

# Grovely, Samford, Mitchelton (GSM)

## Faith Matters

### Posted Newsletter Articles

## 2021

#### December 18, 19

Here's a thought about Christmas which we sometimes overlook. God is vulnerable when it comes to us human beings, His people.

God, all powerful, all just, all merciful, and Goodness itself, desired his only Son to be born as a tiny helpless baby in unsettled times **as one of us, for us**. Why? Because he loves us. It shows among many things God's tenderness towards humanity, and through that, God's overwhelming desire to be with us, to be in our lives, and to lead us in His ways.

God's creation is immense, but God's love is particular. God doesn't just let us cope alone with whatever comes our way. He is right there waiting for us to acknowledge his presence. Every day, as we go about our normal matters, being open to the omnipresence of our loving God is as easy as just that - acknowledging that He is right there beside us, involved in everything. All it takes to get that feeling of peace and confidence that God is with us is as simple as a word to the Lord – remember Jesus called God the Father “Abba”, “Daddy” - so now and again “hello Lord”, “be with me now, Lord”, or “Lord, how will I cope with **this**?” or “Lord, I'm anxious about -----” “Thank you, Lord!” and so on. Let's bring God into our everyday life with the knowledge that he wants to be involved in everything we do – and we want Him to be! **Come Lord Jesus!**

**The Faith Matters team, Pat, Aileen, John and Rosaleen wish everyone in the parish, Christmas blessings: Hope, Peace, and Joy! and the companionship of Emmanuel, God-With-Us.**

#### December 11, 12

Gaudete Sunday – This Sunday could almost be called “Happy Sunday”. Each year on the third Sunday of Advent the penitential mood of the season lifts. The readings in the celebration of this Sunday's mass reflect this. The candle is pink today and the priest's vestments are rose pink: pink for joy. We are to take a break from our more solemn deliberations and “rejoice in the Lord”. The Church is giving us a foresight of the joy we associate with the birth of Jesus at Christmas, and the peace we associate with the coming of Christ at the end of time.

The Scripture readings urge us to be joyful. Check them out again later today. (References for the readings for each week are found on page 2 of the newsletter.) Zephaniah tells us to cry out with joy, rejoice, sing joyfully and do not fear any misfortune. Paul tells us in Philippians ‘rejoice...rejoice’ and ‘the Lord is near’, while in Luke's Gospel, John the Baptist is encouraging people to act with integrity and compassion to ready themselves for the coming of the Lord.

Readying ourselves for Christmas can be as momentous or as small as our lives allow. It's quite possible to act with integrity and compassion in one's ordinary day: denying the sharp criticism or retort in favour of a quiet response; a small prayer for someone else, as one goes about one's daily activities; a little

patience to listen instead of talking; eye contact and a smile for a stranger; a little courtesy to another driver or shopper during the pre-Christmas rush.

Today we can allow ourselves to throw off the sombre atmosphere of Advent and respond to the joyful anticipation of the birth of Jesus and his second coming at the end of time – to rejoice in the fact that He is here right now with us, in us. Emmanuel.

**Lord, teach us your ways and help us to be generous, gracious and just so that all can rejoice in the Lord.**

## **December 4, 5**

**Faith and Hope.** We're all looking forward to Christmas, and planning with presents, food, people. We're even remembering what Christmas is really all about, remembering GodWithUs in all the busyness of these weeks leading up to the big day.

However, for so many families - we all know some of them - Covid has made this time one of uncertainty and frustration. Not all of us will be able to be with family members or dear friends in person this year.

Even the Holy Family experienced uncertainty, and risk. Especially the Holy Family experienced uncertainty, hardship. Life was not predictable nor certain for the birth of God's Son. A very young Mary must have been astonished and uncertain when a messenger from God appeared and greeted her. Then an astonishing proposition – would she bear the Son of God? Mary wasn't married, though betrothed to Joseph – she was a virgin, how on earth...?? But with humility and faith, Mary said the "yes" which has resounded down through the ages as an ultimate sign of faith. For Joseph – what turmoil he must have felt when he heard Mary was with child. What agony of mind, what uncertainty: Mary was his pure, prayerful betrothed. He knew the child couldn't be his, and it couldn't be happening! With faith again and prayer, Joseph also said "yes" and Jesus was born.

No mention is necessary about more uncertainties in their family life – Scripture tells us about some of them: the flight into a foreign country to save their baby from death; the agonizing search for the 12-year-old Jesus in Jerusalem; the concern when Jesus began the uncertain and risky task of fulfilling his mission in becoming an itinerant preacher. How did they feel about that? And yet it all happened, through faith and hope. Now we have God's gift of eternal life. Uncertainty was overcome by faith and hope.

**During this Advent of uncertainty let's pray with hope and faith, and for hope and faith. Joy and Peace will follow. Come Lord Jesus**

## **November 27, 28**

**Advent begins!** Today is the First Sunday of Advent. The word "advent" is from Latin *advenire* 'to come towards something' - in this case 'someONE' - God. We're always on our way towards God, and in Advent it's a time to contemplate anew the mystery of God's tender love for humankind made clear in Jesus' coming as a tiny baby about 2000 years ago. And a time to contemplate the way we live our lives as we await his Second Coming some time in the future

Advent is a time of a little confusion: we wait as we **look forward** to celebrating Jesus' birth at Christmastime, and in doing that we **look back** to the first coming of Jesus. And then, at this time we also **look forward** as well to his Second Coming. But hold on! Isn't he already here with us? with each of us right now? Ah, yes, resoundingly! **God is with us now! Emmanuel!**

Christ has come. Christ is here now. Christ will come again.

In the coming weeks as we journey towards Christmas let's look forward with joy and hope and expectation. When it gets busy – hectic at times perhaps – let's remember God is right there with us, even more excited than we are that we are thinking, remembering, God and his Son, and how our lives can help His Kingdom come. **Come Lord Jesus!**

## **November 20, 21**

Today we come to the end of the Church's liturgical year with the feast of Christ the King. This feast was established by Pope Pius XI in 1925 to remind us that Jesus is the Lord of the universe, both as God and man.

Originally it was celebrated on the last Sunday of October, but after Pope Paul VI revised the Church's liturgical calendar in 1969, it was moved to the last Sunday in Ordinary Time before the first Sunday of Advent. This year we celebrate Christ the King today (November 21) because the First Sunday of Advent occurs next Sunday on November 28.

We know that Jesus referred to the "kingdom" more than 80 times in the New Testament – Kingdom of God, Kingdom of Heaven, Kingdom of Light. Most of these references occur in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (the Synoptic Gospels) but very few in the Gospel of John. Actually the Gospel of Matthew takes the concept of "the Kingdom" as one of its major themes.

For Jesus, the concepts of King and kingdom were radically different from what the world considers these terms to be. After the Church took on the forms and style of the Roman Empire under Constantine the Great, it gradually became, over the centuries, more of an institution which reflected power, hierarchy, etc – quite different from what Jesus modelled while he was on earth.

Pope Francis has tried to rewind the current Church to a path which more resembles what Jesus meant when he spoke of the "Kingdom of God". We are all familiar with so many of the phrases he has used in his pontificate as he tries to bring about change. Our Plenary Council is part of this process.

Mind you, Pope Francis has met a lot of resistance to what he is trying to do, particularly in the Vatican Curia and in certain countries, especially in the American Church.

**Advent booklets for everyday reading and reflections available in the church shop \$5.**

## **November 13, 14**

**Some parishioners have been confused by the Plenary Council (happening now) and the term "synod" (used for centuries) and also "synodality" as it is used by Pope Francis. We have been preparing for our Plenary Council for a few years now, with the first of 2 sessions happening recently, and the second one to occur in Sydney, July 4 to 9, 2022.**

The results of the Council will be decided by the Bishops of Australia and clergy - the attending lay people will not have a vote. These matters will then be forwarded by the Bishops to the Vatican which will then decide "yes" or "no".

Synodality is an entirely different approach (even from a synod) and is Pope Francis' preferred model for the Church moving forward in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Pope recently announced a Synod on the

topic of synodality for the entire Catholic Church, to be held in 2023. Each Diocese in Australia will have a part to play in the years leading up to 2023. At this point we have no information as to the process to be followed in this Archdiocese, but it will come in due course.

We do know that the deadline for feedback into this process was to be about March next year - not a lot of time. However a recent decision has moved the timeline at least 3 months further down the track. This gives a bit more time for people to have some kind of a say and to be able to communicate this to the Bishops before they begin their preparations for the world-wide "Synod on Synodality."

This is important because the major difference between the process of synodality and a council is that all of us, as the baptised, have a role to play which is far more significant than it is for a Council.

A document re what a synod and synodality actually are, can be found on the Faith Matters' website (see above) – go to "Plenary Council and Associated Articles".

## **November 6, 7**

Last week we had a few thoughts from one of the delegates of the recent first session of the Plenary Council. Today some thoughts from **another delegate, John Warhurst**, a member of the Concerned Catholics Canberra Goulburn group.

In referring to the time between the 2 sessions he thinks there are many questions to answer before the next session, however the window of "opportunity too good to miss" is still open **but the hardest work is still to come.**

**The agenda contained 16 questions. His comment on the effectiveness of this process was,** "The official advice during the formation sessions that these 16 questions were broad enough so that any issue could be squeezed between the cracks proved misleading, because such issues could then be characterised by another member as peripheral to the core task of the group".

**"On the role of women in decision-making within the church** there is also a clear appetite for inclusion, accountability, and equality. This is driven, despite some cultural and theological objections, by widespread acceptance of synodality and co-responsibility. Religious women were strong advocates".

**"On governance reform** there is widespread support too, though it is a topic on which discussion can be easily diverted by resource concerns. The need for diocesan and parish pastoral councils is almost universally accepted".

**"The First Assembly process turned out to be too compressed and rushed,** especially over the final 36 hours. We started slowly and finished with a disturbing "helter-skelter". This led key elements, such as the final group papers and the final communique, to proceed without proper examination. This must not be repeated".

**“Finally, the method used to resolve differences of opinion remains unexplored, because we took no substantial votes in either small groups or plenary sessions. This is where synodality remains untested”.**

### **October 30, 31**

One of the delegates to the recent first assembly of the Plenary Council was Sr. Patty Fawkner, congregational leader of the Good Samaritan Sisters – a group of religious sisters well known in this parish.

She says that part of the process was that delegates were divided into discussion groups, about 25 in each group. It was decided in her group that titles would not be used – just Christian names. The absence of titles – a significant chink in the hierarchical structure – fostered a sense of mutuality and collaboration. In her group of 26 there were 17 clerics, 9 laity – 6 women, 3 men.

Across the week, any participant in the group could make an “intervention” if he/she wished. This was a three minute address to the group on a topic which fell within the agenda of the assembly. Sr. Fawkner did so and here are a few of her reflections.

- We silently prayed before we spoke and respectfully listened to the reflections of each member of the small breakout group.
- There was an overall focus on mission throughout all discussions. Even if groups were discussing structures, formation, governance, prayer – all was in the service of mission.
- I asked the question – “What if we allowed women to break open the Word of Scripture and to speak from their experience, the experience of more than half the faithful?”
- It occurs to me that because of this Plenary Council event, the Catholic Church in Australia is irrevocably changed, and echoing Archbishop Mark Coleridge, we can’t return to “business as usual”.
- Such diversity! Diversity of race, role and rite; diversity of age, gender, perspective, spirituality and theology. It was a diversity that enriched and a diversity that challenged in equal measure.

### **October 23, 24**

Some of our parishioners subscribe to “The Madonna” – a quarterly magazine (many spiritual themes) from Jesuit Communications in Melbourne. Each edition links in to one of the seasons of the year (summer, autumn, winter, spring). The main article is always by the editor, Fr. Chris Gleeson S.J., an excellent writer. Each day, across the 3 months covered by the edition, the Scripture readings of the Mass for that day are listed, followed by a short reflection.

There are a variety of articles by various authors, each with an interesting point of view. For instance, in the current edition, called “Evangelisation – spirituality in daily life”, there is an article called “The Closeness of God”. The writer raises the question – “Is life all about my finding a way to God (as we are often told) or is God already with me all the time?” The answer is obviously the latter, but we find it difficult to live this truth in our busy daily lives.

This quote from the article is quite challenging as we live our lives. “Our pathway is to discover God in all things, and our stepping stones are sharing what we know about God (evangelisation) as well as loving and serving others (mission)”.

Then again we have nothing, or can do nothing, on our own – everything we have and do are sheer gifts from God. Another quote - “God is involved in our world and in God’s creation. I don’t have to struggle to get to God. I don’t have to win God’s approval to be worthy of God’s love”. Total gift from a loving God.

Like to suss out a subscription to the “The Madonna?” Website

<https://www.madonnamagazine.com.au> . Go here for more information and find some of the articles of the current issue.

## **October 16, 17**

Two significant events took place this week:

The first part of the Australian Plenary Council was held across the whole week. Some of you may have followed the unfolding of the process via various reports.

Pope Francis officially started the preparation for the “Synod on Synodality” gathering, in about 2 years time, for the worldwide Catholic Church. Our Archdiocese will certainly be involved.

On previous occasions in the Faith Matters section of the parish newsletter, we have explained the difference between a Plenary Council and a Synod. Currently we are having a Council, but right from the start of his pontificate, the Pope has been stressing that he favours a synodal approach as the Church goes forward from here.

The focus of this coming synod across the whole Church is actually on the concept and practice of synodality itself. This is an attempt to try to get all Bishops, Dioceses, etc on the same page, as to what this process actually is and why it is so important if future change in the Church is to take much more notice of what all the baptised think about various issues in the universal church.

We know that all the baptised people in our Church (as well as for all the Christian churches) are in a special relationship with Jesus, the Christ. This is true of we, the laity, as it is of the clergy. Synodality looks to give the laity in the Catholic Church a more prominent role in church decision-making.

The final statement from the Council is on the Faith Matters website, above. It is also on the Plenary Council website – click here: [First-Assembly-Concluding-Statement-FINAL.pdf \(catholic.org.au\)](#)

Also on the Faith Matters website is an article from the Parramatta Diocese in Sydney (Bishop Vincent Long) which summarises the main points of the Council document.

## **October 9, 10**

### **October 2, 3**

After a year’s delay, here we are at the start of the first session of the Australian Plenary Council – Sunday October 3. This session will continue until next Sunday, October 10. There are 278 members participating in the discussions, drawn from the 28 Archdioceses/Dioceses across the country. To gain an idea of who these people are go to [Members and Key Roles – Plenary Council \(catholic.org.au\)](#) .

Scroll down to see the other 6 lists of people who will be involved in the Council process. An interesting list is that of “periti” or experts, required by Canon Law. These are advisers to the Council with particular expertise across a range of matters, such as theology, Scripture, governance, formation, ecclesiology (study of the Church), who can be called upon by members, individually or collectively, to provide advice on particular matters to assist with their discernment and decision-making.

“Observers” (another group of assistants) are people who, as the name suggests, observe the proceedings of the Council assemblies because of their particular relationship with the Catholic Church in Australia. Following the tradition of other Church gatherings, the observers are likely to include Catholic leaders from other parts of the world, especially New Zealand, the Pacific and Asia; leaders of other Christian denominations; and leaders of other faith traditions. The observers might attend some or all of the assemblies.

The results of all these discussion, after session 1, will be put in some format for distribution to all of us before we move to the second session. As yet, we have not been told what the process will be to discuss the results of the first session before we move to the second one, next year.

## **September 25, 26**

**The words “synod” and “synodality” have been frequently used by Pope Francis since he became Pope. He is a strong supporter of synods as he believes a synod is an effective way of engaging more of the lay people, so as to discover what they believe about the catholic faith and other matters in relation to it. After all, they are the Church as much as bishops and priests.**

A Synod is a method whereby everyone in the Church (clerics and lay people) can take part in the debate with an increased emphasis on the contribution of lay people and their input being listened to more intently than in the past. This is a welcome change in direction.

The Australian Bishops have been discussing the upcoming Plenary Council for quite some years – 2007. At the start, they opted for a Plenary Council as opposed to a synod. In hindsight it could have been more effective and led to more of the decisions we need at this time in Australia, to have a synod instead.

A Plenary Council is governed by Canon Law and it may be that some matters referred to Rome by the Bishops, as a result of the discussion at the 2 meetings, cannot be changed, without a change in Canon Law. Some current Canon Laws are significant for this Council. There can be changes in Canon Law and some have happened in the past, but only after quite a lengthy and complicated process.

The Plenary Council is composed of all the Australian Bishops, other clerics, leaders of Religious Orders and a minority group of lay people. When the vote is taken as to what decisions will be sent to Rome after the second meeting, the only persons with a deliberative vote (one that counts) will be the Bishops. The votes of all other attendees will be consultative, only.

## **September 11, 12**

**In a recent interview Pope Francis was asked how he would like to be remembered. He replied. “For what I am, a sinner”. As are we all. We can merit nothing at all. All is sheer gift from a loving and merciful God, absolutely everything. Each one of us is made in the image of God. None of us**

ever really knows the full extent of what this means until we come to see God, face to face, in the next life. Our deceased relations and friends now know the beauty of this reality.

**Fr. John Thornhill**, one of our most respected Australian theologians ( he died only a few years back) used to say that one of the best prayers we can say is **“who am I, God, and who are you?”** Perhaps we could also add, **“what am I, God, and what are you?”**

Our “what” (that is, our nature) is human and God’s “what” (his nature) is divine. Somehow, since we are created in the image of God, as humans, we are far, far more than what we will ever know about ourselves on this earth. We will know the full extent of what we really are as human beings, and get a glimpse of what God really is, only when we look at God after we die.

**God has 3 divine persons and we have one human person. Our human person is what it is about us when we relate to each other. It is the part that does not die – it is part of the real “me”. Asking who we are and who God is, puts our human person in close contact with the person of God, rather, with the 3 persons of God. In our prayers we often deal with God as one entity, rather than dealing with each person of the Trinity. Praying to each of the 3 persons of the Trinity and developing a relationship with each one, may be part of what we mean by “contemplation”.**

## **September 4, 5**

At Sunday Mass we stand together as part of God’s family to say the Creed - a list of the main concepts we believe in, as Christians. The Creed we say on a given day could be either the **Apostles’ Creed or the Nicene Creed**, although the former one is probably the one we grew up with.

The website of the Parramatta Diocese in Sydney (Bishop Vincent Long) carried an article by **Fr. Brian Strassburger (a Society of Jesus priest in the U.S. and recently ordained)** called **“Catholic 101: What is the Creed?”**. This is an excellent piece of writing as to how the 2 Creeds developed in the early Church and the similarities and dissimilarities between them in their structure and language. This article has been placed on the “Faith Matters” website (see above) and is near the top of the articles under the link “Plenary Council and Associated Articles”. When one gets an idea of the background of these 2 Creeds, as contained in this article, one may be able to pray them with more understanding.

**There are under 30 days before the start of the first session of the Plenary Council.** Maybe some parishioners have not seen the agenda items for this meeting, based on the 6 themes determined not all that long ago. If you wish to see this agenda go to the Faith Matters website and to “Plenary Council and Associations Articles.”

**The 6 themes are as follows** – Conversion, Prayer, Formation, Structures, Governance, Institutions. Each of the themes has 2 or 3 questions under it.

Don’t forget to pray to the Spirit that change will occur in the Australian Church which will enable it to meet the needs of God’s people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **August 28, 29**

On **Pentecost Sunday 2018**, the Australian Catholic Bishops launched the 5<sup>th</sup> Plenary Council for this country. This was at least 18 months before the start of Covid, an event which would significantly

change our lives and cause the Plenary Council session 1 to be postponed from 2020 to this year and the second session to 2022.

Now here we are – **34 days before the start of the first session in Adelaide from Oct. 3 – 10.**

Although previous attempts to change some of the Church's structure and operation in Australia did not eventuate from those events and people were disillusioned about the prospects for meaningful change this time around, Australian Catholics really got behind this Council and made thousands of prayerful suggestions to the Facilitation Team led by Lana Turvey - Collins. This parish was no exception.

To get an idea of how big this event is, with **279 members** (formerly called delegates), go to <https://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/members> . There you will find the names of all members from the various Archdioceses, Dioceses, Religious Institutions etc across Australia. Our members from the Brisbane Archdiocese are as follows:

**Clergy** Archbishop Mark Benedict Coleridge DD BA DSS  
Reverend Monsignor Peter Joseph Meneely  
Bishop Kenneth Michael Howell DD  
Very Reverend Dr Adrian Farrelly PP  
Very Reverend Daniel Joseph Ryan PP VF (Vincentian Fathers)  
Monsignor John Grace

**Religious Institution** Sr (Dr) Maeve Louise Heaney VDMR (Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity)

**Lay People** Mrs Liliana Ortiz Ms Toni Marie Janke  
Mr Thomas Warren Ms Patricia Bernadette Kennedy

These 11 people will represent us and our suggestions at the first session on Oct. 3 – 10. Some parishioners may remember when The Adult Faith Education team (now called Faith Matters) invited the Sisters from Verbum Dei in Brisbane to address parishioners. This was an inspiring event.

## **Aug 21, 22**

Some people, time poor, would prefer to have just a brief time for prayer, when they can take a short passage from the Gospels and meditate for a few minutes before facing a hectic day. If this is you, we may have a suggestion which could be the very thing for you.

A Benedictine nun in the Rockhampton Diocese (Sr.Kym Harris) sends an email each day in which she takes a sentence or two from the Sunday Gospel at the start of the week, and follows it up with a few thoughts about the passage and a short prayer. By the following Saturday she has covered the Sunday Gospel and has included a short reflection each day on that particular text.

This is just the start. Her website, [www.prayasyoucan.com.au](http://www.prayasyoucan.com.au) has a wealth of information about the Gospel from a number of viewpoints. You will be amazed at what is on the website as there is something there for varying approaches to meditation and spirituality. She tries to put the Gospel passage in language more akin to our current way of speaking.

Here is an example of a recent email.

***Mary said, '...because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid.***

***Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed.'* (Lk 1:48)**

**Humility isn't a harping on our weakness and failure, a raking over what is wrong with us. True humility recognises the greatness of God and how God wants to make our lives rich and great in love - if only we would get our puny egos out of the way. This day celebrates the fulfillment of Mary's humility. Then a short prayer follows.**

**Aug 14, 15**

**There are less than 50 days until the start of session 1 of the Plenary Council**, to be held in Adelaide, Oct. 2-10. Covid 19 has caused a significant delay of a year but everything is now in place in line with all the requirements under which we currently live.

Right from the start of the process the emphasis has been on the role of the Spirit and on the need for each of us to pray for the success of the Council. The prayer below is one of the prayers suggested by the Council facilitation team and the bishops. Everything is out of our hands now and the ball is in the court of all those delegates (bishops and lay people) as they discuss and debate, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

A suggestion might be that each of us say the following prayer each day until the end of the first session.

**Come, Holy Spirit of Pentecost.**

**Come, Holy Spirit of the great South Land.**

**O God, bless and unite all your people in Australia and guide us on the pilgrim way of the Plenary Council.**

**Give us the grace to see your face in one another and to recognise Jesus, our companion on the road.**

**Give us the courage to tell our stories and to speak boldly of your truth.**

**Give us ears to listen humbly to each other and a discerning heart to hear what you are saying.**

**Lead your Church into a hope-filled future, that we may live the joy of the Gospel.**

**Through Jesus Christ our Lord, bread for the journey from age to age. Amen.**

**Our Lady Help of Christians, pray for us.**

**St. Mary MacKillop, pray for us.**

On this day, August 15, the feast of the Assumption of Mary into heaven, a prayer to her for the same intention will certainly not go astray.

**Aug 7, 8**

Today is the feast day of St. Mary MacKillop, Australia's second patron saint. Last week's parish newsletter carried some of her sayings which she lived up to and which she modelled to her sisters throughout her heroic life. **To check these out again go to the website above to the "news" section.**

Today we have put on the Faith Matters website (above) a series of writings by the parish priest of St Finbar's Parish, Glenbrook - **Fr Joseph Lam OSA (Benedictine)**. (Glenbrook is a township of the Lower Blue Mountains of New South Wales, Australia. It is located 63 kms. west of Sydney.)

These pieces, entitled "**Is God angry with us? God and COVID19**", appeared on the Catholic Outlook website which is the site for the Bishop of Parramatta, Fr. Vincent Long. Glenbrook is in that diocese. We live in terrible and worrying times. These writings are not dealing just with Covid itself but rather with pain, suffering, sorrow etc which is the lot of each one of us in life, in varying degrees.

Part 1 deals with concepts from the Old Testament, part 2 deals with Jesus and the New Testament while part 3 advances the idea, quite strongly, that epidemics, suffering etc are not caused by God but are part of life as God intended it to be.

**God is actually with us in our pain, sorrow and suffering, helping us to work through it and come out the other side with a deeper relationship with him. This may be hard to accept while one is in the pain etc but ultimately it is only Faith that enables us to weather the storm and believe God is actually with us in the pain.**

**Brisbane Lockdown Aug 1**

**Jul 25, 26**

The Franciscan, Fr. Richard Rohr, recently wrote about the true meaning of the Sermon on the Mount. He believes contemplation and action should be combined by each of us in our lives.

“I am told that the Sermon on the Mount—the essence of Jesus’ teaching—is the least quoted Scripture in official Catholic Church documents. We must be honest and admit that most of Christianity has focused very little on what Jesus himself taught and spent most of his time doing: healing people, doing acts of justice and inclusion, embodying compassionate and nonviolent ways of living.

“St. Francis of Assisi, took the Sermon on the Mount seriously and spent his life trying to imitate Jesus. Franciscanism offers a simple return to the Gospel as ***an alternative lifestyle more than an orthodox belief system***. The Sermon on the Mount was not just words....they focused on including the outsider, preferring the bottom to the top, a commitment to nonviolence, and choosing social poverty and divine union over any private perfection or sense of moral superiority.”

In Matthew 7: 24, Jesus gives us a short but effective image of ***acting*** on his words and ***living*** the teachings, **instead of only believing things about God.**

“Jesus was teaching an alternative wisdom that shakes the social order instead of upholding the conventional wisdom that maintains it. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount is not about preserving the status quo! It’s about living here on earth as if the Reign of God has already begun (see Luke 17:21). In this Reign, the Sermon tells us, the poor are blessed, the hungry are filled, the grieving are filled with joy, and enemies are loved.”

**Let us go and follow Jesus’ example. Let us both act and contemplate.**

**Jul 17, 18**

Last week we posted the address, given 2 years ago by Bishop Vincent Long (Parramatta Diocese, Sydney), on changes required, if the coming Plenary Council is to have a positive effect on an Australian Church currently struggling for relevance.

Today we post his address, “My Hope for the Plenary Council” – 30/6/21. This is a ‘pearler”, one that everyone should read before the first meeting in Oct. **Here are some excerpts – better still, go to the website above.**

- ! “Until we have the courage to admit the old ways of being Church, which is steeped in a culture of clerical power, dominance and privilege, we cannot rise to a **Christ-like way of humility, inclusivity, compassion and powerlessness.**”
- ! “The old wineskins of triumphalism, authoritarianism and supremacy, abetted by clerical power, superiority, and rigidity are breaking.”
- ! **“So long as we continue to exclude women from the Church’s governance structures, decision-making processes and institutional functions, we deprive ourselves of the richness of our full humanity.** Until we have truly incorporated the gift of women and the feminine dimension of our Christian faith, we will not be able to fully energise the life of the Church.”
- ! **“Pope Francis affirms that ‘this path of synodality’ is precisely what ‘God expects of the Church of the third millennium.’** He gave new impetus to the doctrine of the *sensus fidei fidelium*, stating that the path of synodality represents an indispensable prerequisite **for infusing the Church with a renewed missionary impulse: all the members of the Church are called to be active subjects of evangelisation and ‘missionary disciples’.**”
- ! (During Vatican 2) **“The emphasis on the superiority of the ordained gave way to an ecclesial communion based on common baptism.”**

## **Jul 10, 11**

Two years ago, Bishop Vincent Long (Parramatta Diocese, Sydney) gave an address to the Diocesan Forum in that Diocese – 13/7/2019. Reading it now makes one wonder how far we have travelled as God’s people in Australia since the start of the Plenary Council process a few years ago.

His address was called “Envisioning the Church in the new millennium for Western Sydney”. His view was a micro view of what might become the macro view across Australia. Now, as we look forward to the first of our Plenary Council meetings in October, we wonder what our church leaders and lay participants will deliver, by way of much needed change, in the way our Australian Church will operate going forward.

The first meeting (Oct. 2-10, 2021) will come up with a number of proposals to be further discussed by all of us, leading to another agenda for the Council’s second meeting ( July 4-9,2022). The final proposals will then be forwarded to the Vatican for consideration and approval. We pray that these proposals, the fruit of all our suggestions, reached after much debate under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will be approved, so that we, the Australian Church, can move forward confidently and faithfully as God’s people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Wisdom from the Psalms** (Taken from “Franciscan Media” 2/7/21)

“David wrote half of the psalms, and his poems are often inclusive of the challenges of the physical body: being sick, getting wounded, ageing.

“ ‘Yet you heard my voice, my cry for mercy, when I pleaded with you for help’ (Ps 31:23).

“Take a moment today and reflect on how God’s light has been there for you or your loved ones during these times of distress.”

### **Jul 3, 4**

Today we highlight another one of the 6 major areas on the agenda for the first Plenary Council meeting in October this year – “**Conversion**”. See the website above for the others.

- How might we better accompany one another on the journey of personal and communal conversion which mission in Australia requires?
- How might we heal the wounds of abuse, coming to see through the eyes of those who have been abused?
- How might the Church in Australia open in new ways to Indigenous ways of being Christian in spirituality, theology, liturgy, and missionary discipleship? How might we learn from the First Nations peoples?
- How might the Church in Australia meet the needs of the most vulnerable, go to the peripheries, be missionary in places that may be overlooked or left behind in contemporary Australia? How might we partner with others (Christians, people of other faiths, neighbourhood community groups, government) to do this?
- How might the Church in Australia respond to the call to ‘ecological conversion’? How can we express and promote a commitment to an ‘integral ecology of life’ in all its dimensions, with particular attention to the more vulnerable people and environments in our country and region?

### **Wisdom from the Psalms (Taken from “Franciscan Media”.)**

“Sometimes, in the challenges of our lives, we can feel far from God’s help. The images in these lines can help us remember God’s nearness:

**“He will shelter you with his pinions, and under his wings you may take refuge; his faithfulness is a protecting shield” (Ps 91:4).**

“Take some time today to recognize the ways that God is alongside you—never missing a step—and that you can trust God completely.”

### **Jun 26, 27**

**The Plenary Council agenda for the first meeting in October this year is now on the Council website at [www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au) . You will find 8 links on the home page, one of which is the “agenda” link.**

Another link you might be interested in, is “members”. There are 282 members, officially called “delegates”. The various areas are listed alphabetically. Near the top is Brisbane where you will find the 11 delegates for this Archdiocese – 6 clergy and 5 laity. These people who will represent us in the discussions have undergone an intensive preparation.

**The initial statement in the “Agenda” document is as follows:** “As children of God, disciples of Jesus Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, the Members of the Fifth Plenary Council of Australia are called to develop concrete proposals to create a more missionary, Christ-centred Church in Australia at this time.”

**There are six items on the agenda.**

Conversion    Prayer    Formation  
Structures    Governance    Institutions

**Each item has a short statement explaining the general approach to it during the discussions.**

For instance, the statement about **Governance** is as follows:

- How might the People of God, lay and ordained, women and men, approach governance in the spirit of synodality and co-responsibility for more effective proclamation of the Gospel?
- How might we recast governance at every level of the Church in Australia in a more missionary key?

**Jun 19, 20**

We are all familiar with the three sets of the mysteries of the Rosary – joyful, sorrowful and glorious. Traditionally the joyful mysteries were said on Monday and Thursday, the sorrowful ones were said on Tuesday and Friday, while the glorious ones were said on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. This was the way it was for centuries. Actually, the 3 sets were established by Pope Pius V in 1569.

Have you heard of the luminous mysteries of the Rosary? The word has to do with light and it could be said that these particular mysteries allow us to reflect on some major events in the life of Jesus. On 16/10/2002 Pope John Paul II issued a letter called “The Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary” in which he instituted these new mysteries.

The 5 new mysteries are as follows: The Baptism of the Lord, The Wedding Feast of Cana, The Proclamation of the Kingdom, The Transfiguration of our Lord, and The Institution of the Eucharist. Each of these are recorded in detail in the Gospels and were significant moments in Jesus’ mission on earth.

It is generally believed that St Dominic (the founder of the Dominican Order of priests) was the first to promote this form of prayer in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century. However, another St. Dominic (a Carthusian monk) is credited with developing the idea of reflecting on the actual event as the prayers were recited. Prior to that, people just recited the Our Fathers and the 150 Hail Marys.

**Whatever the history of the Rosary, there is no doubt that this form of prayer has been the mainstay of so many Christians down through the centuries.**

**Jun 12, 13**

**As we prepare for our Plenary Council, the Pope is busy promoting the value of synods as the Church moves forward. Vatican 2 (1962-65) raised the idea of synods in our western church and**

**Pope Paul VI was disposed to them. However Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI circled the wagons somewhat during their pontificates and became very defensive.**

Then along came Francis with a different style and who has always pushed for synods to be the way the Church moves forward. He has often raised the idea of a major synod on the topic of synods but circumstances have led to a recent announcement by the Vatican that it has to be postponed for a period.

Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of Eureka Street, and writer at Jesuit Social Services. He has written an article called "Why Pope Francis places such importance on synodality." The article has been placed on the Faith Matters website - see the address above - click on "Plenary Council and Associated Articles" if you would like to increase your knowledge of what synodality actually means in practice. Make no mistake about it - this process will become much more important as time goes on.

One statement from the article - "Upon his election, Pope Francis has set out to encourage freedom and initiative among Catholics. In his own conduct he paid less attention to issues of authority and doctrine than to outreach to people at the margins of the church and beyond it."

The Gospels suggest this is what Jesus was on about while on earth. The change required to bring this about may be best achieved via a synodal approach.

**Jun 5, 6**

Today we begin a long period in the Church's Liturgical Year called **Sundays in Ordinary Time**. Today is the 10<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time and this will continue until Nov. 14 (33<sup>rd</sup> Sunday) and the final one on Nov. 21 (with the special name of **Feast of Christ the King**). For most of these Sundays the Gospel will come from the Evangelist for this year - Mark. On Pentecost Sunday a **prayer campaign called "Fan the Flame"** was launched across Australia, as the clock counts down to the first meeting of the Council in October. All these resources can be found on the following website

[www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/fantheblade](http://www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au/fantheblade) . There is a lot of material on the site and available time can be a problem.

**OR..... you could say the following prayer daily** as suggested by the Council organisers.

Come, Holy Spirit of Pentecost      Come, Holy Spirit of the great South Land  
O God, bless and unite all your people in Australia and guide us on the pilgrim way  
Lead your Church into a hope-filled future that we may live the joy of the Gospel  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,    bread for the journey from age to age.    Amen.  
More information about the Council can be found on the main website

[www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://www.plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)

**The Faith Matters lending library has kicked off again** and is to be found in the Grovelly St. Vincent de Paul shop after each weekend Mass. Drop in to have a browse- perhaps borrow a book.

**May 29, 30**

**On Pentecost Sunday, Archbishop Coleridge, Chair of the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference, (ACBC), by his signing of a special decree, convoked the 5<sup>th</sup> Plenary Council of Australia. This is the final formal step required by the Vatican.**

In February, the Council's working document *Continuing the Journey* was published and it is expected that the agenda for the first meeting in October this year, will be published in early June. That will be something to look forward to.

Over the last few years, many members of our parish, along with all the other parishes in the country, have submitted numerous suggestions as to what we think would be worthwhile changes in the structure and operation of the Australian Catholic Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

How appropriate that the signing of the decree was done on Pentecost Sunday as the work of the Spirit will be crucial when the Bishops and a group of the laity meet to discuss what changes will be sent to Rome for the Pope to consider.

**After signing the decree the Archbishop made the following statements.**

"The journey of the Council began long ago and this is just another step on the way towards the first assembly in the first week of October.

"And on Pentecost Sunday we have invoked the Holy Spirit upon the entire journey of the Plenary Council but in particular upon the first assembly – to which we now move."

**Let us continue to pray to the Spirit** that the discussions at the first meeting lead to worthwhile proposals to be further considered by us before we enter the second meeting next year

**May 22, 23**

Pentecost Sunday is one of the few times the Church puts a reading, called a **Sequence (a type of liturgical hymn), in between the Alleluia verse and the Gospel**. "Veni Sancte Spiritus" ("Come Holy Spirit") is a beautiful hymn, dedicated to the Holy Spirit and here are some verses in a translation a bit different from the usual one. These show the intimate relationship the Spirit has with each one of us.

"Come sacred Spirit, send forth your light softly from the stars.

"Come protector of the poor, come provider in our need, come lighten hearts with love.

"Trusted true supporter, heart's most welcome guest, **strong breeze of fresh ideas**.

"Give reward unto our efforts, life's outcome secure, give never-ending joy, Amen. Alleluia."

Given that the **first session of the Plenary Council is coming soon (Adelaide Oct. 3-10)** and that the **announcement of the agenda is planned for June or July**, it seems appropriate for us to remember the Spirit's role in this whole process.

One way of raising our awareness of the critical role of the Spirit at this time is to redouble our prayers to the Holy Spirit to ask for an outcome which answers the key question of “What do you think God is asking of us in Australia at this time?”

How relevant is the phrase in bold above (**strong breeze of fresh ideas**) to what is starting to unfold here in the Australian Church? Pentecost Sunday is a great time to pray to the Spirit to be with the bishops and the lay delegates as they prepare for the first meeting to discuss what we have submitted to date.

## **Veni Sancte Spiritus**

**May 15, 16**

“Listen to what the Spirit is saying to us” has been a major theme in our preparation for the Plenary Council later this year and next Sunday we celebrate Pentecost Sunday - the special feast day of the Holy Spirit.

Pope Francis has promoted the work of the Spirit as we seek change in the Australian Church. He is especially supportive of the process of synodality as the way forward. Our Archbishop, Mark Coleridge, made some interesting observations in a recent video with Cardinal John Dew (N.Z.) and the British theologian, Thomas O’Loughlin and reported by Robert Mickens. The quotes below come from his article.

- The Archbishop acknowledged that synodality is messy, is marked by tensions and requires "holy patience". But he said he was absolutely convinced that this "is the way forward... is what the Spirit is saying to the Church today".
- Archbishop Mark Coleridge says the days of the autocratic, monarchical Church "are over".
- The archbishop said the "call to synodality is profoundly biblical", showing us that we are not part of a "static church, but an on-the-way Church" that is continually progressing.
- "My hope is that the Spirit will surprise us all and show us ways we hadn't imagined," Coleridge said.

**Since all of us are looking forward to the Plenary Council giving us meaningful change in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Church we need to redouble our prayers to the Spirit for such an outcome. Pentecost Sunday presents us with the opportunity to do this.**

**May 8, 9**

Traditionally, May has been the month which the Church has dedicated to Mary, the mother of Jesus and today is Mothers’ Day, during the same month.

**The main devotion to Mary, down through about 8 centuries, has been the Rosary.** Many families would pray the Rosary every day but in recent times though, the daily praying of the Rosary has diminished to a degree – partly owing to time constraints in modern life. However it is still a much preferred prayer for anyone seeking help from God through the intercession of his mother.

**Another devotion is prayer to Our Lady of Perpetual Help - Perpetual Succour is an alternative name.** (Celebrated on June 27).The devotion stems from a 15th-century Byzantine icon which

depicts Mary, under the title “Mother of God,” holding the Child Jesus. **Why not google it to see its beauty and meaning.**

The Archangels Michael and Gabriel, hovering in the upper corners, hold the instruments of the Passion— St. Michael (in the left corner) holds the spear, the wine-soaked sponge, and the crown of thorns, and St. Gabriel (in the right corner) holds the cross and the nails. The intent of the artist was to portray the Child Jesus contemplating the vision of His future Passion.

The anguish He feels is shown by the loss of one of His sandals. Nevertheless, the icon also conveys the triumph of Christ over sin and death, symbolised by the golden background (a sign of the glory of the resurrection) and the manner in which the angels hold the instruments, i.e. like trophies gathered up from Calvary on Easter morning. In a very beautiful way, the Child Jesus grasps the hand of the Blessed Mother. He seeks comfort from His mother, as He sees the instruments of His passion.

The star painted on Mary’s veil, centered on her forehead, highlights her role in the plan of salvation as both the Mother of God and our Mother.

**These are just 2 of the many devotions you might use in May to celebrate Mary.**

**May 1, 2**

**The Plenary Council approaches.**

Words are used in discussion which require some explanation to ensure everyone is on the same page.

A **Plenary Council** process means that when the 2 meetings finish next year, the recommendations have to be sent to Rome for final approval. Canon Law - the law of the Catholic Church as developed in Rome in the past – has an important role to play in decisions on these recommendations. Some recommendations cannot be accepted by Rome unless there is a change in some particular Canon Law /s. This is a significant process in itself. Canon law rarely changes but some changes have occurred in the past.

**Synod/synodality** is a process which Pope Francis has favoured since he became Pope. He has often promoted his idea of synodality. His first major speech on synodality was made about 5 years ago to a synod of bishops. In that document he made the following statement.

*A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening “is more than simply hearing”. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of truth” (Jn 14:17), in order to know what the Spirit “says to the Churches” (Rev 2:7).*

A Council is usually just clerical people. The church has had many synods over the years but these were also mainly attended by bishops. Pope Francis has significantly broadened the attendance to allow lay people to attend synods.

**Our Australian process is a Council but there are a number of lay people attending which is a positive change. We would have liked more but it is a start.**

**April 25, 26**

**Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform**

This group will conduct the first of 3 major online meetings on Sunday May 2 (9 am to 10.30 am) entitled "THE FUTURE OF CATHOLICISM IN AUSTRALIA".

The guest speaker is Sr Joan Chittister OSB (Benedictine nun) [www.joanchittister.org](http://www.joanchittister.org) Joan Chittister is one of the most influential religious and social leaders of our time.

Joan's address will combine practical proposals and visionary ideas around the themes of synodality, subsidiarity, inclusivity, transparency and accountability.

[accr.com.au](http://accr.com.au)

If you copy and paste the link above, you will be taken to an information page about this event. There, if you wish to, you can register for this online event.

This information above is open to the whole parish and there may be some parishioners who wish to take up this opportunity. It also serves the purpose of letting everyone know that the Plenary Council preparations are very much alive, with the first meeting to be held this year, Oct. 3 – 10.

All of us are asked to pray frequently for the success of the Council as we know that serious change needs to happen in how the Church functions in Australia.

The Church's liturgy over the next few weeks:

25 April – 4th Sunday of Easter

2 May - 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

9 May – 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

16 May – Ascension of the Lord

23 May – Pentecost Sunday.

### **April 17, 18**

In the autumn edition of "Madonna", the editor, Fr. Chris Gleeson (Jesuit), in a piece called "The Passion Pattern", reflects on the passage in John 12: 24, that the germ of wheat must die if it is to produce new growth. This is a timely article as we move from Lent to Easter.

Pain and suffering are an integral part of life, and given time to heal, lead to better times and transformations in our ever changing lives. Jesus' passion and death, leading to his resurrection, is the pre-eminent example of this "passion pattern" in life. Lent leads to resurrection – a time of joy, laughter and hope.

Fr. Gleeson uses some examples to convey the truth of this pattern in life.

Bette Midler's song "The Rose" – "Just remember in the winter, far beneath the bitter snow, lies the seed, that with the sun's love, in the spring becomes the rose".

Tunisian proverb – "How lovely is the sun after the rain and how lovely is laughter after sorrow".

Sebastian Moore in "Jesus, the Liberator of Desire" – "Life is no longer lived in the shadow of death. It is lived in the light, with death behind us".

Fr. Gleeson's concluding paragraph – "in brief, Christians are called to be people of the resurrection, people who are joyful, and aspire to be life-enlargers, ready to spend their joy wherever life takes them".

Mind you, when you are in the midst of the suffering, life is quite unbearable. One needs faith and hope, via Jesus' resurrection, to push through to the other side.

**April 10, 11**

**"Catholic Outlook", the website of Bishop Vincent Long, Bishop of Parramatta, Sydney**, recently carried an article by Christopher Lamb, entitled "Catholic Church must embrace synodality". His article followed a webinar (organised by The Tablet and chaired by him) at which Archbishop Coleridge and Archbishop Costelloe of Perth were interviewed re the Plenary Council and synodality.

The article, (on the Faith Matters website as above), is worth reading because our Archbishop is the Chair of the Australian Bishops Conference (the main group influencing decisions at the Council to be forwarded to Rome after the second meeting next year) and he has some interesting points to make in the article.

**Here are a few ideas from the article.**

Archbishop Coleridge stressed reform is needed in the Church because **"... the current mode of leadership is unsustainable."**

**"We need a less hierarchical and less monarchical form of governance."**

"One of the areas up for discussion is **how to include women at decision-making levels**. Archbishop Coleridge stresses that "a church which says we cannot ordain women to the priesthood and perhaps even to the diaconate" is, therefore "equally obliged in my view, and the view of many, to keep asking the question, how else might we include in imaginative and new ways, women, **not just in the point of management but even in governance.**"

Archbishop Coleridge pointed out that **"... a Council has more decision making power than a synod with the final decrees signed off by the Pope"**. (Note – Australia has a Plenary Council, not a Synod.)

**Synodality**, a concept which Pope Francis wants to see implemented from the parish upwards, brings people, priests and bishops together to make decisions about the future of the church.

**April 3, 4**

A Gospel Lens: On March 5, Fr Richard Rohr (Franciscan) wrote a piece which could well resonate with us at this time in the church's liturgical year.

"Everybody looks at the world through their own lens, a matrix of culturally inherited qualities, family influences and other life experiences." This lens, or worldview truly determines what we bring to every discussion. When Jesus spoke of the coming of the Reign of God, he was trying to change people's foundational worldview. When Francis of Assisi described his 'marriage to Lady Poverty' he was using a lovely metaphor to explain his central thesis for life.

"We would do well to get in touch with our operative worldview." It is there anyway, so we might as well know what this highly influential window on reality is. It's what really motivates us. Our de facto worldview determines what catches our attention and what we don't notice at all. It's largely unconscious and yet drives us to do this and not that. It is surely important to become conscious of such a primary lens or we never know what we don't see and why we see other things out of all perspectives.

"Until we can allow the Gospel to move into that deepest level of unconscious and touch our operative worldview, nothing substantial is going to change." It will only be rearranging the furniture, not constructing a new room. Conversion is about constructing a new room, or maybe even a whole new house.

Our operative worldview is formed by three images that are inside every one of us. They are not something from outside; they have already taken shape within us. All we can do is become aware of them, which is to awaken them. The three images to be awakened and transformed are our image of self, our image of God, and our image of the world. A true hearing of the Gospel transforms those images into a very exciting and I believe truthful worldview.

The passion of Jesus during this week and his resurrection is a valuable time to cleanse our operative worldview - to clarify our Gospel lens.

### **March 27, 28**

Looking for another interesting way of "doing Lent"?

Try [www.prayasyoucan.com.au](http://www.prayasyoucan.com.au) and look at each of the links at the top:

Home - an explanation of the overall program.

This Sunday's program - very impressive – have a look. It uses the Scripture for the Sunday in a variety of ways and sends a small email each day of the following week, reflecting on a small section of that Scripture reading. Check it out for a week to see if it is for you.

The contributor Sr. Kym Harris – Benedictine nun who provides this site on behalf of the Catholic Diocese of Rockhampton. She lives in a small Benedictine monastery in that area – Tanby

Your reflection - You and others can make a comment on the Scripture passage. Many do.

Occasionally Faith Matters uses some of her content in this newsletter item - copyright is fine if one mentions the source.

Below is an extract from Sr. Kym about the program.

This weekly programme offers a variety of ways of using the Word of God to pray. It takes as its basis the Gospel reading of the following Sunday. I believe that the echo of the Word in our heart can be a fruitful way to foster our relationship with God. There are many suggestions offered here - too many, far too many for one person to use. There are many in the hope that you may find one or two ways that suit you. Follow the wise advice of Abbot Chapman: Pray as you can, not as you can't.

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### **March 20, 21**

Instead of running the usual Lenten program of past years, Evangelisation Brisbane, on behalf of the Archdiocese, distributed a booklet called "Look to Jesus", containing 52 reflections for Lent and the first week of Easter.

This booklet has been excellent and it is hoped something similar is done next year. We sold about 150 booklets to parishioners this year and the feedback on its content has been very encouraging. The booklet was written by Shane Dwyer, Associate Director, Adult Formation, Evangelisation Brisbane.

An interesting point made recently in the booklet refers to the Gospel texts.

“To understand any Gospel text we need to understand what they are and what they seek to achieve. As people trained in the western mindset, our first instinct is to see them as being an attempt at an historical record. We are familiar with reading history and we have studied significant moments from our cultural past (Australian history, Gallipoli, the Second World War, etc). Therefore we imagine that every account of a past event must be an attempt to record what happened as literally as possible.

“As a result it can confuse us to realise that it is not what the Gospel writers were primarily interested in doing. They had something else in mind. The problem is that once we realise that we are not dealing with history as we typically understand it to be, we do another western thing.

“We dismiss these accounts as ‘untrue’ because they do not conform to our narrow notion of truth”. More next week.

## **March 13, 14**

### **March 6, 7**

From today there are 210 days until the opening of the first assembly of the Plenary Council – Oct. 3-10, 2021.

On February 25, the Plenary Council’s national facilitation team released a 76 page document, currently awaiting approval from the Vatican’s Congregation for Bishops. It is called “Continuing the Journey” and in Latin is called the “Instrumentum Laboris”. It is the “working document” for those attending the Meeting.

This document will inform discussions at the first meeting.

The document, entitled “Continuing the Journey,” calls for a sweeping renewal of the Church in Australia.

It highlights a series of “major topics,” including “strengthening practices of discernment and synodality,” “co-responsibility in mission and governance,” “renewing the Church’s solidarity with First Australians and those on the margins of society,” and responding to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

It says that these topics will help to form “the skeleton of an agenda” at the Plenary Council’s first assembly.

Want to have a look? Go to then go to the Plenary Council page, link above, and scroll down to the link to “Continuing the Journey”. It is very long.

However there is help available if you do not have the time. On the Faith Matters website, under “Plenary Council and Associated Articles” we have placed some of the topics for discussion. The title is “Some topics for discussion at the Council”.

## **February 27, 28**

**An article called “Reforming the Church and the Plenary Council” by Fr. Terry Kean has been placed on the Faith Matters website as above. Go to “Plenary Council and Associated Articles” on the site to access it.**

This article was originally published in The Swag, the magazine of the National Council of Priests for Australia (NCP). Terry Kean has been a Catholic priest in the Archdiocese of Melbourne for nearly 50 years.

The article is basically what Fr. Terry sent to the Committee of the Council which is currently preparing the “Instrumentum Laboris” or “working paper” for the upcoming meeting later this year.

He has witnessed the deterioration in the Church's standing over the years and is saddened by it. **However he is "confident that the Spirit of God will lead the Church to a new story"**. His paper is an attempt to share with those preparing the agenda, some of his ideas gleaned by his working at the "coalface" over a long period. Surely that is where the real work of Jesus is done, as Pope Francis so often tells us.

He picks just 4 of the issues which he believes the Bishops need to address at the Council and he outlines some of his thoughts on these issues.

**Outreach to the poor and marginalised  
Climate change**

**Clericalism and Governance  
Eucharist**

This simply written article is by a man who has served in God's vineyard for 50 years and is well worth a read.

**February 20, 21**

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**February 12, 13**

Lent starts next Wednesday, Feb 17. There may be some Lent booklets left ("Look to Jesus") in the St. Vincent de Paul shop at Grovely at the Masses this coming weekend or if you ring the Grovely parish office on 33552667 after Sunday – office hours 9am – 1pm. There will be no books available at either Mitchelton or Samford.

The Archdiocese's new approach to the customary Lent program of the past, has meant it has been so popular that the 10,000 print has been sold out and it is unlikely there will be a reprint. More will certainly be printed next year.

A reminder – A Monday morning group will meet in the parish library at 9.30am with the new Lent booklet, beginning this Monday 15th Feb. Open to all parishioners. A book will be available (\$5) at the first meeting.

There are many devotions or practices that one can get involved in during this time of Lent. The booklet above is one of many. The key aspect of carrying out what you decide to do for Lent is that you remember to do it each day.

The overall objective of Lent, irrespective of what you actually do, is that your relationship with Jesus deepens. Jesus says that he stands at your door and knocks – it is up to you to let him in. There is a great work of art that depicts the door on which Jesus knocks as having a handle, but the handle is on the inside.

### **February 6, 7**

**WOW! The Archdiocesan booklet for Lent – “Look to Jesus”** - is flying off the shelves. Instead of the previous format for the Lent program, the Archdiocese has taken this new approach. This small booklet of 143 pages has a 2 page section for each day from Ash Wednesday - Feb. 17 - right through to the First Sunday of Easter.

Actually, the Archdiocese printed 10,000 of the booklets and they are now sold out. We have 43 copies left and then that is the end of it. In our second order we were able to get the last available 20.

Each day follows this format – A short extract from the Mass readings of the day, typically the Gospel but not always so, followed by a reflection, a quotation from Francis and a final prayer.

Having read the Scripture passage, you are invited to read the reflection as prayerfully as you can (thinking about it as long as you need) and then you are invited to read the quotation from Pope Francis and to pray the final prayer.

The booklet can be purchased for \$5 at the weekend Masses for Samford, Mitchelton and Grovely. Some are also available at the Grovely parish office. (Hours Mon. to Fri, 9am – 1pm)

**The Monday morning 10am group** will continue to meet with the new Lent booklet, beginning **Monday 15th Feb.** Open to all parishioners". The customary evening group will not be meeting.

**Also available** from the two St. Vincent de Paul shops (Grovely and Mitchelton) are the Little Black Books for Lent (\$4.50). These have been popular over the years with many of our parishioners.

### **January 30, 31**

### **January 23, 24**

### **January 15, 16**

Vincent Long, Bishop of Parramatta, Sydney, is one of the foremost thinkers of what the Church needs to be it is to be reformed, so as to fulfil the role Jesus wishes it to pursue in a rapidly changing 21st century world

His Diocese is doing excellent work in preparing for the Plenary Council. On July 13, 2019 he gave an address entitled "Envisioning the Church in Western Sydney for the new millennium". It contained excellent ideas many of which, hopefully, would be the outcome of the Plenary Council in 2021/2022.

Below are some statements from his address.

"It is not a top-down and centralised approach reminiscent of the monarchical model. Rather, it is a synodal church at every level, with everyone listening to each other, learning from each other and taking responsibility for proclaiming the Gospel. Vatican II already spoke of the key principles: collegiality, subsidiarity and sensus fidelium, all of which pointed to a more listening, dialogical and inclusive Church."

"So long as we continue to exclude the laity, especially women, from the Church's governance structures, decision making processes and institutional functions, we deprive ourselves of the richness of our full humanity".

"As the Church, we must die to the old ways of being Church which is steeped in a culture of clerical power, dominance and privilege. We must abandon the old paradigm of a fortress Church which is prone to exclusion and elitism. We must learn to rise to the Christlike way of humility, inclusivity, compassion and powerlessness."

The full address is on the Faith Matters website, as above, for those who wish to follow up on his ideas.

## **January 9, 10**

As mentioned in a previous Faith Matters item in the parish newsletter, most of the information we use in our celebration of the birth of Jesus, the Christ, comes from the Gospel of Luke. Apart from Herod's massacre of the young children and the holy family's flight into Egypt, (both of which are found in Matthew's Gospel), any other information is scant indeed.

St. Francis and his followers, the Franciscans, see the coming of the child Jesus into our world as the main event. Everything else (the life of Jesus, his mission, his dying, and resurrection) flows from the fact that God decided to intervene in the world of humans. A supreme being is born as a vulnerable child who will live an exemplary life, showing humanity a glimpse of who and what God is and in doing so upsets the establishment so much that he has to be killed. The irony is that he then rises from the dead as proof that he actually is God.

The Incarnation and crucifixion/resurrection of Jesus are the 2 core beliefs of Christianity. At Christmas we celebrate the first one, a beacon of love and hope in a currently devastated world.

The Faith Matters team prays for our parish community at the end of a very disruptive year and wishes everyone a share in the peace and joy that the Christ Child brings to all who have faith that such an intervention by God into our world is true.