about the harmful effects of pornography. Melinda tells us about some of her victories and about why she remains hopeful, while pointing out that there is still much work to be done.

This week, we continue our exploration of the 40th International Eucharistic Congress, hosted right here in Melbourne 50 years ago this year. Among the participants were Mother Teresa, Cardinal Karol Wojtyla (later Pope John Paul II) and a significant number of Ukrainian Catholics, who brought the plight of their people to the world’s attention. We cover all of this, and some other highlights, in [our rundown on what happened](#).

Finally, at the Rite of Election last week, catechumens and candidates affirmed their readiness to embrace the Catholic faith more fully. We [hear some of their stories](#) about why they converted and their journeys to this point. We pray that your own Lenten journey has been a fruitful one so far. In coming weeks, may we all travel further and more faithfully along the way of the Gospel and the way of prayer.



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



Holy feasting

When we add an ‘ecological’ layer to the meanings of fasting and feasting passed down by tradition we are not introducing a new truth but understanding ancient truths more deeply

/ By MARGARET ATKINS

In 2011, the catholic bishops of England and Wales restored the traditional obligation to abstain from meat on a Friday, for centuries a defining badge of Catholics. Last November the bishops urged Catholics to refresh their weekly observance of Friday abstinence by refraining from eating meat. This was not, though, only a return to tradition. It was presented explicitly as a social and environmental resolution: we are called to an act of solidarity with the hungry and of mitigating harm to the climate. At the same time, this is an act of penance, “in memory of the death of Christ, by which our broken relationships with each other and with God’s creation are healed”.

Some Catholics will have taken the next obvious step and given up meat for Lent. Others, though, might have questions. Are the bishops back-pedaling on “meat-free days” only because they are trendy again? Is this an olive branch to eco-vegans who know nothing of the church? Is it secular activism in religious disguise? Secular dieting is a straightforward practical activity: it aims at bodily health. Religious fasting is symbolic, and therefore more complex. It may contain varied and multiple layers of meanings.

After the death of Saul, the “valiant men” of Jabesh-Gilead fasted for a week in mourning. Esther called a three-day fast of all the Jews, intent on invoking the Lord’s aid before she faced the king. Jonah called the Ninevites to a fast of repentance, which even their animals joined. Jesus’ 40 days in the wilderness both recalled the Exodus and signaled his preparation for his mission. For GK Chesterton, abstinence was a mark of gratitude: “You should thank God for beer and Burgundy by not drinking too much of them.”

Over the centuries, the Christian faithful have chosen to go short of food as a witness to compassion, to justice, to battles with demons or to the hope of heaven. But whichever

motivation is primary, our fasts will carry echoes of other meanings. The underlying significance which connects them all is the acknowledgement of our dependence. This goes deep when we experience it in our bodies. We feel our weakness and our need - of other creatures, of our fellow-human beings, of God. All those other meanings - mourning, petition, penitence, preparation, solidarity, self-discipline, eternal life - are bound up with one simple truth: we are not God, but God’s fragile, limited creatures. We cannot rely on ourselves.

The communal nature of religious abstinence is another mark of that dependence. Individuals go on diets. Believers who fast even privately do so as members of their community. It is together that we mourn, repent, reform and recommit ourselves. Through this, we signal our identity as the people of God. We acknowledge that our sins have broken the bonds of community, and witness to our longing for reconciliation one with another.

The Church’s calendar focuses our asceticism differently at different times. Fasting on Friday, recalling the sacrifice of Christ, expresses our sorrow for sin and our gratitude for redemption. The abstinence of Advent deepens our expectation. The long weeks of Lent allow us to concentrate on becoming people worthy of the gift of Easter, by restraining and retraining our desires, by rebuilding our damaged communities through alms-giving and the making of peace.

Can we, then, add an authentic “ecological” layer to the complex meanings of fasting passed down by tradition? Does it make sense, as the bishops put it, to “dedicate to God the pressing need for us all to live more simply”? To be mindful of the call to care for Creation is not to introduce a new truth into Christianity. It is rather to attend more carefully to two ancient truths. First, the created world is good, a gift from our loving

Creator. Second, as Christians we are called to love our human beings, above all when they are needy and vulnerable. The modern world has added much understanding, of how we are harming what is entrusted to us, of the limitations of resources and inequalities in how they are shared, and of the multiple interconnections between damaging the environment and harming the poor. It has added nothing to the reasons why these matter.

Animal products are a major cause of damage: they are calculated to be responsible for 14.5 per cent of global greenhouse gases and 95 per cent of Amazon deforestation. (The ecological impact of fishing is probably even worse.) It makes sense, then, to shape our weekly and seasonal disciplines in ways that acknowledge this. As a bonus, this can reconnect us with our Catholic Christian roots.

The monastic fast from meat lasted from Holy Cross in September until Easter. All good Catholics, like devout Eastern Christians even today, used to renounce both meat and eggs throughout Lent. Until quite recently, the Sunday roast was a highlight of the week, not a daily norm. For most of Christian history, people ate flesh in order to celebrate. Feasting, just like fasting, was an act rich in communal meaning. The Sunday roast, the Easter lamb, were not gobbled down hastily and carelessly, but savoured with Christian purpose.

As a practical response, a single plant-based day a week looks minimal. As a symbol, it makes a powerful point: our choices of food can express our love of God. It opens up the possibility of a more radical renewal of tradition, one defined not by fasts but by feasts. Suppose we reserved meat, and fish, for celebrations? Suppose we saw them less as a daily right, occasionally to be renounced, than as a rare treat, granted by God’s merciful generosity, for shared rejoicing. For it is Easter, not Lent, that is the heart of Christianity; our sorrow looks forward to our joy.

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Gospel: John 4: 5-42

Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well is there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, 'What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?' - Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied:

'If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: Give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.'

'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered 'and the well is deep: how could you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?' Jesus replied:

'Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again; but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life.'

'Sir,' said the woman, 'give me some of that water, so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water.' 'Go and call your husband' said Jesus to her 'and come back ere.' The woman answered, 'I have no husband.' He said to her, 'You are right to say, "I have no husband"; for although you have had five, the one you have now is not your husband. You spoke the truth there.' 'I see you are a prophet, sir' said the woman. 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said:

'Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know; for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour will come - in fact it is here already - when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.'

The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah - that is, Christ - is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything.' 'I who am speaking to you,' said Jesus 'I am he.'

At this point his disciples returned, and were surprised to find him speaking to a woman, though none of them asked, 'What do you want from her?' or, 'Why are you talking to her?' The woman put down her water jar and hurried back to the town to tell the people, 'Come and see a man who has told me everything I ever did; I wonder if he is the Christ?' This brought people out of the town and they started walking towards him.

Meanwhile, the disciples were urging him, 'Rabbi, do you have something to eat'; but he said, 'I have food to eat that you do not know about.' So the disciples asked one another, 'Has someone been bringing him food?' But Jesus said:

'My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work. Have you not got a saying: Four months and then the harvest? Well, I tell you: Look around you, look at the fields; already they are white, ready for harvest! Already the reaper is being paid his wages, already he is bringing in the grain for eternal life, and thus sower and reaper rejoice together. For here the proverb holds good: one sows, another reaps; I sent you to reap a harvest you had not worked for. Others worked for it; and you have come into the rewards of their trouble.'

Many Samaritans of that town had believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony when she said, 'He told me all I have ever done', so, when the Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days, and when he spoke to them many more come to believe; and they said to the woman, 'Now we no longer believe because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he really is the savior of the world.'

Prayers of the Faithful for 12 March 2023 - Third Sunday of Lent

Leader: Lord, as we bring these prayers before you, quench our thirst for life with your living water.

For our Church: that we may be a source of living water for all who thirst for meaning and purpose in their lives.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For our parish community: that we may have a deeper appreciation of God's gift of creation. Allow us to tread gently on our common home, cherishing its resources whilst drawing us into a greater stewardship of the earth.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For Pope Francis: as he celebrates ten years as the Bishop of Rome, that God will grant him good health in mind and body. We pray that God will also continue to bless his efforts to show mercy and compassion to all. Inspire him as he leads the Church to greater unity and a deeper love.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For greater recognition of the ministry of women: that we may be open to, and encouraging of, the ministerial gifts of women, who bring the Good News to our communities, including those who no longer come to Church

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who are suffering: that God will give strength to those recovering from accidents, natural disasters, droughts, or who are grieving the death of loved ones.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For a deepening of hope: that the Spirit of God will help us experience the depth of God's love for us and renew our trust in God's faithfulness, as we face our daily challenges.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who are sick and those who are listed in our bulletin. May they experience the healing touch of Christ in their lives.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

We pray for those who have died recently. We also remember Joyce Arundell, Laurence Gatt, Joyce Jakubik, Margaret McKinley, Gianluca Salvitti and Benjamin Vincent whose anniversaries occur at this time. May they rest in the peace and love of Christ.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: God of life, be fresh water to our dry days, as you hear the prayers we have spoken and those held deep within our hearts. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen