

Grovely, Samford, Mitchelton GSM

Faith Matters

Posted Newsletter Articles

2023

December 9, 10

Let's keep going as we enter the second week of Advent. This is a shorter Advent than most years - this year, although there are the usual four Sundays of Advent there are only 3 weeks between them, because Christmas Day comes immediately on the day after the 4th Sunday, on the Monday. This is a compact Advent.

Keeping our focus on the Coming of the Lord, hopefully we are looking forward joyfully and calmly; we're responding to the necessary preparations, but keeping the Reason for Christmas close in our thoughts and prayers. We all need to let God into our lives and hearts. We all need to be open to God's Spirit. We all need to be prepared to sit a little while with God, perhaps thinking over a line or two of Scripture. Or simply, "Maranatha" - come Lord Jesus.

Jesus' direction to his disciples to "Stay awake. Be alert" is as valid today as it was then. Let's be alert to the presence of God in this Advent time. Of course we are preoccupied with everyday life right now. There's certainly a lot to do and it is not only the nearness of Christmas and all that needs to be done making it a bit too busy and even stressful: turn on the news and we hear about the turmoil in the world around us, wars and suffering, grief, disagreements, unhappiness. Let's take a deep breath, relax, and open our spiritual eyes to God's presence and place all these concerning things in his Shepherd's arms.

During the season of Advent we are called to "prepare the way for the Lord". We are called to prepare our homes - the **homes of our hearts**. What clutter can we remove to make way for a closer relationship with God? Do we have some grudges, resentments? Are we clinging to a hurt? Is it time to revisit that and take it to the Lord?

Perhaps there is someone we have fallen out with, and now the lines of communication are blurred if not cut. Is it possible to try again? But **don't try to do it alone - take it to Our Lord**. Pray about it, for the other and for yourself, both children of God. Good relationships are at the heart of Christ's message. Even a tentative attempt at reconciliation might be welcome, and the healing process could begin.

Advent isn't a self-help program. Let's open ourselves to the Lord and get him to take us with him towards Christmas. Come Lord Jesus. Come.

December 2, 3

Christ, King of the Universe

Today's feast, Christ the King, or Christ, Lord over all Creation, is one of great importance, a solemnity of the Church on this the last Sunday of the liturgical year. It was instigated by Pope Pius XI a century ago in 1925 post WWI. This was a time of unrest and change when some European governments began to be ruled by autocratic and perhaps Godless governments. It was a response to growing secularism and atheism – a reminder that Christ reigns above all earthly leaders, an effort by the Pope to give people in those nations comfort that God was still their loving King. Governments may come and go but God through Christ reigns forever.

If someone says “king” these days what image might come to mind immediately? Most probably it would be along the lines of thrones and crowns or wealth, power, colourful pageantry and ceremony --- and distance from our everyday life. Christ's kingship couldn't be more different.

Clearly Christ's Kingdom is not a human kingdom where the king could rule with great power, perhaps unjustly and with fear, as in former times. Christ is a King of Mercy and gentleness, a shepherd of the lost.

Before Jesus' birth, already in the Old Testament the image of our God as a caring and tender shepherd was being proclaimed especially by David in some Psalms, (we are all familiar with Psalm 23 – The Lord is my Shepherd) and today we hear Ezekiel using the same image of a just and loving God tending us, his sheep.

The idea of a shepherd was familiar to the people that the itinerant Jesus taught. Shepherds of those days had fewer sheep and lived with them, guarding them from wild dogs and from theft or losing their way. The sheep were called by name. The shepherd protected them, found them when they were lost, fed them and rested them when they were weary. Christ the shepherd king is compassionate and tender. As the hymn “Like a Shepherd” says “He carries the lambs in His arms, holding them tenderly close to His heart...” Remember, we are Christ's sheep.

Jesus' life and actions revealed God's idea of kingship, which is compassionate, merciful, inclusive. It is open to all, and all belong. Each time we pray the Our Father we commit to wanting God's kingdom to come and to making it happen: “Thy kingdom come”.

Luke says the kingdom of God is within us (Luke17:21), and it is in today's Gospel of Matthew that Jesus spells out what the Kingdom of God is. Read it again at home. It is the key to the Kingdom.

Advent begins next Sunday. Have you picked up your **Advent Daily Prayer** book? \$6 Don't miss out.

November 25, 26

November 18, 19

How quickly the last year has gone. **The Church's 2023 liturgical year finishes next Sunday with the feast of Christ the King.** Then we start the 2024 liturgical year with the first Sunday of Advent – a four week period during which we prepare for the coming of the Lord on Christmas day.

The liturgical year is a number of periods of time during the year when we trace the various stages of the Christian story, detailing when the Second person of the Trinity actually lived on this earth. He was sent by the Father to tell us humans the incredible news of who God is and how our lives were so closely intertwined with that of the Godhead. Such good news.

How does the liturgical year unfold?

Advent - We prepare for Jesus' coming in the first four weeks.

We celebrate Jesus' arrival and early life - **Christmas period and a number of other events in Jesus' life** before he begins his ministry of preaching.

Lent - 40 days of preparation for the Triduum when the Paschal mystery occurs.

The Triduum (Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday) Jesus' preaching about the Kingdom of God riles the authorities so much that they kill him to preserve the status quo.

The Easter period - about 6 weeks of celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus

Pentecost and the season after Pentecost. This is the largest part of the liturgical year. For instance, this year we got to about 32 Sundays in Ordinary Time before Christ the King next week. The phrase "Ordinary Time" is used for 2 sets of Sundays during year - some before Lent starts but most of them after Pentecost.

An understanding of the Church's liturgical year helps us to be more involved in the liturgy of the Sunday Masses.

September 23, 24

Season of Creation: Let Justice and Peace Flow

We are in the midst of the 2023 Season of Creation, but what is this Season? How does it affect me - my family? As Catholics we are familiar with the liturgical seasons of Advent and Lent. In 2015 Pope Francis published his second encyclical *Laudato Si: On Care of Our Common Home*. At the same time he announced that each year in September the Catholic Church would celebrate a Season of Creation. It is a time when Catholics are joined by other Christians to reflect on our relationships with God and God's earth, and each other.

The theme for this year, "Let Justice and Peace Flow" is from a line from Amos 5:24 - "Let justice flow like water, and righteousness like an ever-flowing river" (righteousness - right with God). Pope Francis says that Amos tells us that God desires justice to reign in every situation; that we should try to maintain a right relationship with God, humanity and nature. When we are maintaining a right relationship with God, humanity and the environment, then justice and peace can flow, sustaining humanity and all creatures.

In the years since Vatican II most Popes have spoken about the environment and the effect people are causing to the detriment of the earth and its people. Pope Saint John Paul II: "frequently some human beings seem to see no other meaning in their natural environment than what serves for immediate use and consumption". Pope Francis has raised many ecological concerns including the effect of burning fossil fuels, destruction of forests, pollution of water, mega-mining, fracking for oil and gas, and the challenge of climate change. But it's not too late - a 2022 report by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has stated that "acting now with greater urgency means that we will not miss our chance to create a more sustainable and just world."

The health and welfare of families and communities depends on the environment in which they exist. It's often the people who contribute least to climate change that suffer most. Our neighbouring nations in the South Pacific are already enduring cyclones, flooding and rising sea levels which affect their livelihood. However, they only contribute less than 0.03 of the world's greenhouse emissions.

What can we do? We are called to reflect, to spend some time in gratitude to God for creation. We can try to see objectively how our life choices impact creation, and the poor and the vulnerable. We can ask

God for the grace to make choices which will not impact adversely on the earth and the vulnerable in humanity.

The Season of Creation ends this year on 4 October, the feast of Francis of Assisi, patron saint of ecology, and is the day coinciding with the opening of the Synod on Synodality in Rome.

September 9, 10

In 2020 Pope Francis wrote a small book called "Let us Dream – The Path to a Better Future". This is a wonderful book and it has a section on just what he believes "synodality" is all about. We know that this is his preferred way forward for the global church and for the local churches. So much so, that he has instigated a synod on the actual process of synodality called "Synod on Synodality".

This Synod is about to begin in Rome after contributions from all the Catholic dioceses across the world during 2020 to 2022. Australian Catholic groups contributed and one of the major ones was the one done by the Australian Catholic Church for Church Reform (ACCCR). All the suggestions from across the world were collated into a document called "The Instrumentum Laboris".

It is composed of an explanatory text and fifteen worksheets that reveal a dynamic vision of the concept of "synodality." It will be the basis for the work of the participants in the General Assembly of the Synod on Synodality, which begins in the Vatican in October 2023 and concludes with a second Assembly one year later.

A copy of the response by ACCCR to the "Instrumentum Laboris" is found on the Faith Matters website (above) under "Plenary Council and Associated Matters" on the home page. Though somewhat lengthy, some parishioners may find it interesting to read. Note that ACCCR has given its permission for us to distribute this document as indicated by the sentence to be found at the bottom of the document – "Please share this with anyone you think may be interested".

Getting back to Pope Francis' book, "Let Us Dream". He has such a wonderful way with words. The book contains a number of themes but if you wanted to get to the section on "synodality" go to pages 81-94.

Faith Matters lending library

Perhaps, throughout your hectic week, you are looking for a small book of various articles dealing with common day spirituality and with a touch of humour. We have a number of such booklets written by Br. John Venard (Marist Brother). There are about 6 titles under the theme "The Battlers God". Why not take one home for a week and browse it. John was very good at communicating spiritual themes with readers. Duck in to the church shop at Grovely at the end of any Masses on the weekend.

August 19, 20

Each moment of our lives involves a past, present and future. Some people concentrate too much on their past which often tends to be a remembrance of what they have done which was not in their best interests, or which they regard as sinning against God. Such an approach has no real benefit as the past cannot be changed, no matter how much we might like to change it. No matter what our past has been, our best way to go forward is to throw ourselves on a God who loves us unconditionally and will never tire of forgiving us. Learn from our past but don't let it enslave us.

Our future is unknown. We do not know what our life will turn out to be like. We do not know the day or the hour when our existence on this earth will cease and we will enter an entirely different type of existence. Apart from the planning we all need to do as we follow the path in life we have chosen, there is little point in worrying about what the future may hold for us. Such worries will usually be for naught. Jesus often tells the people not to be fearful – "Trust in God and trust in me". The phrase "Do not be afraid" appears in the Scriptures hundreds of times.

That leaves us with the present – each moment followed by the next moment. Everything after this life is a never ending “present moment”. There is no past and no future because time does not exist. The moment we see the face of God in the next life is heaven. There is no series of such moments as time does not exist.

So, it would appear that the best way to live our life is to cherish the present moment. Hundreds of spiritual books have been written on the value of living in the present and trusting God to look after us no matter what confronts us. Mind you – it is difficult to live just in the present. The past and the future always try to invade our thoughts and actions.

One way of walking with God in this current life of ours is via prayer. But people say they forget about God during such busy days of work, raising children, doing grandparents duties etc etc. True, but many religious people have often said that everything we do is a prayer. Contemplation is a word we often associate with saints, however each of us can be a contemplative – just convince ourselves that every breath, every thought, every action is indeed a prayer.

Faith Matters lending library

On page 10 of the transcript of Fr. John Thornhill's DVD “Conscience in Catholic Teaching” he speaks about the 1974 pastoral letter of the Australian Bishops in the aftermath of the Encyclical “Humanae Vitae”. He notes that it made a great deal about “conscience”. This pastoral letter did not receive much publicity when it was published and that was a pity for the laity. If you wish a copy via email contact pcondon@westnet.com.au

August 12, 13

Mention has been made previously of the magazine “**Madonna Magazine - Spirituality in daily life**”, published quarterly by Jesuit Communications in Melbourne. Each edition has a section which lists the references for the liturgy of the day for the 3 months of that edition, followed by a short reflection after the entry for each day. Madonna is a magazine which also provides a series of spiritual writings, among other features, especially the opening reflection by the editor, Fr. Chris Gleeson (SJ), a spiritual writer of some note.

The reason for mentioning the magazine again is that the reflection for the Feast of the Assumption of Mary occurs next **Tuesday, August 15**. In years past there were many Holy Days of Obligation but very few exist now and Mary's Assumption is one of them. **The reflection appears below.**

“On this feast of the Assumption, it is fitting to reflect on Mary's attitude to life. Unmarried and pregnant she was able to praise her God. ‘The mighty one has done great things for me’ was her response to this particular crisis in her life. It was not, ‘This is too much – I can't take any more’ or some such sentiment.

“Of course we don't know if Mary had any fears of what lay ahead. Whatever emotions she may have felt, she was still able to maintain a positive outlook.

“In our own lives, there are always circumstances when we feel justified in displaying bitterness, crankiness or other negative attitudes. If we reflect daily on our responses to events, then we can emulate Mary's attitude. After all, we don't have to do it alone – Mary walks with us.”

Want to know more about the magazine? www.madonnamagazine.com.au

Faith Matters lending library

Last week we spoke about the DVD of Fr. John Thornhill, titled "Conscience in Catholic Teaching". We have only one or two copies of the DVD but have available the transcript of the DVD - DVDs of Fr. John Thornhill is titled "Conscience in Catholic Teaching". 12 foolscap pages. If you would like a copy of the DVD or the transcript, email pcondon@westnet.com.au. This document would have to be one of the best explanations of the nature of conscience and how it integrates our lives and actions with everything in our extremely complicated and confusing world.

August 5, 6

Mary MacKillop, known to most people in Australia, was beatified at the Randwick racecourse by Pope John Paul 2 on Jan. 19, 1995 and became Blessed Mary MacKillop. In Rome, on Oct. 17, 2010, she was canonised by Pope Benedict XVI and became "St. Mary of the Cross MacKillop". Her feast day is next Tuesday, August 8, the date she died in 1909. She was a remarkable Australian woman. Google her name. Pope John Paul 2 was himself canonised as a saint on April 27, 2014.

Below are some of her sayings, which she tried to live by – they may be of benefit to us as we live our daily lives.

- Never see a need without trying to do something about it.
- Normally we are harder on each other than the loving heart of Jesus is on us.
- Be not hasty in judging one another – put kind constructions where you can, and where you cannot, be silent.
- In times of aridity we can best prove our love of God. (She certainly had many of these)
- Try always to be generous with God.
- Gratitude is the memory of the heart.
- A shortcut to Heaven is meekness, gentleness and kindness to all.
- Look back a little and see what our good God has done for us.

Her Religious Order and her schools were not under the control of the local bishops but were under the control of the Vatican. She was too smart to submit the Order and the nuns to the whims of the local bishops at that time. Her excommunication by Bishop Laurence Shiel on Sept. 2, 1871 was removed by the Vatican on Feb. 23, 1872.

Catholic Education in this country owes a large debt to the efforts of Mary Mackillop and her teaching nuns.

July 29, 30

The time has come for those interested in Church history.

When Next Wednesday August 2 7.30 pm – 9.15 pm.

Speaker Fr. Chris Hanlon, Archdiocesan historian.

Topic The early Bishops of Qld

Where Daley Centre 67 Dawson Parade, Keperra.

Cost A gold coin donation

One of these Bishops banned St. Mary McKillop and her sisters from their schools in Qld. They returned later on to the State. Thank the Lord for that blessing.

Synodality takes off in Parramatta Diocese in Sydney.

We know that a major synod is about to start in Rome which involves the whole church and its topic is the actual process – “Synodality”. Pope Francis hopes this synod will lead to more acceptance of the synodal process than what is occurring at the moment.

Here, in Australia, preparations have been underway for some time for the holding of a Diocesan Synod in the Parramatta Diocese on Oct. 12 – 15 this year. The “mover and shaker” for this great initiative is the Bishop of that Diocese, Vincent Long. He is regarded as one of the more forward-thinking Bishops who are committed to meaningful change in the Church.

An excerpt from the Parramatta Diocese website concerning the degree of power for change of a Diocesan synod:

“Can a Diocesan Synod change Church teaching or address issues of Doctrine?”

“Diocesan Synods primarily focus on matters related to pastoral care, evangelisation, and the specific needs of the local diocese. They may discuss and provide recommendations on pastoral strategies, local policies, and initiatives to address specific challenges within the diocese. However, any decisions made by a Diocesan Synod must be in harmony with the broader teachings of the Catholic Church as handed down by the magisterium”.

Last week we mentioned that the 20 DVDs of Fr. John Thornhill would be listed on the Faith Matters website under the link “Library loans”. They were to be at the bottom of the material there, however we have now moved them to the top, in an effort to make it easier to access for those interested.

To borrow one, any parishioner can do so by emailing pcondon@westnet.com.au

July 22, 23

Scripture study - something for everyone? Yes! The Word of God is meant to be a "lamp to my feet" (Ps 119), lighting up the path of my life, but do I actually spend much time with the scriptures, discerning that path? Should I? Would I like to?

If yes, there's a great scripture-study opportunity coming up soon, from late August, right here on our doorstep. Instead of driving to Banyo on Monday evenings, just come to the Daley Centre at St William's to be part of the Grovely Hub on Thursday afternoons 3:30-5:30 p.m.

See Catholic Foundations: Understanding, praying and living the scriptures at www.catholicformation.au Look out for the details - including how to register - in next week's bulletin. Mark the start date (24 Aug) now!

Around 2008 or so, the theologian Fr. John Thornhill (Marist priest) with the technology assistance of Fr. Patrick Lim, produced a series of DVDs on various aspects of the Catholic Faith. Fr. John gave a number of presentations on some of these DVDs in the Daley Centre when he was living in Brisbane. He did this when the present Faith Matters group was called Adult Faith Education. The DVDs are excellent, still so relevant in 2023, and presented with such clarity and common sense.

Faith Matters is looking at how these 20 DVDs could be available for parishioners to borrow. More on this soon.

Date claimer Prior to Covid, **Fr Chris Hanlon, the official historian for the Archdiocese of Brisbane**, gave an annual presentation in the Daley Centre. Over the years we have covered most of the main periods of Catholic Church history. We are pleased to announce that Chris will speak in the **Daley Centre on Wednesday August 2 at 7.30 PM**. He is currently involved in a project involving the early bishops of Qld and, on this occasion, he will be talking about some stories (probably unknown to most people) which happened during their times as Bishop.

You might know that Bishop James Quinn, in 1880, told Mary MacKillop and her sisters, who were going really well here in their schools, to pack their bags and get out of Qld. They did not come back until the early 1900s. Bishop Quinn found that he could not control Mary and her sisters because of the way she had set up her religious Order of nuns with the Vatican, and was guided by the Pope and not the local bishops.

July 15, 16

Mention was made last week of a series of DVDs, The Emmaus Series (20 in all), by the theologian Fr. John Thornhill. The 20 titles were divided into 4 groups under the following headings - Basic Themes of Evangelisation, Life in the Church, Living the Faith and Other themes. The titles, for instance, under the heading "Living the Faith" are:

- Can Prayer be a Satisfying Experience?
- Conscience in Catholic Teaching
- The Sacrament of Forgiveness
- Discovering an Australian Spirituality
- Stages of Faith Experience

The first 3 on this list are worth listening to for a start. In fact, because we have only 1 copy of each DVD we have a full transcript available in printed form for the first 2. There is a brief transcript for the third one, to be used in conjunction with the DVD. We have just the DVD for the other 17 titles.

These DVDs and transcripts are not for loan in the same way as the books are in the Faith Matters lending library. The process for indicating interest is via an email to pcondon@westnet.com.au - we will contact you and take it from there. The titles of all the DVDs are on the Faith Matters website www.faith-matters-gsm.com.au

We are all busy, time is a limited resource and hence valuable to all of us. Think about these DVDs, check the full list on the Faith Matters website and see if one of them would be relevant to you at this stage of your spiritual life. If not now, perhaps later.

The early bishops of Queensland. Fr. Chris Hanlon will give a presentation in the Daley Centre on Wednesday August 2 at 7.30pm, finishing at 9.15 pm. There will be an opportunity for lots of questions and Fr. Chris (the Archdiocesan historian) is just the person to answer them. The first 3 key bishops in Qld. were:

- James Quinn (1859-1881... 22 years)
 - Bishop Robert Dunne (1882 -1887 and then
 - Archbishop 1887 – 1917...35 years)
 - Archbishop James Duhig (1917 – 1965...48 years).
 - History is always fascinating.
-

Faith Matters lending library – clarification of the process for DVDs.

To order a DVD – email pcondon@westnet.com.au . I will contact you and it will go from there.

You may order a DVD or one of the 2 transcripts mentioned above. For full list of DVDs go to www.faith-matters-gsm.com.au , click on “library loans” and scroll to the bottom.

July 8, 9

Scripture study - something for everyone? Yes! The Word of God is meant to be a "lamp to my feet" (Ps 119), lighting up the path of my life, but do I actually spend much time with the scriptures, discerning that path? Should I? Would I like to?

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July 1, 2

Fr. John Thornhill, a noted Australian theologian, now gone to God in recent years, wrote a small booklet called “Some Faith Outlines for Thinking Catholics”. One of the 10 articles was entitled “Prayer – Living with the questions, ‘who are you God?’ and ‘who am I before you?’” He made the point that we were taught to “**say prayers**” but not how to “**pray**”.

A quote from the article. "Many people who have decided to take prayer more seriously and set time apart to commune with God have been disappointed. After an initial period of satisfaction they have given up – their prayer seemed little more than **talking to themselves**".

He suggests that by asking the question "**who are you?**" and then staying silent we begin to start a personal relationship with God and thereby seek to know what is in the heart of God. This question will inevitably lead to another question later on – "**Who are you for me today** as I live this life and bring it to you?"

As Fr. Thornhill says – "And the answer will come, not in words but in the assurances which our faith and hope bring us.

- In our self-doubt, for instance, we shall know God's loving choice of us from all eternity.
- In our uncertainties, we shall know God's unfailing fidelity.
- In our joys, we shall recognise God's generous providence in our lives.
- As our life goes on, we shall recognise what God is asking of us and offering us.
- In our difficulties and failures, we shall know in a very personal way God's mercy and compassion.

The fact that we were not taught how to develop our personal prayer was one of the factors contributing to the difficulties our highly institutionalised church has experienced in coming to terms with the call of Vatican 2 and the future God has prepared for us".

Mind you, verbal prayer will always have a significant role to play in our prayer life, but a deeper relationship with God must be a key goal as we live out the life God has gifted to us.

I am reminded of the quote by John Vianney (parish priest of Ars, France – and a saint) when he asked an older person who spent a long time just sitting in the church - "What do you do here all this time?". His answer was, "I look at him and he looks at me." Such a deep relationship.

June 25, 26

June 27 is the feast day of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour (also called Our Lady of Perpetual Help). The feast harkens back to the famous Byzantine icon in the 15th century. If you wish to pursue this further go to the following website which will give you the image, plus other information.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/our_Lady_of_Perpetual_Succour

In Mediaeval times and some centuries later, the laity, mainly illiterate and uneducated, resorted to many types of devotions during Mass. The people were not involved at any stage as the Mass was said in Latin, which no one understood, except the clergy and the well-to-do minority. Since the priest stood **facing the altar with his back to the people**, they said the rosary or practised other devotions during Mass.

A number of these devotions ceased after Vatican 2, but certain ones (like this one) survived and had a strong following. Go to the website above to see the icon. Mary is holding Jesus but just above him, on

either side, are 2 signs of his future sufferings on Calvary. He seems upset by this as he turns from one to the other and the sandal comes loose.

Across the years, many people have prayed to Mary under this title. Mary, as the Mother of God, herself no stranger to sorrow and suffering, always stands ready to assist anyone who calls on her for help. On June 27 why not pray to her under this title. This devotion might even become one of your special devotions, particularly in stressful times.

Faith Matters lending library

A few weeks ago I spoke about the small books about practical spirituality written by Br. John Venard – a Marist Brother, now gone to God. Each of the 7 booklets, with a varying theme related to “A Battlers God”, contain about 80 short articles on practical issues in our daily lives.

Here is an excerpt from one of his books with the title “The true purpose of prayer – a relationship with God”. Quote – “It took me time to realise that prayer was more than saying words, no matter how beautiful and helpful these might be. It is about forming a relationship with God.....Where before I would spend most of my prayer time asking for help and forgiveness using prayers from a book, I now spend time talking to God as a person I love in “John talk”. I was uncomfortable with this until I remembered God’s message to me via St. Augustine – Our hearts are made for thee O God and they know no peace until they rest in Thee.

June 17, 18

Thanks to those 40 parishioners who were able to attend the presentation on “synodality” last Tuesday night, by Fr. Ormond Rush and special thanks to him for fitting us in, despite a very heavy schedule. We were fortunate to have such an esteemed speaker whose credentials can be accessed on the internet. Synodality is also on our Archbishop’s radar, as he looks to facilitate a Brisbane church which is more attuned to the signs of the times.

In the meantime we await the response of the Vatican to the recommendations sent last year by the bishops, after the conclusion of the Australian Plenary Council. This will give us an idea of the extent to which the Council has been successful after so many parishioners and clergy were very involved in the process. That process meant that we were using some of the principles of synodality as well.

Those who attended who would like a copy of the PowerPoint can email me at pcondon@westnet.com.au .

In the Faith Matters lending library, housed in the shop in the Grovely church, there are past copies of “The Madonna”. The subscription for this magazine is \$68 which entitles you to 4 magazines a year. We speak about religion and spirituality and there is a difference between them. The Madonna magazine is a spiritual magazine produced by Jesuit Communications in Melbourne. Why not drop in to the shop and borrow one of the magazines to browse through at home. The editorial of each publication is written by Fr. Chris Gleeson (Jesuit) and the spiritual articles in the magazine may be an approach which appeals to you. The readings for Masses across the 3 months are also listed, with a short reflection each day. These will not be current for past copies but relevant for reflection.

Faith Matters lending library.

The 4 editions of the Madonna magazine correspond to the 4 seasons of the year. The present winter edition has the theme “Soul” while the autumn edition prior to that had the theme “Harvest”.

The best way to see if this magazine speaks to you is to come in, borrow one, fill in the pink book to record your borrowing, check it out at your leisure, and when you bring it back just sign the book. Easy

process. If you do not wish to subscribe to the magazine just keep borrowing one of the editions from time to time.

May 27, 28

Last week, Evangelisation Brisbane ran a major conference for the Archdiocese of Brisbane, called “Summit 23”. The conference ran from Thursday May 18 to Saturday May 20 and about 600 people attended from the various parishes, including ours. It was evident during the conference that “synodality” is a process the Archbishop is keen to use as the Archdiocese pursues the 7 Apostolic Priorities, going forward. These 7 priorities were listed in the parish newsletter of May 14.

The synodal process will be a future part of our lives in this parish, Archdiocese and indeed the global Catholic Church. A smart way to get up to speed with what this process means and how it might affect us would be to come to a presentation organised by the parish Faith Matters group to be held on Tuesday June 13 at 7 pm.

Fr Ormond Rush, will speak on synodality (the synodal process) on Tuesday June 13, here in the Daley Centre. He is one of the best in the Archdiocese for explaining what synodality is all about. The presentation will start at 7pm, go for 1 hour or so (questions will be possible), and will finish with a cuppa for those who can stay a bit longer. We are conscious of the fact that June is a colder month and people are busy. This might be an opportunity for you to get comfortable with what synodality is all about. This is a barrow Francis will push for the rest of his time as Pope as he pursues a more relevant global Catholic Church.

It is appropriate that this promotion today of the coming presentation happens on Pentecost Sunday because the process of synodality is all about seeking the assistance of the Holy Spirit as the one who inspires any group seeking solutions to a problem, or seeking to agree on contentious matters if meaningful change is to occur – in this case in the Catholic Church .

Faith Matters – Lending library

Fr. Richard Leonard (S.J.) “What Does It All Mean – a guide to being more faithful, hopeful and loving”. 3 copies.

Fr. Richard commends ways of thinking about faith and living that are realistic, that focus firmly on what matters most (not on peripheral matters, that are open to challenge) and that are grounded in the faith of the Church. At a time when many Catholics speak of losing heart, the openness and assurance of the writer’s address to his readers offer much-needed reassurance.

May 20, 21

The month of May has long been celebrated as the month devoted to Mary, the “Mother of God”. This title, given to her long ago, is well known to all of us because it is part of the Hail Mary – “Holy Mary, mother of God”. But in the early 400s its authenticity was hotly debated.

Some argued that Mary was the mother of Christ but calling her mother of God was going too far. The other side argued that Jesus is truly God and in bearing Jesus, Mary bore God. The Council of Ephesus in 431 resolved the matter, affirming that Mary is truly the Mother of God.

The documents of the Council were in Greek and the term used for Mary was “theotokos” which means God-bearer. In 1969 our celebration of Mary under this title was changed by the Church from October 11 to January 1.

May though, is Mary's special month – we try to pray to her quite a lot in May.

June 13 - Last week we set the date aside for a presentation on the word “synodality” by Fr. Ormond Rush. Daley Centre, Grovely, 7pm to 9pm. This approach to how the Church should operate, so differently from the past, and strongly promoted by Pope Francis since he became Pope over 10 years ago, is being hotly debated in our time.

What does this process actually involve and how is it intended to work? Why not come along on June 13 and find out? A cold month – yes – but this is the only month this year that Fr. Ormond has available. Hence the start at 7pm and the finish at 9pm. Synodality is about to take off.

May 13, 14

Having had to cease our activities during Covid, the Faith Matters team is pleased to announce that we are resuming our service to the parish communities as of now.

Our first speaker will be Fr. Ormond Rush, an expert on the topic of synods and just what the synodality process actually is in understandable terms. Fr. Ormond will speak on this topic at Grovely on Tuesday, June 13, in the Daley Centre, at 7.00pm.

The synodality movement has become the preferred approach (under Pope Francis) whereby all members of the church (both clergy and laity) can come together, to listen carefully to each other and to agree, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, on what steps need to be taken to assist the Church to become more relevant in its message, mission and operation in the 21st century.

It is obvious that both the clergy and the laity believe that current ways of being church do need to change in a number of ways. How to bring about such meaningful change is what a synodal approach is all about. Fr. Ormond's presentation will assist us to be aware of what synodality actually entails. Hope you can make it – you will not be disappointed.

Faith Matters Lending library

Faith Matters has 4 copies of “The Wind Blows Where It Will” written by Kevin Treston in 2018. It will deal with facing the crisis in Christianity, recovering the Jesus story, what happened to the Jesus story in the history of the Church, a spirituality for living each day and a way forward in hope. This well-known Brisbane writer will challenge you to deepen your adult faith. If borrowing a book, please remember to fill in the details in the exercise book provided in the Grovely church shop.

May 6, 7

When Pope Paul VI established the Synod of Bishops at the end of Vatican 2 in 1965, only bishops, priests and male religious were allowed to attend and vote. However in October, in Rome this year, the Synod on Synodality (a Catholic world-wide synod on the topic of synodality itself) will have a few major changes.

It will still be a “Synod of Bishops” attended by bishops from around the world, but some important changes will be introduced for the October one. The major change will involve who else is able to attend and have the right to vote. **70 “non-bishop members” will be appointed by the Pope.** Of these 70 individuals, **50 percent will be women and there will also be several young people,** all of whom can attend and vote for the very first time. This is a major change.

You will remember that in our recent Plenary Council quite a few lay people, men and women, were allowed to attend and vote. **On that occasion, the voting patterns were partly influenced by the lay people, leading to some worthwhile changes in perspective from both the clergy and the laity.**

Pope Francis has favoured a synodal approach since he became Pope ten years ago. A synodal church is one where everybody listens to each other (both clergy and lay people), and where all different views of what the Church should be about are openly debated and decisions are made, sometimes hard decisions.

With regard to the October Synod, each continent has had a major meeting of clergy and laity to thrash out what that continent thinks about issues that could be on the agenda in October. Australia was part of the Oceania group – large and small islands in the Pacific.

How the church functions in the future could easily depend on the decisions made in the October Synod in Rome.

April 29, 30

The 7 books of the Battlers' God series were written by Marist Brother, John Venard, the principal of the Catholic Chanel College in Gladstone. Like most principals, he wrote the front page editorial of the regular school letter, which went to all parents, provided their child did not leave it in the bottom of the school bag. These days it is all on computer.

When he left Gladstone he wrote hundreds of articles in the Catholic Leader, under the heading "Sacred Space". Both the ladies in the school tuck shop and a number of ladies in the Catholic Leader offices, suggested he include his writings in a book. The latter convinced him to do so and one book became seven, over time.

His argument about putting his articles in book form was that, " nobody reads a book written by a nobody". How wrong he was.

The value of his books lies in the fact that he does not try to teach through them. He is a spiritual writer with a human touch, telling stories of life and hope, simple stories, often humorous, sometimes tragic, but always about a God who surrounds us with love. He is not writing in a "churchy" way but just wanting to engage you in a down to earth, spiritual, Christian way of living.

His seven books – Walking with a Battler's God(3); A Journey with a Battler's God(1); In the Arms of a Battler's God (0); At Home with a Battler's God (0); Surprise! The Battler's God Dwells Within(4); The Best of the Battler's God(2); Finally the Battlers' God (2) .

Lending library article.

John Venard's books. Less than 100 pages, each book contains about 40 or so of his writings – each one less than 2 pages. The numbers above refer to how many we have in the lending library. Drop in today if you are at Grovely weekend Masses. You can browse this type of book to search for articles which speak to you.

April 22, 23

Today we have a brief look at the 2 well known creeds of our Faith – the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed. Currently we usually say the Apostles Creed at Mass but from time to time we do say the Nicene

Creed. At the recent Easter Sunday Mass we recited our Baptismal vows which are a shortened version of the Creeds.

Most of us were probably taught the Apostles Creed in our youth. It is shorter, not so complex in thought, whereas the Nicene Creed is expressed in more theological terms and has more complex concepts. By about the third century of Christianity a type of creed had emerged called "Old Roman Creed" and it was from this version that a similar one evolved by about the eighth century which became known as the Apostles Creed.

However, as Christian communities and the clergy discussed and debated these matters, there arose a state of uncertainty and it was felt that more precise statements should be thrashed out. A number of heresies were also becoming rampant and this led to a series of Councils {Nicea 325, Constantinople 381, Chalcedon 451 etc } to hammer out what Christians were to believe.

The debate at these Councils was certainly not timid. Finally the Nicene Creed, as we have it today, emerged. **Whenever we stand at Mass to say the Creed we are participating in a solemn moment** – many thousands of people have given their lives over the centuries in defence of what we are saying as a Christian community in the 21st century.

April 8, 9

On Easter Sunday (20/11/14) the Adult Faith Education team (now called Faith Matters) put the following article in this column.

One of Br John Venard's articles in his book, "The Best of a Battler's God", tells the following story as an illustration of how Jesus' Resurrection can influence the way we live.

Quote. "A chaplain on the battlefield came across a seriously wounded soldier and asked him if he would like to be read a passage from the Bible. The soldier said, "I'm so thirsty I'd rather have a drink of water". The chaplain got him a drink.

"Could you put something under my head? I'm in so much pain". The chaplain took off his overcoat, put it under the soldier's head and then noticing how the soldier was going blue with the cold, he took off his jacket and draped it over his shoulders. The soldier whispered, "Yes, if there is something in that book which makes a person help another, as you have done, please read it to me".

If our actions don't speak of Gospel values be sure that our words never will, no matter how often we go to Mass or jump for Jesus. This is what the Resurrection is about.

The resurrection proved that Jesus was God and had overcome death, but more importantly, it proved his Spirit would always be with us. The Chaplain brought Jesus to the soldier. Easter challenges us to bring Jesus to others. **Unquote.**

The resurrected Christ sweeps all of us into his kingdom of love, mercy, compassion and joy – not only us, but everything and everyone in the world, a world where everything is connected.

Happy Easter everyone (Faith Matters Team)

April 1, 2

This is the start of Holy Week, which includes the "Triduum", a term which means a period of 3 days of prayer in preparation for an important celebration or feast. One of the most important examples of a

triduum is the **Easter Triduum**, which starts with the Mass on Holy Thursday night, continues through Good Friday and concludes at the end of the Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday night.

At the end of the Holy Thursday Mass there is no final Blessing, as usually happens at the end of Mass. Instead, we follow the priest, carrying all the hosts from the tabernacle to the Mary MacKillop hall, where it remains until it is brought back for the Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday night. Then, at the end of the Vigil Mass the blessing is given. The point is that the period of the Triduum is one continuous liturgical prayer in preparation for the rising of Jesus on Easter Sunday morning.

During Lent we have been preparing for the coming events this week. Over that time, we have been identifying certain actions, attitudes etc in our lives which lead us away from Jesus, and trying to erase them from our daily lives and hence be better able to welcome him at Easter.

Today we celebrate Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem to the praises and accolades of the people. How quickly things turn ugly and within a few days we see our God dying on the cross. But we are believers, a totally unmerited gift from God, and we know that Jesus will rise on Sunday and fill the world with light and love.

March 18, 19

On **March 13**, a week or so ago, Pope Francis celebrated the **10th anniversary of his election as Pope**. What a breath of fresh air he has been and what a wonderful ride he has taken us on. Prior to the anniversary, he was interviewed. His answers to some questions appear below.

Resignation? He says he is not thinking of resigning, but explains what would eventually drive him to do so: "A tiredness that does not make you see things clearly. A lack of clarity, of knowing how to evaluate situations."

Many describe you as the Pope of the least. Is that how you feel?

"It is true that I have a preference for those who are discarded, but that does not mean that I discard others. The poor are Jesus' favourites, but Jesus does not send the rich away".

How do you imagine the hour of truth, the afterlife?

"I cannot imagine it. I don't know what it will be. I **only ask Our Lady to be with me.**"

You often talk about gossip. Why?

"Gossip destroys coexistence, the family. It is a hidden disease. It is the plague".

Jesus asks that everyone be brought to his table. What does this mean?

"It means that no one is excluded. When the guests did not come to the feast, He said go into the main roads and invite to the banquet whomever you find, the sick, the good and the bad, the small and the great, the rich and the poor, everyone. We must not forget this: the Church is not a home for some, it is not selective. The holy faithful people of God are: everyone. The Church is not a home for some, it's a home for all."

March 4, 5

Since the 40 days of Lent do not include the Sundays, we are now one quarter of the way through it, as of yesterday. The 40 days begin on Ash Wednesday and go to Holy Saturday, the day before Easter Sunday. Maybe some of us were a bit slow out of the blocks. If so, we can pick it up again tomorrow.

Remember that during Lent it is about repentance, which is about turning back to God if we have strayed a bit from the path of being a disciple of Jesus. No one said it was going to be easy and we will fall by the

wayside from time to time, and, yes, we will spend our lives asking for God's forgiveness for many times we have messed up.

Pope Francis has a multitude of insightful sayings and the following one comes to mind.

"Let us ask for the grace not to give up asking for forgiveness because he never tires of forgiving."

We use the term "fasting" quite a bit during Lent. There is a danger that we think this mainly means giving up various things in Lent. It does, but fasting has another meaning which might be more powerful in helping us to turn back to God. How much more difficult is it to go to the next level – what about forgiving people who have hurt us or giving up our criticisms of others, our tendency to gossip about others, etc.

Pope Francis' quote above carries with it the necessity for us to forgive others, in return for the myriad times God forgives us, not just during Lent but throughout our whole life.

February 25, 26

In Feb. 2020, Pope Francis appointed the first lay person to be the Undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops at the Vatican and this is a woman – progress, to be sure. **This person is Sr. Nathalie Becquart XMCJ** (the Congregation of Xavieres, a Religious Order of nuns in France) who has had quite a bit of experience with Synods. She was involved in the Synod on Youth in 2018 and the Synod on the Amazon in 2019.

A most interesting point is that in this role she will be the first lay person to have a vote that counts in the "Synod on Synodality" in Rome, later this year. **Her vote will be equal to that of a bishop.**

She was in Australia recently on a speaking tour (Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide) and spoke in the Parramatta Diocese (Bishop Vincent Long) on the synodal journey and her learnings from the previous synods she was involved in. She commented that young people in the Synod on Youth said that it was really the first time the Church had asked for their voice. **This emphasised for her that the Church is not only the priest and the bishop but is all of us.**

Under Pope Francis we are on a synodal journey, despite the opposition to the concept of synodality from various quarters, especially in America and some European countries. Buckle up everyone – it will be a challenging, but rewarding journey.

First Sunday of Lent Prayer from "Ashes to Hope".

"Ever present God, I come to you in prayer, open my heart and hold me close to you. Help me to know that I am your beloved child and that you are with me in all things. Help me to respond as Jesus does , with love and trust in you."

February 18, 19

The season of Lent begins this week on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 22. It will go for 40 days, exclusive of Sundays, and will finish on Holy Saturday – the day before the Resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. People usually give up various things or do something for other people during this time as a sign that they wish to repent for past mistakes and make an effort to become better Christians in the future.

We speak of Lent as a period of **repentance** – an interesting concept. A common understanding of the word is that it is a turning away from sin, regretting what we have done wrong and wishing to do better.

Hence the sacrifice referred to in the preceding paragraph is one way to show that we are turning away from sin.

However, from the Greek, repentance refers to a change of heart which leads to a change of direction in one's life. One looks at life and one's actions through the eyes of God, rather than through our human eyes, which usually have a selfish tint. When major changes happen, say in society or in the life of a person, they are referred to as a sort of paradigm shift.

So...Lent is a time for us to look closely at our current lives and our motivations. Are there actions or patterns of thought which we need to alter, and if so, what are we going to do about it? This is where prayer, some self-denial and assisting others in need, can be helpful. The main thing is to make an effort and if you fall by the wayside, pick yourself up and have another go.

Thanks to all parishioners who purchased a copy of "From Ashes to Hope" to assist you with the Lenten period. It will be a great resource for you. There are no copies left at Mitchelton and Samford and only three at Grovely.

February 11, 12

During the last week, the Federation of the Catholic Bishops Conferences of Oceania (FCBCO) held a conference in Suva in Fiji – a gathering, every four years, of the Conference of Bishops in Australia, N. Z., P.N.G and the nearby Pacific islands. As well as being part of this area's preparations for the global "Synod on Synodality" gathering in Rome, (Oct 9,10), as convened by Pope Francis, it also had other matters to discuss.

- A key theme was the Church's mission in the region and how this is best shared.
- Another was the oceans, particularly the intersection between the People of God and the seas.

A statement by Archbishop Peter Loy Chong of Suva, current president of the Federation, at the start of the conference, speaks to No. 2 above.

"The bishops of Oceania must tackle the reality of rising sea levels in their part of the world because if we don't, no one else will.

"As theologians say, context matters," he said. "And as Jon Sobrino, the Latin American theologian says, 'we have to carry the weight of the reality of our experience' and, for us, that experience is of the oceans. "We will speak about the small island nations and the Pacific Ocean in a way that we who live in the islands and live on the ocean know the importance of the ocean and its significance in terms of the Earth's whole ecosystem."

Lent approaches Good news. We have been able to obtain more copies of the booklet of Lenten reflections, called "From Ashes to Hope". All three churches will have books available for purchase this weekend - \$5.

Grovely and Mitchelton – the Vinnies shop at the church. **Samford** – James Baxter.

The booklet can be used by an individual or a small group of friends. We are pleased to see a few small groups forming. The format each day in the booklet is a small Scripture passage, a reflection on it, a question to stimulate our thoughts and a concluding prayer. One advantage is that the reflections could be used at any time of the year, not just during Lent.

January 28, 29

Do you remember our Plenary Council here, in Australia? It seems so long ago. The proposals are now with the Vatican. We will eventually find out what has been accepted for our Church here.

Pope Francis does not let any grass grow under his feet. He is a man of action – thank goodness for that. He has a preference for synods rather than Plenary Councils and he has made this fact known almost from the start of his papacy. **Now he is supporting a global synod on the very subject of synodality – “a synod on synodality”.**

The preparation for this event has been happening for a few years now. Currently, each continent is holding conferences to fine tune its submission to Rome for the first meeting of the synod in October this year. Australia is part of the Oceania conference to be held in February.

Statement by Australian Catholic Coalition for church reform.

“SYNODALITY is a Church word for inclusive leadership, listening to the sense of faith of the faithful.

The Synod on Synodality is an opportunity for much-needed change to the Catholic Church’s culture, leadership and governance structures. The bishops must listen to the people of the Church and open their minds to the cultural and structural renewal urgently needed to rescue it from irrelevance.

“Renewal must include a focus on: the role and status of women, acceptance of the spirituality of First Nations people, inclusion of all without discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender, marriage, race or relationships, clericalism and the harm done by the sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults, synodality and the inclusive use of authority.”

January 21, 22

Fr. Tony Doherty, formerly 10 years as the Dean of St. Mary’s Cathedral and 10 years as parish priest at Rose Bay, Sydney, is now retired. He is well known for his homilies. One of his projects in his so-called retirement is to start recording his weekly reflections on the Gospel.

His homily for last Sunday (the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist) is well worth looking at. To get to it, just copy and paste <https://youtu.be/HbF2OIKkdFw> into your browser.

The point about this homily is how Fr. Tony presents both these men as being so different. One is an ascetic, living in the desert, linked to the past history of the Israelites while the other is the one with the “Good News”, very much a convivial person who evangelised while eating, more often with those despised by the religious elites. See Luke for many examples. One sees everything as somewhat static while the other sees God moving towards us and very much in our lives.

Towards the end of the homily Fr. Tony draws some interesting points between Pope Benedict and Pope Francis (before he became Pope) from the movie “The 2 Popes”. Some of you will have seen it.

In the last scene of the movie Francis says to Benedict “Holy Father, I want to teach you to tango”. We then see the 2 men doing the steps of the tango. Life is not about “this” or “that” but more about “this” and “that”.

January 13, 14

The Church Liturgical Year during the next few months.

Last Sunday, the Epiphany, was the first Sunday in Ordinary Time and this Sunday is the second Sunday in Ordinary Time. We will get to the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (19/2/23) before Lent begins in the following week.

The start of Lent, **Ash Wednesday (22/2/23)**, will be followed by the first Sunday of Lent (26/2/23) right through to Palm Sunday, the sixth Sunday of Lent (2/4/23). Holy Week dates are **Holy Thursday (6/4/23)**, **Good Friday (7/4/23)** and **Easter Sunday (9/4/23)**.

The Archdiocesan booklet for Lent is called "From Ashes to Hope". The popularity of this booklet (still \$5) has increased so much, so that when the parish requested extra booklets last year there were none left. There will be adequate supplies this year.

More information will be given in coming weeks and the books will be sold from the St. Vincent de Paul shops at the Mass centres of Grovely and Mitchelton. The books will also be available at Samford. There is still plenty of time to buy them prior to Lent and if they are not available for sale this weekend they certainly will be by the following one.

"Our task is not to change who we are. Our task is to recognise how we have gone about being who we are and then learning how to do it even better - now." (Sr. Joan Chittister)