

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.

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.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

- Unfortunately the Archbishop Peter Comensoli will not be holding Mass this weekend due to a prior engagement.
- 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:

We come to the second of the three great Johannine narratives that have historically featured on these Sundays of Lent - the woman at the well, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus. Each discloses something fundamental about Jesus' identity. In turn he is the Messiah, the light of the world, and the resurrection and the life.

Once again there are choices to be made. Is it better to read the fully story or the abridged version? Whichever is selected, is it more effective to proclaim it via a single voice or with an ensemble of voices? The pros and cons are much the same as for last Sunday's gospel and do not need repeating here. While the shorter version reads quite coherently, it omits Jesus' claim to the light of the world and his dramatic judgement on the authorities at the end.

Like the Samaritan woman, the man born blind gains insight and grows in faith as the drama unfolds. In the longer option, "the man called Jesus" becomes "a prophet," then someone who must be "from God," then "the Son of Man," and finally "Lord". Unlike the woman at the well, who is led to faith through an intimate encounter with Jesus alone the blind man's belief is forged in the crucible of intense public hostility.

Whatever choices are made, this splendidly constructed story deserves to be proclaimed with flair, faith and skill

Break Open the Word 2023

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 18

6:00pm Mass Montmorency

Sunday 19

8:30am Mass Montmorency

10:00am Mass Eltham

12:00pm Baptism: Poppy, Lara Eltham

Monday 20

5:30pm Rosary & Viewing: Peter Lamers Montmorency

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

11:00am Funeral: Peter Lamers Montmorency

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

Monday 27

7:00pm Easter Liturgy Music Rehearsal Montmorency

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

Thursday 30

9:30am Liturgy of the Word with Communion Montmorency

Friday 31

9:10am SFX School Lenten Liturgy Montmorency

9:30am Mass Eltham

Saturday 1 April

12:00pm Baptism: Isabelle, Harvey, Adeline,
& Grace Montmorency

6:00pm Mass Montmorency

Sunday 2 - Palm Sunday

8:30am Mass Montmorency

10:00am Mass Eltham

12:00pm Baptism: Toby, Willa Eltham

Monday 3

7:00pm Easter Liturgy Music Rehearsal Montmorency

**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:

Peter Lamers, Margaret Lumb

For those whose anniversaries are at this time:

Isabelle Borg, Terry Boyd, Marianna Cantone, Jack Feil, John Frawley, Mary Greenwood, Bill Maloney (10 years), Angelina Monteiro, Michael Morabito, Maxwell Vanderwert, Denise Wraight

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.



Congratulations to all who celebrated their sacraments during January:

Sunday 19 March

Our Lady Help of Christians, 12:00pm

Poppy Isabel Mazzone Pillusch

Baptism

Lara June Robinson

Baptism

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.

A Small Pastoral Team



Thank you to those of you who took up the invitation offered in last week's bulletin to join the list of those happy to help take care of some of the needs of those less able in our Community.

You may know of someone finding life difficult at the moment and in need of assistance, do let us know.

As we mentioned, bringing someone to Mass, dropping off a Bulletin, taking communion to someone unable to attend Mass, is a call to each of us as a welcoming, caring community.

We are here for each other and together we make up the whole Body of Christ.

The invitation still holds if you are able to help out. Please be in touch with Patsy (0429 439 675) or Kate (9435 4742).

Thank you



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.



Mary and Des O'Connor wish to thank Fr. Michael and friends from OLHC and SFX for joining us to celebrate the life of our daughter Caroline, and for the support given in so many ways.



DAYS FOR GIRLS

St Francis Xavier parish & Kadasig Aid & Development Inc are a team for Days for Girls. The group has been working on making reusable menstrual kits for several years.

The sewing of these kits is very exact and very time consuming. Around the world these kits are made, packed then sent to a wide range of countries. We send ours to the Philippines as we have the contacts & a trainer for the correct distribution & education for girls & women. A couple of years ago 50 kits were taken by a couple of members – what a success!

Over the past few weeks 540 kits were packed & shipped to be given to another lot of girls & ladies. These kits can't be distributed until body education has been given which is really important. These kits will give dignity to all girls & women allowing them to go to school & go about their business.

The cost is \$130 per balikbayan box to send these kits – we are looking for sponsors to assist with this aspect of the program.

If you can help with shipping or assist in any way please call: Vinka Heagerty: 0418 354 954; Glenys Gayfer: 0411 196 395.



Rehearsals for Easter Liturgy Music

Are you going to be around over Easter? Do you fancy yourself as one with musical talent? If so, would you like to add your voice or instrument to others, enhancing the celebrations of our Easter Liturgies of Holy Thursday, the Saturday Vigil and Easter Sunday morning at 8.30am Mass? Vocal or instrumental music ability would be very welcome.

Music rehearsals for these Liturgies will be held in the SFX Church from 7-9pm on **Mon 27th March, Mon 3rd & Tues 4th April.**

Complying with current policy, all participants are required to have a Working with Children Check and a current Code of Conduct. If this is a challenge for you, please be in touch with Peter Williams at Parish Office ph: 9435 4642. Caring for our children and the vulnerable is the responsibility of all of us. Many thanks. It would be nice to see some new faces and fresh voices!

Pope Francis set out his vision for the Church within the first few days and weeks after his election, and the same vision still inspires him a decade later. It can be summed up in a few key words / **by CHRISTOPHER LAMB**

Ten years in five words

Exactly a decade ago, I stood in a cold and wet St Peter's Square, looking up at the balcony of the basilica, awaiting news about who had been elected pope. After the white smoke had cleared, Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, the protodeacon of the College of Cardinals, emerged and announced the name: "Bergoglio".

People around me started asking: "Who is he?" I could only tell them that Jorge Mario Bergoglio was the Jesuit Archbishop of Buenos Aires and that he had been a leading contender at the 2005 conclave. This time, he had barely registered on the lists of *papabile* - and he certainly had not been on mine.

Moments later, Pope Francis appeared. He greeted the crowd with "*Buona sera*" and asked them to pray for him. In those first minutes, any remaining nostalgia for a remote, monarchical papacy evaporated. A pastor of simplicity and humility immediately made a connection with the people he had been called to serve. It marked a new moment for the Church, and there's been no turning back.

It is remarkable how the first impressions Francis made that evening and in the days immediately after, have remained constant. In his first remarks to the world, the new Pope talked of the "bishop and people" taking up a "journey of fraternity, of love, of trust among us". It was an early pointer to the synodal reforms which have become central to his pontificate. Three days later, speaking to journalists, he explained why he had decided to become the first pope to take St Francis of Assisi as his namesake. "For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects Creation," Francis told them.

The past decade has seen the Pope channel the spirit of the poor friar from Assisi. Those three Franciscan pillars have framed his reforms. It's not a liberal or



PHOTO: ALAMY/DPA, MICHAEL KAPPELER

conservative agenda but a mission rooted in the Gospel

Inside the Sistine Chapel, when it became clear that he had achieved enough votes to be elected, the Brazilian cardinal and Franciscan friar Cláudio Hummes (who died in July 2022), turned to Bergoglio and said: "Don't forget the poor." N.T. Wright, one of the world's leading New Testament scholars, later described this to me as a "biblical injunction". It's one on which Francis has sought to base his ministry.

The first Latin American Pope has faced fierce resistance from inside the Church. As I wrote in my book *the Outsider*, the opposition to Francis has been driven by modern-day doctors of the law and religious authorities opposed to his pastoral mission. Often they have the support of well-funded groups in the United States. The attacks on the 86-year-old Francis following the death of Benedict XVI, including from a cardinal who had worked closely with him, show that this opposition is not going away. If anything, his enemies have been

emboldened. They want a moralizing Church; a safe, immobile refuge from modernity which stands as a fortress against the world. The opposition to this papacy is both theological and political.

Pope Francis' vision is straightforward and transparent. It could be summed up in five words. The first is the Pope's call for a **missionary** Church. He urges every believer to become a missionary disciple. Whether it's updating the Code of Canon Law or ending the practice of Church official living in vast, rent-free apartments in Rome, his underlying aim has been to ensure that every element in the Church supports its mission of building the Kingdom of God. Francis' new constitution for the Roman Curia (*Praedicate Evangelium*), which places the Church's central government into a missionary, service-oriented key, is not just about what happens in Rome but a modle for every diocese. It challenges the "business as usual" mentality which puts hug resources and energy into maintaining bureaucracies. Pope Francis does

not want bishops to act like managers of corporations. “Some bishops are running dioceses as though they were some sort of financial concern,” one senior Vatican official told me recently.

Francis’ focus on mission can be traced back to the speech that helped get him elected. “When the Church does not come out of herself to evangelise, she becomes self-referential and sick,” he told his fellow cardinals during the gatherings before the 2013 conclave. “But I think about the times in which Jesus knocks from within so that we will let him come out. The self-referential Church keeps Jesus Christ within herself and does not let him out.”

The efforts to structurally embed a missionary vision of the Church brings us to the second word that characterizes this pontificate: **synodal**. Over the last 10 years, the general synods of bishops have been the primary vehicle for Francis’ pastoral agenda. The themes covered in these gatherings in Rome have included family life, young people, the Amazon, and the nature of the Church’s mission. While the language may be technical, the “synod on synodality” now in progress is an attempt to place discernment of the will of the Holy Spirit at the centre of decision-making. It seeks to create the space and the structures to ensure the Church does not become closed in on itself.

Francis’ vision of synodality emphasizes listening, dialogue and a sense of shared mission between laity and hierarchy. He wants a new way of being the Church for the third millennium. He is wary of groups who campaign for specific pre-packaged reforms. Nevertheless, the synod process has opened up heated discussions about a whole range of contested topics - the role of women, sexuality, governance, and ordination - which are not going to be resolved easily. The synodal journey which began on the day of the Pope’s election is set to reach a major watershed with the summits of bishops in October 2023 and October 2024. It won’t end there: Francis has begun a long-term renewal process that will be his lasting legacy.

Third, Francis has been a **disruptor** Pope, challenging the status quo. He repeatedly warns against the phrase “It’s always been done this

way”, and early in his papacy told a crowd of millions at World Youth Day in Brazil to “*Hagan lio*” (“Make a mess” or “Make some noise”). Over the last 10 years, he’s shaken things up in the Vatican with his refusal to be scripted, giving unprecedented number of media interviews, rejecting the trappings of office and continually pulling off surprises.

Francis has disrupted the old system of power and patronage in the Church by appointing cardinals from far-flung corners of the globe and has opened the door for lay people to lead Vatican offices. Francis has also taken groundbreaking, albeit incremental, steps to include women in the male-dominated world of Church leadership by appointing them to senior, board-level positions in the Roman Curia: the number of women in the Vatican’s workforce has risen from 19.2 per cent to 23.4 per cent over the last 10 years.

The fourth word that sums up the Francis pontificate is **fraternity**, mentioned in his opening remarks to the world and central to his 2020 encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*. “From the start of his pontificate, [he] has been referring to Muslims as ‘our siblings’”, Cardinal Michael Czerny, one of Francis’ closest advisers and Prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, said in a recent interview in Australia. “Let’s hope that Christians and Muslims will look back on his pontificate as a turning point in our interfaith and fraternal relations.” Francis has gone further than any other pope in seeking to build bridges with other religious leaders. He believes that world peace is only possible if there is peace among religions.

Over the past 10 years, he has visited more than a dozen Muslim-majority countries and when he went to the United Arab Emirates in 2019, he became the first Pope to travel to the Arabian peninsula, the birthplace of Islam. Two years later, he became the first Bishop of Rome to go to Iraq. While in Abu Dhabi he signed a landmark document on human fraternity with Dr Ahmed el-Tayeb, the leading Sunni authority, and in Iraq he met the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the widely respected Shia leader.

His ecumenical efforts have also broken new ground and are underpinned by a refusal to allow

past divisions to prevent efforts to show that Christians can take practical steps towards unity. His ecumenical pilgrimage to South Sudan with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland was an unprecedented effort to put this into action, as was his trip to Sweden to mark the 500th anniversary of the start of the Reformation.

The final word to describe the Francis pontificate is **pastoral**. Throughout the last decade, the Pope has emphasized the mercy of God, repeatedly urging priests and bishops to forgive and not to condemn. The pastoral heart of the pontificate underpins everything Francis does, from his interactions with world leaders to his desire for a field hospital Church.

The pastoral focus is why this pope is so allergic to the Church being caught up in the culture wars, or becoming bound up with political or worldly ideology. He is insistent on applying the model of the Good Samaritan, who didn’t consider what tribe the traveler left for dead came from or what he might have done. He simply helped him get back on his feet.

Francis’ approach to LGBTQ people is an example of where his pastoral focus has shifted the Church’s approach away from harsh legalism to a Gospel-based vision of seeing every person as a child of God.

Francis has made plenty of mistakes. His failure to grasp the scale of the clerical sexual abuse crisis in Chile is the most obvious, and there is still urgent work for the Church to do in safeguarding. It would be wrong to see this papacy as a one-man crusade. Francis’ papacy is shaped and informed by the Second Vatican Council, whose reforms were embraced in his home continent of Latin America. It has to be remembered that Francis’ vision for the Church emerged out of the suffering and lived experiences of the people of God in Latin America, where the Church has so often been a prophetic voice for justice.

The tenth anniversary of Francis’ election as Bishop of Rome is not just a celebration of the vision of one man but of an “event” with a distinct history and cultural hinterland that is continuing to decisively reshape the Church.

Roster for THIS 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
McAlear, 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
Roster for NEXT WEEKEND: 25/26 March 2023	
Armstrong, Miranda	C10:00
Azzopardi, Michael	E10:00
Bowyer, Darrell	ASRC
Bowyer, Rosemary	ASRC
Capuana, Marisa	PRYR
Dunell, Linda	ASE
French, Jossie	W8:30
Leahy, Michelle	R10:00
Love, Philip	W8:30
Northrop, Greg	E10:00
Reardon, Kathy	E10:00
Reardon, Peter	E10:00
Scully, Greg	E10:00
Turnbull, Mark	H10:00
Turnbull, Pauline	H10:00
Wallace, Kathryn	W6:00
Williams, Peter	W6:00
Zavdil 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

ASRC Foodbank	
Honey	Dried Fruit
Peanut Butter	Unsalted Nuts
Tahini	Tinned Chickpeas
Sweet Biscuits	Tinned Beans
Savoury Biscuits	Tinned Vegetables
Olive Oil 750ml	Black Tea
Tuna in Oil 400g	Coffee



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.



Fourth Sunday of Lent - 18 & 19 March





Thu lives in Vietnam. When Thu was 12 years old, he stepped on an unexploded land mine and lost his leg.

Living with a disability in rural Vietnam presented many challenges for Thu, who worked mainly as a rice farmer. Thu also took on the role of caring for his wife, Linh, after she suffered a stroke.

Determined to turn their lives around, Thu and Linh joined the empowerment of People with Disabilities program, run by Caritas Australia's local partner in Vietnam, the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD).

For Thu, the greatest impact the program has had is enabling the change in Linh's physical and mental wellbeing. With the support of a physiotherapist, Linh can now walk short distances with the aid of a walking stick.

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: Phan Tan Lam/Caritas Australia

The ground beneath our feet

For members of the L'Arche communities, this Lent is truly a time in the wilderness, of striving to strip away what is false and discovering what can really be trusted / **By HAZEL BRADLEY**

Lent meant little more to me than giving up chocolate - until, in 1979, I came to L'Arche. There I came to love the liturgical year, with its annual round of readings and celebrations leading to an ever deeper, richer familiarity and understanding. Now we are in Lent, journeying from the wilderness back to life, turning again to God; repenting, as we choose between life and death.

In a sense I have been living in Lent since early 2020, when L'Arche International published a report which revealed that our founder, Jean Vanier, had secretly, over decades, abused women, many of whom had come to him for spiritual direction. A few weeks ago the results of a two-year inquiry into these abuses was published. It makes for miserable reading: shocking, disturbing. With many others in L'Arche I feel angry, betrayed, saddened.

Many people were inspired by Jean Vanier. Many came to L'Arche because of his gift for articulating the beauty of people with learning disabilities, and how they can act as a catalyst in forming and sustaining community. But our perception of him has been profoundly shaken.

So, this Lent, we are truly in the wilderness, striving to strip away what is false, and discover what can really be trusted. The ground we thought we were standing on gave way, but we discovered surer ground beneath it. We are discovering what we can really rely on, and for me, as for so many in L'Arche, this is the reality of our relationships together as people with and without learning disabilities, in community. The day-to-day joys, the ups and downs of life in community, make possible depths of relationship for which I feel truly blessed.

Richard Keagan-Bull, a friend who has learning disabilities, exploded with anxiety and rage when I told him the news about Jean Vanier. Then he looked at me and asked whether I was OK. An hour later, when we broke the news to the community, Richard took the microphone to say, "What's important is that we stay together and support each other." Richard spoke for us all: first his rage, then his concern for me as a friend, then his insight into how much we need each other.

During Lent, we in L'Arche are called to re-examine our history and our values. There are many questions to reflect on: how can we support the victims? What made it possible for such abuse to take place, unknown, in our midst? How can we prevent it happening again? What must be learned, and changed? Does Jean Vanier's written work have any enduring value?

Lucy Winkett, rector of St James's Piccadilly, recently reflected on Christ's temptations, pointing out that the devil is the adversary who deceives and separates, in order to control. She spoke of the need to build communities that insist on truth and connection. This is the challenge for L'Arche today as we reflect on the lessons we must learn from the recent report. We are searching for a way to begin again in truth, with a deeper humility and love.

After the revelations were first made public in 2020 there was lockdown. It was hard. Then our international leader, Stephan Posner, had a good idea. He suggested we have an international gathering online. In what felt like a time of darkness, we were invited to light a candle of hope at sunset, beginning in New Zealand and slowly, as the



Pope Francis at the L'Arche community at Ciampino on the outskirts of Rome

sun set across the world, spreading the light, community by community, ending with Vancouver.

Then we gathered online together, people with and without learning disabilities from 38 countries. A story from the Lakota and Sioux people was told, of an old woman who guards all the seeds of the world. As she keeps watch she weaves the most beautiful garment. Years of work go into it, but one day a dog comes. He seizes a loose thread and pulls until the whole garment is just a mess of tangled threads on the ground. When she returns and sees her lifetime's work ruined, she sits, in silence, for a long time - then picks up a thread, begins again, creating a garment even more beautiful than the first.

The old woman had a choice. To stay in her anger, to give up, or to begin again. In L'Arche we too have a choice: to remain in our anger and grief, or to reflect on our messy, flawed story, and discern what is true and life-giving. This is what we are choosing to do today as a federation: picking up those threads and re-weaving our story together, to recreate a garment of colour, life, hope - different from the first - discarding what is not of God, and building on what is.

It is never too late to begin again.

Hazel Bradley is a long-term member of L'Arche UK.

Gospel: John 9:1-410

As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?' 'Neither he nor his parents sinned,' Jesus answered, 'he was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him.'

'As long as the day lasts I must carry out the work of the one who sent me; the night will soon be here when no one can work. As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.'

Having said this, he spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam' (a name that means 'sent'). So the blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored.

His neighbours and people who earlier had seen him begging said, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said, 'Yes, it is the same one.' Others said, 'No, he only looks like him.' The man himself said, 'I am the man.' So they said to him, 'then how do your eyes come to be open?' 'the man called Jesus' he answered 'made a paste, daubed my eyes with it and said to me, "Go and wash at Siloam"; so I went, and when I washed I could see.' They asked, 'Where is he?' 'I don't know' he answered.

They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. It had been a Sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had come to see, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.' Then some of the Pharisees said, 'This man cannot be from God: he does not keep the Sabbath.' Others said, 'How could a sinner produce signs like this?' And there was disagreement among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?' 'He is a prophet' replied the man.

However, the Jews would not believe that the man had been blind and had gained his sight, without first sending for his parents and asking them, 'Is this man really your son who you say was born blind? If so, how is it that he is now able to see?' His parents answered, 'We know he is our son and we know he was born blind, but we don't know how it is that he can see now, or who opened his eyes. He is old enough: let him speak for himself.' His parents spoke like this out of fear of the Jews, who had already agreed to expel from the synagogue anyone who should acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. This was why his parents said, 'He is old enough; ask him.'

So the Jews again sent for the man and said to him, 'Give glory to God! For our part, we know that this man is a sinner.' The man answered, 'I don't know if he is a sinner; I only know that I was blind and now I can see.' They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' he replied, 'I have told you once and you wouldn't listen. Why do you want to hear it all again? Do you want to become his disciples too?' At this they hurled abuse at him: 'You can be his disciple,' they said 'we are disciples of Moses: we know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this man, we don't know where he comes from.' The man replied, 'Now here is an astonishing thing! He has opened my eyes, and you don't know where he comes from! We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but God does listen to men who are devout and do his will. Ever since the world began it is unheard of for anyone to open the eyes of a man who was born blind; if this man were not from God, he couldn't do a thing.' 'Are you trying to teach us,' they replied 'and you a sinner through and through, since you were born!' And they drove him away.

Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 'Sir,' the man replied 'tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said, 'You are looking at him; he is speaking to you.' The man said, 'Lord, I believe', and worshipped him.

Jesus said: 'It is for judgement that I have come into this world, so that those without sight may see and those with sight turn blind.'

Hearing this, some Pharisees who were present said to him, 'We are not blind, surely?' Jesus replied: 'Blind? If you were, you would not be guilty, but since you say, "We see", your guilt remains.'

Prayers of the Faithful for 19 March 2023 - Fourth Sunday of Lent

Leader: God our Father, you shepherd us with your unconditional love, hear the prayers we offer you this day.

For your Church: that all those who minister to your people are strengthened in their faith, so that they give continuing witness to God's love and faithfulness. We pray also for those who will answer the call to a priestly vocation and for those who will guide them.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all Christians: that we recognise our role in promoting the Gospel values and in working to create a better society where the works of light - goodness and right living and truth - are shown for all to see.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the people of Ukraine and all those whose freedom is under attack: that we pray for, and do what we can to promote, peace and the cessation of all hostilities.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those suffering the effects of natural disasters: that people of good heart throughout the world will come to their assistance in the restoration of their homes and their way of life.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For the people who struggle with the darkness of mental ill-health: that they are supported by caring health professionals and others in dealing with their pain.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For all those who are ill and those who are listed in the bulletin: that God will comfort them and give them strength in their ordeal.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who have died, especially *Peter Lamers & Margaret Lumb*, and those whose anniversaries occur at this time, including *Isabelle Borg, Terry Boyd, Marianna Cantone, Jack Feil, John Frauley, Mary Greenwood, Billy Maloney, Angelina Monteiro, Michael Morabito, Maxwell Vanderwert & Denise Wraight*. May they rest in the light of God's face.

Let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: God, your perpetual light shines on us, hear and answer these prayers and those in the depths of our heart. Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

All: Amen