WITHOUT DOUBT, the biggest event in 2010 for the Church in Australia was the canonization of Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop. We are still discovering the fuller significance of having our first Australian canonized saint, and still discovering what a characteristically Australian saintly person she was. Even though she lived more than a century ago she still inspires us and gives us heart as we encounter in present-day Australia very similar challenges to those she encountered.

This issue of *Compass* can be read as a reflection on Saint Mary and her way of living by faith and our contemporary efforts to do likewise. Cardinal Pell’s homily during the thanksgiving Mass will suggest links with later articles.

Mary’s well-documented concern for people who were missing out or suffering deprivation and neglect of any kind provides a link with the theme of justice and peace: ‘There can be no peace without justice’.

Cardinal Pell recalls her capacity to forgive and even to love her enemies as we are instructed to do in Mth 5.44. Thus she can provide an inspiration for us as, with the encouragement of the Australian Bishops’ statements in recent times, we grapple with the reality of violence in Australian society and the challenge to cultivate a culture of peace.

But peace, as we are discovering, is a very big theme: peace is intimately personal yet global as well, encompassing peace with the environment, with the whole of creation.

The reason why we call Mary of the Cross a saint rather than a philanthropist, as Cardinal Pell reminds us, is the fact that her life was centred on God, and her work for others was her way of responding to God’s will. Her efforts for people were contemplation in action. Thus the articles in this issue that explore the contemplative tradition in Catholicism, marriage included, are able to find a niche in this issue.

As I write we are in the season of Advent, and I am reminded that at the time of the canonization there was much controversy, puzzlement and worse about the Catholic belief in miracles. Miracles, to some, seemed quite unfair—how nice for those few who received cures and other blessings, while the rest of the human race is left to suffer. If God could do that for some at the request of Mary MacKillop, what sort of God is it that leaves the rest of us to our fate?

The liturgies of Advent give a reply. John the Baptist seems to have expected a more spectacular Messiah to erupt into human history than Jesus turned out to be: Jesus was healing a few people, but he was a little low-key in John’s estimation. And so John sent his disciples to ask Jesus if he really was the one who was to come or should they wait for another. Jesus’ reply was simply, ‘Go and tell John what you see’. In other words, he instructed them, and through them John, to look for the signs—what he was doing showed that the time of the Messiah had begun.

And so in Advent the message is: with the birth of the Messiah we celebrate a massive leap forward in the realization of God’s plan to establish his kingdom on earth. The kingdom of God is in our midst, and faith enables us to see the signs. But the kingdom grows like a mustard seed; it needs time to grow to be a big tree. As yet it is largely in the future, something promised, and we are asked to believe in that promise: ‘Blessed is that person who does not lose faith in me’.

The miracles that are attributed to the intercession of Saint Mary of the Cross are to be understood in that way. They are signs, the beginnings of the realisation of God’s ultimate will for humankind. Saint Mary MacKillop is in the action of promoting the kingdom. The fact that only a few miracles occurred is what we might expect, given that even Jesus himself cured only a few people, comparatively speaking. The kingdom of God is ‘now’ but is also ‘not-yet’.

—Barry Brundell MSC, Editor.
BOOKS ON SAINT MARY

The beatification of Mary MacKillop in 1995 saw the release of many new and reissued publications, and this has also been the case with her 2010 canonisation. Following is a guide to MacKillop-related books.

BIOGRAPHIES


Mary MacKillop: The ground of her loving. Margaret Paton; Darton, Longman and Todd, UK, dist. by Rainbow Book Agencies; PB $29.95 [9780232527995]; 164pp; 2010.


Julian Tenison Woods: A life. Mother Mary of the Cross MacKillop; Margaret Press RSJ (editor); St Pauls; PB $29.95 [9781921472442]; 262pp; 220x150mm; 2010. MacKillop’s biography of Fr Woods (1832-89), co-founder of the Sisters of St Joseph.

CORRESPONDENCE
Mary MacKillop and Flora: Correspondence between Mary MacKillop and her mother, Flora McDonald MacKillop. Sheila McCreanor RSJ (editor); Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart; PB $24.95 [9780957997622]; 205pp; 2004.


Mary MacKillop on Mission: To her last breath. Sheila McCreanor RSJ (editor); Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, dist. by St Pauls; PB $32.95 [9780646522890]; 421pp; 2009.

SPIRITUALITY
The Little Brown Book: Mary MacKillop’s spirituality in our everyday lives. Sue Kane & Leo Kane; Helen Barnes RSJ (illustrator); St Pauls; HB $17.95 [9781921472268]; 176pp; 2009.


God Will Take Care of Us All: A spirituality of Mary MacKillop. Pauline Wicks RSJ; St Pauls; PB $24.95 [9781921472367]; 142pp; 2009.


Mary MacKillop: Spirituality and charisms. Daniel Lyne CP; St Joseph’s Generalate; PB $15.00 [9780959231601]; 240pp; 1983.

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SAINT MARY OF THE CROSS


CARDINAL GEORGE PELL, ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY

BROTHERS AND SISTERS in Christ. Fellow citizens of Australia. Yesterday Mary MacKillop was canonized at St. Peter’s Basilica here in Rome by Pope Benedict XVI as Saint Mary of the Cross, the first Australian-born saint in the two thousand year history of the Catholic Church. We are delighted and grateful.

The Australia of today which welcomes this canonization is very different from the separate British colonies where Mary spent most of her life before the Commonwealth of Australia was established in 1901. In most ways Australia is now a better society, due to the wisdom and hard work of our predecessors, women and men like Sister Mary. The Australia which was and is Protestant or irreligious has made room for Catholics and we are grateful for this too.

My second greeting this morning ‘Fellow citizens of Australia’ (and I apologize to those non-Australians present, who are certainly included in the ‘brothers and sisters in Christ’) is taken from the final address of another great and earlier Australian, described on his tombstone in Scotland as ‘The father of Australia’. Major General Lachlan Macquarie came to the colony of New South Wales as governor 200 years ago in 1810 to restore order after the New South Wales Corps, the ‘Rum Corps’, had overthrown William Bligh the previous governor. It was then only twenty two years since the First Fleet had arrived in 1788, comprising about 1000 convicts and soldiers.

Many of the convicts were Irish Catholics, who were flogged if they did not attend the Protestant service on Sunday and had no freedom to practise their religion. Their numbers and sometimes their demeanour made official-dom uneasy. Although Macquarie laid the foundation stone for the first St. Mary’s Church in Sydney in 1821, for most of the colony’s first thirty years the public celebration of Mass was forbidden. Indeed on becoming governor Macquarie was obliged to swear on oath that he did not believe in the Catholic dogma of transubstantiation! It was only in 1829 that the Irish statesman Daniel O’Connell achieved Catholic emancipation through the British parliament after a long campaign of peaceful mass protests.

Macquarie was the first public champion to the outside world of what he called Australia, not New Holland or even New South Wales. He was determined to change a convict colony into a free society, the beginnings of a nation and he built fine buildings, founded new towns, crossed the Blue Mountains, encouraged education for Europeans and for the aborigines also. But most importantly he insisted that reformed convicts, the emancipists should be accepted into society and he encouraged their children and the children of the free settlers, the ‘currency lads and lasses’, taller than their parents, outspoken sometimes, regularly determined, confident and occasionally irreverent. Many Australians today still like to think of themselves in these terms.

Mary MacKillop was born in the Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy in 1842, the child of free settlers, some decades after Macquarie, and before the discovery of gold turned the colony upside down, bringing hundreds of thousands of immigrants seeking their fortune. But we believe that she shared the best characteristics of the currency lads and lasses as she exploited the openness of society which Macquarie encouraged, struggled to spread
education and battled quietly and effectively to combat the Catholic versus Protestant antagonisms, the sectarianism which waxed and waned until the middle of the twentieth century. She, however, suffered more from her fellow Catholics than from outsiders.

Saint Mary worked to give poor Catholics the capacity to exploit their opportunities, to avail themselves of the consequences of the widespread Australian conviction, which Macquarie favoured, that everyone had a right to a ‘fair go’. Many young Australians when she opened her first school in Penola in 1866 did not want to go to school and their parents were not too disturbed by this. Mary wanted them to know the three ‘rs’ of reading, writing and arithmetic but she also wanted them to know of God’s love for them and for ‘the Word of Christ, in all its richness, to find a home’ in them.

Two quotations from her writings help explain her life’s work. Her sisters as St. Joseph’s true children were to ‘seek first the poorest, most neglected parts of God’s vineyard’, while probably her most famous exhortation was that the sisters were ‘never (to) see an evil without trying to discover how they remedy it’. I hope and pray that this injunction sinks into the subconscious of all young Australians.

Mary of course became a nun, the founder of the Sisters of St. Joseph of the Sacred Heart, a religious, devoted explicitly to the evangelical counsels, to being and living in faith, hope and love as an Australian. When presenting her rule to Rome for approval, she explained in an accompanying letter that ‘It is an Australian who writes this, one brought up in the midst of many of the evils she tries to describe’. She stressed to Rome that ‘what would seem much out of place in Europe is still the very reverse in Australia’.

We thank God today for the contribution of all the women religious to the Catholic story ‘Down-under’, not merely the hundreds of young Australian and Irish women who joined the sisters of St. Joseph, but all the religious who have labored for our benefit, served with ‘generosity and humility, gentleness and patience’ to bring goodness and Godliness into the empty spaces of our vast continent.

Unlike some of Australia’s best known humanitarians such as Fred Hollows or Weary Dunlop, Mary’s life was centered on God. She realized that she was one of those ‘chosen of God, the holy people whom he loves’ and she wrote ‘I want with all my heart to be what God wants me to be’, to do only God’s will and never to stand in God’s way. Whatever she did, she did in the name of the Lord Jesus and she set her heart first of all on God’s kingdom and his saving justice. It was this faith which motivated her service and motivated the many women who joined her. ‘Faith’, she explained ‘is the first essential if we are to cope’ with life’s difficulties.

Today we find strange the name she chose for her religious profession ‘Mary of the Cross’, which explains our preference for the title St. Mary MacKillop. We like to think of ourselves as positive and affirming and one temptation today in our materially comfortable lives is to downplay the evil and spiritual anguish around us, to soft pedal the costs of redemption and ignore the flaws in our own hearts, the personal consequences of original sin. We are not born bad and depraved, but we are born selfish and imperfect. Nineteenth century Catholicism understood all this better than we do.

Mary did not like suffering and did not go looking for trouble. Her title ‘Mary of the Cross’ was for her a happy one, which acknowledged the afflictions of daily life. She
claimed ruefully ‘the little crosses of everyday life are harder to bear than the thumping big ones’. But she was given a number of thumping big crosses.

She was excommunicated by Bishop Sheil, a foolish and arrogant man, who let himself be misled by priestly lies. She was slandered, saw her sisters divided, suffered unjustly in a second enquiry and had to endure the estrangement, despite her best efforts, of the co-founder Father Julian Tenison Woods. Not surprisingly she turned to the Pope for help and protection and Pope Pius IX did not disappoint her.

Pius IX was pope from 1846-1878, the longest reign in history, surpassing even the twenty-five years traditionally assigned to St. Peter. During this period the Church was often under ferocious ideological attack and lost political control of the Papal States through military action.

The Pope was strict and not much given to conciliation, calling the First Vatican Council which defined Papal infallibility. But he presided over a period of remarkable expansion and renewal in Catholic life and devotion, which occurred also in Australia. The Sisters of St. Joseph were only one of a number of new religious orders from the nineteenth century which flourished.

Pope Pius IX recognized that the finger of God was upon the young, once excommunicated Sister Mary of the Cross. He understood her faith, idealism and potential. He supported her and we have benefited immensely.

In Australian terms we would now say that in Mary MacKillop the Holy Father backed a winner!

In these circumstances, we recognize her most remarkable virtue which was the capacity to forgive. She made her own Paul’s instructions to the Colossians which we have heard today: ‘The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same’.

We are told that John Kennedy the American president said ‘forgive your enemies but never forget their names’, while much earlier the great Protestant queen of England, Elizabeth I is alleged to have recommended burying the hatchet, but ‘don’t forget where you buried it’.

Sister Mary of the Cross belonged to a different school. During the months of her excommunication, which she knew to be invalid, she wrote ‘I have, through God’s wise permission at present enemies…but they are loved enemies’. Nearly twenty years later she told her sisters that ‘when you become hard, suspicious and censorious, then goodbye to being children of St. Joseph’. Over the years she practised what she preached. She felt the ‘force of God’s immense love and patient mercy’ despite her own ‘poor and cold spirit’ and told of her own return to equilibrium ‘a quiet and slow healing process, rediscovering a calm after the storm which had been (her) life for the past few years’. She truly said good bye to her old scores.

St. Mary of the Cross was kind and commonsensical. She told her sisters to expect crosses and realize that ‘we also give them’ and encouraged them to have patience with their own failures, to bear with the faulty ‘as you hope God will bear with you’. She regularly dispensed good Christian advice.

We thank God for the life, wisdom and contribution of St. Mary of the Cross. We are grateful that she was not eccentric, not religiously exotic. We warm to her advice, are encouraged by her perseverance in sickness and adversity. Her faith and moral goodness are heroic, but not in a way which is off putting or surreal. She does not deter us from struggling to follow her.

From the earliest days of European settlement Christianity and its Catholic component has been one of the most important rivers watering and nourishing Australian life. In yesterday’s Papal ceremony the universal Church put its seal on the outstanding Catholic contributor in Australian history. By its approval majority Australia now acknowledges that Godliness, Christian virtue and Catholic service have a well deserved place in the pantheon of Australian achievements.
This canonization is an occasion for Catholic rejoicing and an occasion too for Australians to rejoice in a job well done. St. Mary of the Cross is one of us, a child of the free and open society that Macquarie created, who made use of all the opportunities that such a society gives to bring God’s love and help to others. Her voice is an Australian voice, the voice of a great woman all Australians can recognize as one of their own. But her example and teachings—about forgiveness, about resisting hardness of heart, and about working to overcome evil, refusing to be disheartened or defeated by it—speak to women and men well beyond our shores and in all ages. Australia is not a perfect place, but the blessings God has bestowed upon us have been blessings in abundance. Now he has raised up from among us St. Mary of the Cross as our first saint. May we be blessed with many more to come and many more like her.

‘Remember who your teachers were—from these you can learn the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus’. For many years countless young people throughout Australia have been blessed with teachers who were inspired by the courageous and saintly example of zeal, perseverance and prayer of Mother Mary MacKillop. She dedicated herself as a young woman to the education of the poor in the difficult and demanding terrain of rural Australia, inspiring other women to join her in the first women’s community of religious sisters of that country. She attended to the needs of each young person entrusted to her, without regard for station or wealth, providing both intellectual and spiritual formation. Despite many challenges, her prayers to St Joseph and her unflagging devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, to whom she dedicated her new congregation, gave this holy woman the graces needed to remain faithful to God and to the Church. Through her intercession, may her followers today continue to serve God and the Church with faith and humility!

[...]

Dear brothers and sisters, let us thank the Lord for the gift of holiness that is resplendent in the Church and today shines out on the faces of these brothers and sisters of ours. Jesus also invites each one of us to follow him in order to inherit eternal life. Let us allow ourselves to be attracted by these luminous examples and to be guided by their teaching, so that our life may be a canticle of praise to God. May the Virgin Mary and the intercession of the six new Saints whom we joyfully venerate today obtain this for us.

Amen.

—From the Homily of Pope Benedict during the Mass of Canonization of Saint Mary of the Cross and five other saints.
IT IS PERHAPS a cliché, but to describe the experience of attending the Canonization of Blessed Mary MacKillop in Rome on 17th October for me was the trip and experience of a lifetime!

From early adolescence I have held a burning passion to visit the heart of the Christian world, the great cathedrals and galleries of Europe, and in particular England for ancestry reasons. I expect that everyone’s first visit taking in the sights of Rome, including the sheer size of St Peter’s Basilica and Square makes a massive impact. Being there for the occasion of the canonization of the first Australian born saint made it an additionally significant and overwhelmingly exciting occasion for me.

Growing up in the Sandhurst Diocese, my education and parish life was shaped by Irish orders of Brigidine Sisters and Augustinian Priests. I had not heard of Mary MacKillop until, as a graduate teacher, my first position was teaching Year One at a Josephite school in far flung Kununurra in the remote East Kimberley region of Western Australia. It was in this year that I developed a deep respect and passion for the charism and spirit of Mary MacKillop and the contribution of the Sisters of St Joseph to Catholic education in Australia.

Most Wednesday evenings I attended a small gathering to celebrate Mass at the convent, where in the centre of the lounge room wall hung the well known portrait of a young Mary MacKillop before entering religious life, green dress, hair in plaits rugged Australian landscape as background. Nearly twenty years on this image has remained with me as the Australian woman who so passionately battled the challenges and obstacles she encountered in delivering a Catholic education for all who requested it in uniquely Australian conditions.

Since my devotion to Mary MacKillop began in Kununurra two decades ago, my wife, two sons and I have journeyed to some Australian places of MacKillop pilgrimage, including the western district trail to the first school in Penola and Fr Wood’s Parish Church, as well as several visits to the Mount Street Chapel in North Sydney to pray at the tomb of Mary MacKillop. Both of these Australian sites I would like to visit again. The experience of being in Rome and witnessing Pope Benedict formally recognise Mary MacKillop as a saint of the universal church, for me is the most sacred of pilgrim experiences and in every way was as overwhelming and special as I imagined.

The only vague comparison I can draw, in attempting to capture the emotion of witnessing the canonization Mass, is that of attending several ANZAC dawn services at the St Kilda Road Shrine. Beginning in the still darkness, we cued from 6:30 a.m. and stood excitedly and patiently as dawn broke over Rome and the cool light of day gently began to illuminate the massive dome of St Peter’s Basilica.

After passing security and gaining access to the public gallery, we were thrilled at the good fortune of not only having seating, but to be in the front row parallel to the large portrait of MacKillop that hung on the façade of the Basilica.

As the crowd grew, and skyline changed from dramatically dark to cobalt blue, the piazza swelled to a sea of faces with many Australian and the odd Kiwi flag proudly waving throughout the crowd. It was moving to see the various banners proudly depicting the
names of parishes from around Australia, other pilgrims who had travelled so far to share in this momentous occasion in both the life of the Church and history of Australia.

What followed was a succession of goose bump moments as I attempted to comprehend the historical significance and truly once in a lifetime of what I was experiencing. Seated amongst the dignitaries in the steps in front of us were Kevin Rudd and Julie Bishop, both of whom responded to our waving and chanting, returning smiles and waves!

The two and a half hours of the Mass passed reasonably quickly as something of the life and work of each of the six candidates for canonisation was told in their mother tongue. There were joyous cheers and clapping as Sisters of St Joseph, wearing distinctive blue scarves, processed to the altar to undertake various roles during the Mass.

This truly was a significant experience in my life, and something that has become part of me and I believe I will remember for my lifetime, certainly with the prompting of many photographs taken to capture the many highlights and unique moments during this pilgrimage.

Other highlights included a day trip to Assisi, the preserved medieval city and birth and burial place of San Francesco and Santa Chiara. Visiting the Catacombs, the place of early Christian burial outside the walls of the old city of Rome during pagan rule, and taking in the Vatican Museum and interior of St Peter’s Basilica, the world’s largest church.

A half day walking tour, following in the footsteps of Mary MacKillop in 1873; visiting various churches, chapels and gardens that were places of personal significance to her and referred to in her journal were also highlights of my time in Rome. It was this day that by chance we met Geraldine Doogue and an ABC film crew. She took the opportunity to interview a handful of Australians who had travelled to Rome for the canonisation. Much to my amazement, ten seconds of my interview was the first pilgrimage ‘grab’ aired on Compass on the evening of the canonisation!

In addition to Italy, I commenced my pilgrimage in London where I attended a high Mass at Westminster Cathedral, mother church of Catholicism in England and Wales and ended with a brief visit to Paris where I attended a morning Mass at Sacré Coeur Basilica before returning to Melbourne.

Holy God, source of all goodness, who show us in Blessed Mary MacKillop a woman of faith living by the power of the cross, teach us, we pray, to embrace what she pioneered, that like her we may show to the world new ways of living the gospel that respect and defend the human dignity of all in our land.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever.

—From the Prayer of the Church.
JESUS’ WORDS, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you’ (Matthew 5:44) set the tone for this Social Justice Statement and the everyday challenge to us in our streets, schools, workplaces and international relations to overcome violence and make space for peace.

It is a very difficult challenge. It is easy to be peaceful with people of peace but not easy when it comes to the so-called ‘enemy’. We have often heard the statement especially from the USA and from Israel, ‘We do not talk to terrorists!!’ This statement by the Australian Catholic Bishops calls us to enact a new script.

The difficulty and challenge of Jesus’ words notwithstanding we have some breathtaking examples of forgiveness: the response of the mother of Gearoid Walsh, and Irish tourist who was killed in Sydney in October 2009 after he was punched and fell hitting his head. Despite calls for retribution and revenge, his mother Teresa spoke of the heartbreak she felt for the man who struck her son. She did not want him to serve time in prison. (Sydney Morning Herald, 30 October 2009, ‘Man charged over Irish backpacker’s death’).

There is the example this week of the family of the young policeman who was killed by one of his colleagues whilst on duty. We have marveled at the embodied reconciliation and forgiveness of Nelson Mandela in 1970 after 27 years of imprisonment on Robbin Island. The attempts to break his spirit and make him hate-filled failed.

The Social Justice Sunday Statement 2004: Peace Be With You: Cultivating a Culture of Peace quotes Archbishop Oscar Romero:

Peace is not the product of terror or fear.
Peace is not the silence of cemeteries
Peace is not the silent result of violent repression.
Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all
Peace’s dynamism.
Peace is generosity.
It is a right and it is duty.

And The Earth Charter says:

We stand at a critical moment in Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future.

And then:

The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life.

We have lived and continue to live in a world of holocausts, gulags, killing fields, suicide bombings, and ethnic cleansings. But unless we are willing to embrace the ‘enemy’, i.e., ‘the other’, atrocities will only increase as technological advances enable us to harm others even more.

Miroslav Volf, the Protestant theologian says:

Forgiveness flounders because I exclude the enemy from the community of humans even as I exclude myself from the community of sinners…[for] no one can be in the presence of the God of the crucified Messiah for long without overcoming this double exclusion—without transposing the enemy from the sphere of monstrous inhumanity into the sphere of shared humanity and herself from the sphere of proud

He goes on to say, ‘When God sets out to embrace the enemy, the result is the cross’ (Volf, *op.cit.* p.129). Our culture can regard giving as losing and forgiving being for wimps. It is difficult to give well and forgive well, but it is not about overlooking faults, injustice and hurts, but the choice to do things differently.

Though love of our enemies is the only attitude that can end the cycle of violence that plagues so many cultures, families and communities, often for generations, the difficult question arises as to how we can forgive when we have been hurt or someone dear to us has been hurt.

This weekend in Sydney at a seminar to celebrate the achievements of the Decade to Overcome Violence (World Council of Churches) one of the speakers, Azim Khamisa, tells how he came to find healing through forgiveness when a fourteen-year-old youth, Tony Hicks, murdered his only son in 1995. Tony was described as mad as hell, without a father and teenage mother with little parenting experience. He found community and solace by belonging to a neighbourhood gang. It gave him pride and an outlet for his anger. Azim’s only son, Tariq, a college (university) student was delivering pizzas two days a week to make some money and he was doing his last delivery when he was shot for the pizzas and the cash he had.

Azim says that when the police came to tell him of his son’s murder, it felt ‘as if a nuclear bomb had gone off in [my] heart.’ Going into deep mourning and despite support from his mosque, he tried to find ways to accept his son’s death. ‘Flickers of forgiveness’ came enabling him to redirect the energy of anger, hurt and loss into finding ways to prevent this from occurring again. He realised that there were three victims in this tragedy: his son, Tony Hicks, the killer, and the community at large. He made contact with Tony’s grandfather, Ples Felix, and invited him to join the newly founded non-profit foundation dedicated to ending youth violence—the Tariq Khamisa Foundation (TKF). Both have continued to work to prevent youth violence through education on nonviolence by speaking at schools and other venues with their message.

So we can be and are called to become channels of the giving and forgiving God. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu says in his book, ‘there is no future without forgiveness’.

There are a number of interdependent threats to peace:

- religious intolerance;
- war, violence, and the arms trade;
- environmental degradation;
- economic injustice;
- patriarchy (cultures of domination, hierarchy, and control);
- and oppressive globalisation.

Peace is an irrepressible yearning present in the heart of each person, regardless of his or her particular cultural identity. The truth of peace calls upon everyone to cultivate productive and sincere relationships; it encourages them to seek out and to follow the paths of forgiveness and reconciliation. (Benedict XVI, *In Truth, Peace, Message for the World Day of Peace*, January 1, 2006)

Desmond Tutu suggests that justice fails to be done if we only entertain the concept of retributive justice. Whereas in restorative justice the central concern is to heal breaches, to redress imbalances, to restore broken relationships, to seek to rehabilitate both victim and perpetrator, who should be given the opportu-
nity to be reintegrated into the community he has injured. For religious people it comes down to the belief that each of us is made in God’s image.

Jim Douglass, the American writer and peace activist, says that ‘The first thing to be disrupted by our commitment to nonviolence will not be our system but our own lives.’ I know that my commitment to peace and nonviolence is challenged many times a day. The fact that I am talking about this subject does not mean that I have arrived. Violence does not just occur ‘out there’. It is very near. It occurs when the weak are dominated and controlled - in families, the work place, schools, our community, and the church; when we allow our fears to fool us into making war against innocent people; when we close our doors to the stranger; when we ignore the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Wherever our commitment to peace and nonviolence lies, peace begins with our everyday relationships and involvements. It begins with each of us; and each of us together. It begins when we respect the dignity of each person and the interdependence of humanity and all of creation.

In 2004 the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference issued a timely social justice statement Peace Be With You during UNESCO’s Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World and the World Council of Churches’ Decade to Overcome Violence. The word ‘culture’ suggested

- an environment of peacebuilding;
- a spirituality of action;
- the interdependence of humanity and creation;
- a space where the welfare of all is a high priority;
- where people are valued above consumerism, material accumulation, status and comfort.

It called for a respect for diversity and the welcoming (not mere tolerating) of difference, equality, empowerment,

- a participation in public life that goes beyond just voting every three or four years;
- transforming values, attitudes and behaviours that promote peace and strive to transform situations of potential conflict and violence into peace.

‘Violence’ comes in many guises. This Social Justice Statement: Violence in Australia: A message of Peace points to the personal roots of violence in family and community and social structures. Though manifested at all levels of society, it is frequently experienced by those who are powerless, excluded and marginalised such as the homeless, the Indigenous Australians (systematic theft of children from their parents), assaults recently in Sydney and Melbourne on Indian and African students, trafficking in persons for sex and labour. The statement also turns to our faith and how peace can and does triumph over violence beginning with the vision of ‘Jesus the peacemaker’ leading on to those who follow Jesus and work for peace.

**Manifestations**

Few Australians admit to racial intolerance. But it does exist. The Cronulla riots in 2005 showed how easy it to scratch racism’s itch. Racism degrades the victim, perpetrator and onlooker. It degrades integrity and human rights. ‘What else can you expect from one of ‘them’? Be it a person who is Jewish, Muslim, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, Vietnamese, Chinese, Lebanese, Sudanese, or a person from some other maligned group of recent decades. From the outset there was fear of the ‘other’—and the ‘other’s’ agenda. Racism has no homeland, no borders and no scientific basis. It can occur in the words and actions of parents at sports games. Gay and lesbian people still come in for abuse—and bullying in school. We make comments about people’s backgrounds when they do things we dislike—whether driving, not standing in a queue, or unawareness of other unwritten rules.

The Statement addresses politicians and shock-jocks who exploit our fear of the ‘other’...
in the outback, the Middle East, the Pacific and Asia. The laws we have enacted against our worst tendencies to dabble in behaviour that offends against people of colour, other race, nationality or creed (Racial Discrimination Act, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Act, Racial Hatred Act, Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination) were cold comfort to Indian students attacked and robbed recently. And various attempts at explanation amounted to blaming the victim.

It is interesting that Alfred Deakin, the legislative architect of our Constitution (51, xxvi), reasoned:

It is not the bad qualities, but the good qualities of these alien races that make them so dangerous to us. It is their inexhaustible energy, their power of applying themselves to new tasks, their endurance and low standard of living that make them such competitors.

Though violence exists in many situations and relationships; it is often disconnected from our thoughts, actions, attitudes and words: (racist language; put-downs disguised as jokes; scapegoating; excluding people in both school and other places; refusing to listen or dialogue with homosexuals, women, youth, people of other cultures; labeling people; domination and control; bullying; social inequity; detaining asylum seekers and psychological torture; promotion of suspicion; punishment rather than rehabilitation; neglect of Indigenous people and people living with mental illness.

**No Peace Without Justice**

Peace is not possible without struggling for justice. It includes a just and equitable distribution of the world’s resources. We know of the inequalities where over half of the world’s population lives on less than $2 a day. It is war on billions of people. Peace requires real justice. (Robert Jensen, *Beyond Peace, Media With Conscience*, March 17, 2008)

We need to see that violence/injustice/abuse of human rights are not abstractions but the real experiences of suffering and grief. Behind the statistics on poverty, malnutrition, exclusion, homelessness and destitution is a suffering person.

We might need to embrace a global citizenship A definition of peace needs to go beyond the shortsighted demands of national security to human security that includes a concern for human life and dignity. If we ask a person from the first world about the meaning of security we might hear responses such as more walls, locks, defenses, private security companies, but a person from the third world might say that security lay in health and medicine, education and housing. Archbishop Oscar Romero said, ‘the only peace that God wants is a peace based in justice.’ But:

- is peace possible when people are made to work in dehumanising conditions?
- is peace possible when finance is available for another prison rather than a school or hospital?
- is peace possible when millions are hungry?
- is peace possible when people do not have a living wage?
- is peace possible when we fail to think sustainable by living in harmony with the natural environment?
- is peace possible when many do not have equal opportunity to access educational, cultural, and financial resources?

This calls for an engagement and participation in civil life through public dialogue and inclusive deliberation so that better systems of living together can be built. It is a compassion coming from a commitment to struggle with and for others so that all may live dignified lives.

Miroslav Volf says that we need to enlarge our thinking,

...by letting the voices and perspectives of others, especially those with whom we may be in conflict, resonate within ourselves, by allowing them to help us see them, as well as our-
selves, from their perspective, and if needed, readjust our perspectives as we take into account their perspectives. (Volf, p. 213)

We cannot assume that we have a monopoly on the truth. It is a prerequisite to establishing any lasting peace, because it is the only attitude that can prevent a group from taking out their swords with dogmatic judgmental zeal.

Dialogue’ is an opportunity for mutual education. We can create a space for peace to happen by listening to each other’s stories and finding narratives that do justice to the ‘truths’ in both. A failure to make peaceful changes possible in our economy, politics, and morality will make inevitable the conflicts that arise from these and other unacceptable inequalities.

We need to view global systems not from the perspective of the dominant and those in control, but from the perspective of society’s most downtrodden populations: the culturally subjugated and the economically dispossessed. Dr Mark Peel, a social researcher at Monash University says that they have experiences and stories that many of us never know. They must be able to decide which forms of development are appropriate for their lives, and which forms of materialism are not appropriate.

Despite witnessing distressing levels of poverty, militarism, and consumption, there are some exemplary scenes of human integrity. Peace and justice do not come by waiting to see if others will act. We can be more compassionate. We can be more humane. We can live in peace. Peace has become our most important challenge. Peace cannot be grasped. It is fragile and easily broken. To communicate peace requires a spirit of humility and reconciliation.

It is easy to point the finger but Jesus taught us to love our enemies. He taught us to be peace in a world where it does not exist. If we are not found in places of darkness, then how will the light of peace be seen in the world?

True nonviolence enacts a new script. The bishops’ statement tries to do this as it presents to us the vision of the one who was peace and who is the peace between us. Jesus’ teaching provides circuit breakers that reverse the cycles of hostility and violence. We can choose an alternative to the traditional ‘software programs’ on which our culture operates. It calls us to take initiatives and to jar ourselves and others loose from the ‘spell’ of violence, the typical action/reaction cycle.

Just as we can take these steps in our personal lives, we can also join with others to confront patterns of violence and injustice at the social or cultural level in this way. Every successful nonviolent social movement has accomplished the task of exposing the offending script of violence or domination it was struggling against and then rewriting that script, enacting a drama that forgoes the typical bad ending for one that is more human and just. Active nonviolence is this process of revision and re-enactment. Active nonviolence challenges us to see and transform the deadly cultural and personal scripts that we blindly rehearse and perform—and produce a drama which is unexpectedly, creatively, and lovingly human.

We can do things differently. We can go against the tide. The scripts of violence can be re-written and be transformed. It requires the creation of a new script that interrupts the violence played out in our own lives and in the world. This new script comes out of conversion. The gospel presents us with the script of love and the Bible continually reminds us that this world is the theatre of God’s love. That love lives within each of us and is poured into the world in ever new and concrete acts. It rewrites the ‘old scripts’ of violence and domination. The choice to play one of these roles in the production of violent conflict—whether emotional, verbal or physical violence in our own homes, in our work places, in the streets, or on the national and international scene—means we remain on the way of suffering and dehumanisation.

Jesus was crucified because of how he ate. Radical inclusiveness evokes a sense of acceptance, warmth, love, healing and happiness.
ness. It takes on a different flavour in the strong line from the Sermon on the Mount: ‘Love your enemies’. Yes, they have to be embraced and included—even the most obnoxious characters (Pilate, Herod, Judas). Not only to include but also to forgive. Love of enemies is empty rhetoric if these people cannot be included. This is where we forge the link between the radical inclusiveness and the commitment to nonviolence. ‘Love your enemies’: this is where the rubber hits the road. The gospels take forgiveness to a new level. The story of the Good Samaritan changes the concept of neighbour by offering one without barriers or boundaries. The only landmark is unconditional love: everyone is your neighbour. Preferential treatment is not for the good and holy but for those considered nobodies, the rabble, and the rejected, by the prevailing culture.

**Church**

It seems difficult for the church to speak with credibility about violence if it does not deal with violence within its own walls. There are alternative stories of subversion, resistance, human equality and radical community in the scriptures that have been muted, dismissed or spiritualised out of harm’s way. Theology has legitimised male dominance, confirmed by a masculine God. We see it in the continued use of language that appears to collude with the frames of violence that serve the powerful and silence the weak and marginalised. This Bishops’ Statement must also be a call to our church communities to be places of courage that offer hospitality, celebrate diversity and confront abuse with honesty, care and integrity. The vision and mandate for the Decade to Overcome Violence calls on us to listen to the stories of those who are the victims of direct and institutionalised violence in the church who might be kept quiet by exclusion, fear and marginalisation. We cannot continue to claim that the violence we do to others and upon creation is sanctioned by God.

**Media**

Violence in the media affects us in many ways. We can be repelled but then become numb to it in such a way that it does not affect us anymore. As with violence in the home, it can become a way of life. The worst thing that can occur is that it stunts our conscience where it is no longer seen as destructive and accepted as inevitable.

Satish Kumar wanted to walk the world for peace and so walked from Mahatma Gandhi’s grave in Delhi to John F. Kennedy’s grave. At the India-Pakistan border, friends and relatives farewelled and warned them of the dangers of Pakistan - an enemy and a Muslim country. They were fearful that he refused to take money or accept a ride from anyone. Coming through passport control and customs, Satish was amazed to find a young man waiting with garlands of marigold flowers. Having heard of these two Indians walking for peace to Moscow, he wanted to offer them hospitality. This hospitality was replicated as they walked through Afghanistan, Persia, Iran, the Soviet Union, and then Poland, Eastern Germany, Western Germany, Belgium, France, England and the USA. They had passed through many different cultures – Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist among the Russians, Asians, Americans, Europeans, Socialists, and Communists. They found that when we dig down deep and touch the humanity, people are the same everywhere. Satish said: ‘If I went as an Indian with a flag, I would meet a Pakistani. If I went as a Hindu proclaiming Hinduism’s supremacy, I would meet a Christian or a Muslim saying, ‘No, no, no! We have got the best religion.’ If I go as a Socialist I’ll meet a Capitalist. If I go as a brown man I’ll meet a black man or white man. But if I go as a human being I’ll meet only human beings.

**Eucharist**

For those who participate in the Eucharist two important words emerge. These are: ‘remembering’ and ‘forgetting’. We know that Christ’s
sacrifice overcomes the distinction between friend and enemy by absorbing the violence of humanity. He shows how God overturns our normal expectations of justice, and absorbs the violence we ourselves do and that God overcomes violence by becoming the victim of violence. The resurrection shows us a God who sides with the victim. We too are called to identify with the victims of this; to overcome the opposition between ‘them’ and ‘us’. So at the heart of injustice and violence consists a ‘lie’. The lie is that those we ignore, neglect, accuse, condemn, attack, or kill are ‘not like us’. They do not share our common humanity. This is the ‘forgetting’ or ‘amnesia’ that is opposite to ‘remembering’ or ‘anamnesis’. The forgetting that the anamnesis seeks to undo is the forgetting that occurs when we justify violence. Anamnesis means that things are not the way things have to be. To participate in this remembering is to live inside God’s imagination where not even the smallest creature is forgotten (Luke 12:6-7). ‘To remember’ is to remember that we are one flesh and our existence is bound up with one another. But we tolerate violence when the other is not like me and so able to be demonised. This thinking made possible gross acts of inhumanity [the Crusades, the Inquisition, apartheid, colonisation and enslavement of the African people, the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide, ethnic cleansing in the Balkans, homophobia, Katrina, Cambodia, etc].

Another aspect of anamnesis is ‘remembering’ the body—knitting together, overcoming the distance between friend and enemy. If we live inside God’s imagination, we will see that even the people we most demonise as enemies are made in God’s image. Furthermore, they have something to teach us about ourselves. Peace is not achieved by torturing and bombing people. We have made terrorists faster than we can kill them. Only by addressing the underlying causes of terrorism honestly is peace possible. The world did not change on September 11 but on December 25 when the Word became incarnate in human history.

Peacebuilding is not a passive activity but an action-oriented endeavour that takes time, integrity, ingenuity, commitment, determination, discipline, restraint and sacrifice. We need to adopt a vision of peace and enact it daily with the deep conviction that we can make a difference, and be as Gandhi said: ‘...the change you wish to see.’ It is a radical departure from war and violence that assumes that force can effectively control people or situations. We are called to do something bold, courageous and risky: let us seek answers and question the answers offered by anyone—political leaders, clergy, teachers, family members—who say the answer to violence is more violence. To question their answers is to risk scorn, to be labeled naïve, or impractical. Each of us is a leader. There is no one else.

The Franciscan priest, Father Mychal Judge, who died at the World Trade Center, preaching the day before 9/11 said, ‘No matter how big the call, no matter how small, you have no idea what God is calling you to do .... But God needs you, He needs me, He needs all of us…. Not just Christians or Jews, but Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, agnostics, atheists, the right, the left, everyone.’ We all have a role to play. None should be involved in inflaming hatred and prejudice or violating the rights of others or considering oneself superior.

In conclusion, I wish to once again express my delight that the Bishops of Australia have offered another call to peace as they did in 2004. We need to hear this message day in and day out because peace and nonviolence are a daily call and challenge. In conclusion, I believe that this Statement might have had more strength as a message to the people of Australia if it could also have dealt in some small way with violence within the church and how people can feel marginalised or actually be marginalised.
THE TWENTIETH century has left us some important legacies. One of the positive legacies is a wonderfully enriched understanding of the universe of which we are a part. Based originally on Albert Einstein’s work on general relativity and the astronomical observations of Edwin Hubble, twentieth century science took us from the idea that we inhabit one galaxy, to the view that our galaxy, the Milky Way, is one of billions of galaxies in the observable universe, and that this universe is not static but expanding dynamically. We now know that our universe began from an unthinkably small, dense and hot state 13.7 billion years ago, and that it has been expanding and cooling ever since. It is made up of something like a hundred billion galaxies, and our Milky Way Galaxy is estimated to contain about two hundred billion stars.

One of these stars is the Sun, with our beautiful home, Earth, set just at the right distance from the Sun to nourish and sustain life. Part of our legacy is the picture we now have of Earth as a blue-green planet set against the inter-stellar darkness of space. Unlike other generations of human beings, unlike Moses, Jesus, or Newton, we can see Earth as a whole. We have a picture of what it is like to observe Earth-rise from the moon. We have a new appreciation of Earth’s hospitality to life. We can see human beings as a global community. We have an imaginative picture of the interconnections of human beings with all other species on our planet and with the life-systems, the seas, the atmosphere, the land, the forests and the rivers. Astronaut Rusty Schweigert says that, from the moon Earth appears so small that you could block it out with your thumb, but then, he continues: ‘Then you realize that on this beautiful, warm, blue and white circle, is everything that means anything to you,’ all of nature and history, birth and love, and then you are changed forever.¹ I am convinced that this vision of Earth as one interconnected planetary community represents a precious new moment in cultural history.

At the same time we are doing terrible, ir-retrievable damage to the forests, the rivers, the seas, the soil and the atmosphere of Earth. Our use of fossil fuels is contributing to climate change that accelerates the extinction of many other species and will cause great suffering to human beings. We are destroying habitats all over our planet. If we continue on this path, if we continue to destroy forests and to exploit the land, the rivers and the seas ruthlessly, we will pass on to coming generations an impoverished planet. Many wonderful forms of life will be gone forever. These forms of life, I believe, have their own integrity, their own right to exist. When we destroy them recklessly, we do something that is terribly wrong in itself. But it is also wrong because it betrays our intergenerational obligations. We deprive our children and our grandchildren of what has always nurtured humanity, its spirituality, its art, its joy-in-life. We do them a very great wrong.

Planetary Spirituality

In this context, something is emerging that I think can be called a planetary spirituality. People around the globe have begun to recognize that we are called to a new way of being on Earth. There is a growing movement of people who are connected in a common love
of Earth and its creatures, a movement of farmers, artists, school children, scientists, industrialists, politicians and religious leaders, people living in villages as well as in great cities. Many have undergone, and are still undergoing, a process of conversion as they commit themselves to a life-style and a politics that involves respecting and protecting other species and enabling them to flourish, conserving the forests, the rivers, the seas and land, and handing on to future generations the bounty of our planet.

I am convinced that this movement, for all its obvious human limitations and sinfulness, can be understood as a new form of global spirituality, in Christian terms as a work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit who breathed life into the whole creation from the beginning, the Holy Spirit who is the very Breath of Life, now breathes through our human community calling us to a new respect for life, for each and every human being in all their unique dignity, and for the other creatures who share this planet, for great ancient trees in old-growth forests, for unknown insects in rain forests, for threatened species of birds and fish, for the great whales of the Southern Ocean.

Many of us find a sense of mystery, wonder and transcendence in our experience of the natural world; looking up at the Milky Way through clear skies and pondering the unthinkable size and wonder of our galaxy and its part in the universe; walking in a rain forest and being caught up in amazement at the extravagant exuberance of so many forms of life; quietly contemplating a great, old River Red Gum in dry creek bed; being overwhelmed by the beauty and abundance of marine life on the Great Barrier Reef; simply attending to one flower before us and truly appreciating its fragility and its beauty. In these and many other experiences we are taken beyond ourselves into mystery and awe. All of this, I think, is part of an ecological and planetary spirituality.

Human spirituality and human aesthetics are nurtured by such experiences. They have always been available, even when we have failed to attend to them. What is new is the sense that we form one global community of human beings beyond all barriers of race and class and nation, that we need each other, and that we are deeply interconnected with all the other creatures, with the Milky Way Galaxy, with rain forests, with the marine life of the reefs, with this ancient tree, with the flowering plant before us. Planetary spirituality involves not only a real receptivity and respect for the natural world, but a deep sense of global solidarity, and a radical, life-long commitment to act for the good of the whole Earth community.

At the heart of this planetary spirituality is the sense that all is given. Life in all its diversity and beauty is a most beautiful and precious gift. It is not to be abused or squandered. It is a gift given by a generous and bountiful God. The creatures we encounter are the expressions of divine self-giving. This is not to suggest a romantic or idealized view of the natural world, but a clear-eyed view of its evolutionary dynamics, of the costs of evolution as well as its fruitful outcomes, of predation and extinctions as well as mutual interdependence and cooperation. A planetary spirituality will need to see the universe of creatures of which we are a part in all its finitude, well aware of the ‘groaning’ of creation (Rom. 8), yet also rejoicing in its beauty, fecundity and diversity and standing before it as most amazing gift.

In attempting to describe this new experi-
ence of planetary spirituality, I am very conscious that here in this land we have the precious heritage of a very ancient, indigenous spirituality, with its sense of the land as a nurturing mother, with the natural world understood as sacred, and with human beings understood as called to be custodians of the land. I think that a Christian spirituality for the twenty-first century has a great deal to learn from this indigenous spirituality. It also has much to learn from the spirituality of other religious traditions. One of the signs of the times in Australia, and in many other places, is not only the growing pluralism of religions, but also the pluralism of spiritualities. There is a growing experience of meeting others beyond the borders of traditions in forms of meditation and prayer, and the emergence of interfaith experiences of spirituality. There are also those no longer in contact with particular religious traditions, who still see themselves as engaged in a spiritual quest. In recent times researchers like David Tacey in Australia and Ursula King in the United Kingdom have pointed to the growing phenomenon of the emergence of spirituality that is not closely linked to the great religious traditions.

What I am suggesting is that there is a new, emerging experience of ecological spirituality, a planetary spirituality shared by people of various religious traditions and by people not committed to any religion. We have a new sense of ourselves as a human community within a global community of life, where every form of life has its own intrinsic value. This emerging spirituality involves a respect for the dignity of each human being and for the gift and potential of the intellectual, artistic, ethical and spiritual life of the human community. It involves a sense of belonging with, and of interdependence with, the other creatures of our planet, and a commitment to their well-being. There is a new awareness of accountability to the future of life. We know that we are responsible for the flourishing of life in all its abundance in the future. And we know that we are responsible to future generations of human beings. We are called to do all we can to ensure that the beauty and bounty of Earth can be the heritage of our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

We are part of the abundant and diverse history of life that has emerged on this blue-green planet over the last 3.7 billion years. We now know that we are deeply connected to the emergence of the universe, that we are children of the universe. But along with this cosmic sense we know that we are grounded here, that Earth is our home, that we are deeply rooted in the life-systems of our planet, in the interconnected web of life. Alongside the sense of the cosmic, we know that the local and the particular matters, this place, this bioregion, this river, this species, this animal, this tree.

**Christian Spirituality**

This transformation to an ecological consciousness is already underway, but it needs the cooperation, the commitment and the best efforts of the whole human community. I believe that the role of the religions of the world is crucial. For many people, their faith tradition is at the centre of who they are. Whether they are Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Christian or belong to another tradition, it is religious faith that can provide the deepest, strongest and most enduring ground for their commitment to Earth and its creatures. This means, I believe, that those of us who belong to such traditions have to do our best to bring out the ecological meaning of our spiritual traditions. And we need to do this is such a way as to build a new consensus between us about care for the planet as central to spirituality.

Here I will point very briefly to some of the ways that Christian tradition can support an ecological spirituality for today. It is important to acknowledge that biblical faith can be, and has been, co-opted as a basis for ruthless exploitation of Earth and its resources, and that it has often been presented in a damaging, other-worldly way. I am convinced that this is a fundamentally flawed reading of the
It is important to acknowledge, as well, that many Christian communities have not been in the forefront of the ecological movement. I see this as all the more reason to point to the interconnection between what is central to Christianity and an ecological spirituality for our time.

What is specific to Christian spirituality and to the Christian view of God is its concept of God as Trinity. Christianity finds the deepest truth about God, the God who embraces and enables the emergence and existence of every creature on our planet, in the conviction that God is Communion. God is a Trinity of endlessly dynamic mutual love. We find this God revealed to us in Jesus, his preaching and practice of the kingdom, his death and resurrection and in the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit. God gives God’s very self to us in the Word made flesh and in the Spirit poured out in grace. In what follows I will focus on three ways in which this Triune God is understood as acting for us, in creation, incarnation and in the resurrection of the crucified Jesus.

Creation is an absolutely free gift. In the life of the Trinity there is an endless generativity of the Word and a breathing forth of the Spirit, in an eternal, dynamic communion of love that involves radical equality and total mutuality. Creation occurs because this God freely chooses to give God’s self to a community of creatures. Creation springs forth from within the divine life. God creates through the Word and in the Holy Spirit. The universe and all its creatures exist out of nothing, as God holds all things in being through the Word and in the Spirit, enabling them to exist, to interact and to evolve into what is new. Every creature is a word that reflects the eternal Word and Wisdom of God. A great rain forest, a threatened species, this flower before me, is an icon of divine Wisdom. Each has its own integrity before God.

In every creature, the Creator Spirit dwells, closer to it that it is to itself, breathing it into existence and life. It is in this triune God that we, and all other creatures with us, ‘live and move and have our being’ (Acts 17:28). Elizabeth Johnson writes:

In our day we discover that the great, incomprehensible mystery of God, utterly transcendent and beyond the world, is also the dynamic power at the heart of the natural world and its evolution. Groaning with the world, delighting in its advance, keeping faith with its failures, energizing it graciously from within, the Creator Spirit is with all creatures in their finitude and death, holding them in redemptive love and drawing them into an unforeseeable future in the divine life of communion. Rather than being simply stages on the way to Homo sapiens, the whole rich tapestry of the created order has its own intrinsic value, being the place where God creatively dwells.

By the action of this same Creator Spirit, the Word through whom all things come into being is made flesh and lived among us (John 1:14). What is at the heart of Christianity is the conviction that the God of creation, the utterly transcendent God, gives God’s self to creatures out of love in the incarnation. In Jesus of Nazareth, a living, breathing, fragile creature of our planet, like us the product of 3.7 billion years of evolutionary history, God takes matter and biology to God’s very self. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God forgives human sin, restores the image of God in us, adopts us as God’s beloved children, and deifies us, transforming us by grace so that we might participate in the trinitarian life of God.

In Jesus of Nazareth, God has embraced not just the human creatures of our planet, but the whole emergent world of biological life, rain forests and insects, wallabies and whales, and the land, the seas and the atmosphere that support life. God has become an Earth creature, one of us, part of the interconnected web of life, so that all of Earth’s creatures might be transformed in God, each in its own distinctive way. This means that a Christian view of creation, and a Christian ecological spirituality, will be incarnational and christological. It will also be grounded in the Christian con-
As Paul said long ago, it is Christ crucified who is the true Wisdom and the Power of God (1 Cor 1:24, 30). Because of the resurrection, divine Wisdom is forever the crucified one, Jesus of Nazareth, the flesh and blood member of the biological community of Earth. God is forever human. God is forever biological. God is forever matter. And this constitutes an unbreakable divine promise not just to human beings but to the whole creation, a hope ‘that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God’ (Rom 8:21). It is important to note that we have no good imaginative picture of God’s future for ourselves or for other creatures. As Paul says, ‘we hope for what we do not see’ (Rom 8:25). And we Christians need to admit that we have often made this hope into something Platonic and otherworldly. But the true biblical hope at the heart of Christianity is a hope for this world, based on a divine promise that this world will be transformed in Christ, when all things reach their own fulfillment (Col 1:15-20). And in this process, our own participation, our loving acts, our ecological commitments and actions, will have lasting significance. Nothing will be lost. All will be transformed in Christ and brought to its proper fulfillment by the Spirit of God.

A Christian ecological spirituality will be shaped, I believe, by these central Christian truths, of creation, incarnation and the resurrection of the crucified. These Christian doctrines cannot be separated one from the other. They are deeply interconnected in what Christianity sees as the divine economy of self-bestowing love. All of them involve not just human beings but, with them, the whole creation. The Word in whom all things were created is the Word made flesh, that all flesh, and all creation, might be transformed by the Spirit and brought to its fulfillment in the dynamic life of the Trinity.

The Way of Wisdom

In the biblical book of Proverbs, we are told that Wisdom is a cosmic principle, involved with God in the whole of creation, delighting in the creation of all things. Yet she comes to be with us: ‘Wisdom has built her house’ in our midst, she has set her table and invited all to her feast (Prov 8:22-9:1). In the book of Sirach, we hear how cosmic Wisdom has pitched her tent among us (Sir 24:8). In the Wisdom of Solomon, we find that Wisdom is the ‘fashioner of all things’ (Wis 7:22) who comes to those who love her: ‘She hastens to make herself known to those who desire her. One who rises early to seek her will have no difficulty, for she will be found sitting at the gate…she goes about seeking those worthy of her, and she graciously appears to them in their paths, and meets them in every thought’ (Wis 6:12-16).

Jesus was a Wisdom teacher, in the tradition of the sages of Israel, who taught in parables taken from nature and from human affairs. He found God at work in the world around him. He is reported to have insisted on the importance of seeing things properly: ‘The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness’ (Matt 6: 22-23). Jesus himself must have keenly observed the world around him, the birds of the air and the wildflowers of Galilee, the way the tiniest seeds produce great shrubs in which birds can nest, the way a woman mixes a little yeast in the dough and the result is the marvelous sight, smell and taste of newly baked bread. Jesus lived the way of Wisdom. He taught that ‘not one sparrow will fall to the ground without your Father’ (Matt 10:29).

For Christians, following Jesus means following the way of Wisdom, seeing all things as loved by God, and as revelatory of God. Christians see Jesus as divine Wisdom, Wisdom made flesh. Paul tells us that Christ crucified is the true Wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24,
30). In the light of his resurrection, Jesus was celebrated by the first Christians as the cosmic Wisdom of God, the one in whom all things are created and all things are reconciled: ‘He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and earth were created…and through him God was pleased to reconcile all things to himself’ (Col 1:15-20).

Following the way of Wisdom today involves a paschal experience of the cross and resurrection, an experience of vulnerability and grace, of letting go of self and finding abundance. To follow Jesus-Wisdom is to see every sparrow as held and loved by God. It is also to see every sparrow and every great soaring tree as created in the Wisdom of God that is made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. To live in wisdom, in the full Christian sense, means seeing the whole of creation as coming forth from the dynamic abundance of the Trinity, as evolving within the dynamism of the life of the Three, and as destined to find fulfillment in this shared life.

But I think a spirituality of Wisdom is shared in different ways by many religious traditions. Perhaps from all our different religious backgrounds we can cooperate to build a wise way of living on our planet, a Wisdom way of life for a global community. Such a way of Wisdom would involve us all in an ongoing conversion to a new, ecological way of feeling, thinking, and acting in our world. It clearly would demand a new life-style and politics.

The way of Wisdom is the way of loving knowledge, knowledge through love. If it is to be an authentic ecological spirituality I think it will involve a rediscovery of asceticism and true mysticism. It will be a mysticism that finds the incomprehensible mystery of God in the boundless beauty of the natural world as well as in its strangeness and otherness. It will be a mysticism that involves an enduring, life-long, indeed eternal, commitment to the good of Earth. It will respect and love Earth and all its diverse forms of life and act to preserve Earth’s bounty and beauty for present and future generations. Conversion to the Earth, to solidarity with the creatures that make up our planetary community, must involve action. It is not only a radical reorientation of thought, and it is not only the discovery of a new capacity for feeling for non-human creation. It is both of these issuing forth in personal, political and ecclesial action.

The way of Wisdom involves both enlightenment and action together. To act wisely is not only to act in accord with all the available empirical evidence, but also to act in a way that is at one with the gift of the Spirit breathing through creation and breathing love in us. Loving knowledge is the kind of knowing we have of a beloved friend. It is not a love that claims to comprehend or to control the other, but recognizes the other, even in the intimacy of deep friendship, as an abiding mystery. I think this kind of loving knowledge is an important foundation for ecological practice. It is a knowing that recognizes the limits of what we can claim to know, that accepts the mystery of the other in humility.

A sound eye, seeing things rightly, is of the essence of the way of Wisdom. Sallie McFague contrasts the ‘arrogant eye’ with the ‘loving eye.’ The arrogant eye is characteristic of the typical Western attitude to the natural world. It objectifies, manipulates, uses and exploits. The loving eye does not come automatically to us. It requires training and discipline to see things with a loving eye. McFague points out that the loving eye requires detachment in order to see the difference, distinctiveness and the uniqueness of the other. Too often we imagine we know who or what the other is, instead of taking the trouble to find out. McFague writes:

This is the eye trained in detachment in order that its attachment will be objective, based on the reality of the other and not on its own wishes or fantasies. This is the eye bound to the other as is an apprentice to a skilled worker, listening to the other as does a foreigner in a new country. This is the eye that pays attention to the other so that the connections between knower and known, like the bond of friendship, will be
on the real subject in its real world.’

What is required is that we learn to love others, human and non-human, with a love that involves both distance and intimacy. This involves cultivating a loving eye that respects difference. This is the way of Wisdom, a way of seeing each creature in relation to God, in Christian terms as a unique manifestation of divine Wisdom, as embraced by God in the incarnation and destined to share in the redemption of all things in Christ. Wisdom finds expression in us in conversion from the model of individualism and consumption to the simplicity of what McFague calls ‘life abundant’: where what matters are the basic necessities of food, clothes and shelter, medical care, educational opportunities, loving relationships, meaningful work, an enriching imaginative and spiritual life, time with friends, and time spent with the natural world around us.8

What I think we need for the twenty-first century is what might be called a mysticism of ecological praxis. Liberation and political theologians have recognized that those committed to the cause of liberation need to be both political and mystical, and the same is true of those committed to the good of the community of life on Earth. The mystical can enable us to hope against hope, to act with integrity and love in the political and the personal spheres in times of adversity and failure, up to and including death. Edward Schillebeeckx says that the mystical seems in modern times ‘to be nurtured above all in and through the praxis of liberation.’ Those committed to a new way of being on Earth discover the same need for repentance and conversion, the same asceticism, the same dark nights, as is the case in contemplative mysticism. He says: ‘Without prayer or mysticism politics soon becomes cruel and barbaric. Without political love, prayer or mysticism soon becomes sentimental or uncommitted interiority.’9

Commitment to the poor and commitment to the well-being of life on this planet must go together as two interrelated dimensions of the one Christian vocation. Ecological conversion is not opposed to, but intimately involved with conversion to the side of the poor. Ecological conversion, like conversion to the side of the poor, will need to involve both the political and the mystical, and the discovery of the mystical precisely in the political.

What then would a mysticism of ecological praxis, the way of Wisdom, look like? I would suggest that it might embrace some of these kinds of experiences:

• The experience of being caught up in the utter beauty of the natural world, when this leads to a wonder and a joy that seem boundless.
• The experience of learning to see what is before us with a loving eye.
• The experience that all is gift.
• The experience of seeing ourselves as born of and dependent upon the 13.7 billion year history of the evolving and expanding universe, and the product of the 3.7 billion year history of the evolution of life on Earth.
• The experience of the natural world as other, of being overwhelmed by natural forces, by the size and age of the universe, and of being taken far beyond human comfort zones into a mystery that is beyond us.
• The experience of being called to ecological conversion, of coming to know other creatures of Earth as kin, of coming to know that each has its own value and its own integrity.
• The experience of being overwhelmed by the complexity of the ecological crisis, of perhaps being near despair, but still living and acting in hope.
• The experience of conversion from the model of individualism and consumption to the simplicity ‘life abundant’ and knowing in this the truth of God.
• The experience of commitment to the good of the whole Earth community, and to the conserving of the natural world for future generations, that has the character of a life-long commitment, which we can recognize as sheer grace.
Alongside the ecology of nature, there exists what can be called a ‘human’ ecology, which in turn demands a ‘social’ ecology. All this means that humanity, if it truly desires peace, must be increasingly conscious of the links between natural ecology, or respect for nature, and human ecology. Experience shows that disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence, and vice versa. It becomes more and more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men. Both of these presuppose peace with God. The poem-prayer of Saint Francis, known as ‘the Canticle of Brother Sun’, is a wonderful and ever timely example of this multifaceted ecology of peace.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TRINITARIAN LIFE FOR US

DENIS TOOHEY

Part One: Towards a Better Understanding of the Doctrine of the Trinity

The re-vitalisation of the doctrine of the Trinity over the past century has allowed better understanding not only of this great mystery in itself but also of the practical implications for how we can live in the image of the triune God. These practical aspects can apply especially in the marital relationship and to marriage as vocation.

In this, the first of three linked articles, the changed approach to understanding the doctrine of the Trinity is explored through the work of two Catholic theologians, Walter Kasper and Catherine LaCugna, both of whom have developed their own perceptions from the earlier work of others. The formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity by both theologians is outlined and then practical implications are noted.

The second article will identify twelve particular attributes from this re-vitalised understanding of Trinity and consider them from the perspective of their likeness to the marital relationship. Through these twelve attributes, it will be shown that, in their marital relationship, a man and a woman can together image the Trinity, albeit in a limited human way. This awareness then leads in the third article to a deeper contemplation of marriage as vocation, God’s call to married couples to use their individual and couple gifts as followers of Christ in the work of salvation. Various perspectives of marriage as vocation will be developed into an understanding of how this vocation can be lived in the life and image of the Trinity. As well as imaging Trinity, the married couple not only can follow this perfect example of unity and community as a model but also is called to participate actively in this trinitarian life.

Two very significant insights which have aided better understanding of the trinitarian mystery have been a reversion to the economy of salvation—God’s saving work in the world—as the focus and a re-definition of ‘person’. Walter Kasper regards the Trinity as the mystery of the Christian faith. In this one mystery, the self-communicating love of God can be seen from three perspectives, each its own mystery: in itself, as the triune being of God; in Jesus Christ through the incarnation of God; and in all the redeemed through humanity’s salvation in the Holy Spirit (Kasper 1984, 270).

With a more specific and a narrower perspective, Catherine LaCugna considers the doctrine of the Trinity as ‘the mystery of God who saves through Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit’. God’s work of salvation enacted through Jesus Christ and the Spirit is no less than a full expression of what God actually is. Even though we humans cannot penetrate the mystery of God, we can be confident that God is not different from the God who acts in the history of salvation (LaCugna 1991, 210-11).

Re-focus on the Economy of Salvation

For many centuries, theologians had used images and concepts from the natural world to probe more deeply into the mystery of the Trinity. Along with most contemporary theologians, Kasper sides with Karl Barth’s radical (at the time) insistence that theological understanding must come from faith itself. ‘A real understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity...
from within is gained only in the light of the economy of salvation’ (Kasper 1984, 272-3).

Even more firmly, LaCugna also approaches the doctrine of the Trinity from the economy of salvation. The true God is revealed to us through God’s actions in the encounter with human persons (LaCugna 1991, 211). It is God’s very self which is bestowed ‘freely, utterly and completely’ even though God remains ineffable because we cannot fully receive or understand this act of bestowal (LaCugna 1991, 231).

Kasper re-interprets Karl Rahner’s identification of the immanent Trinity (the indwelling within Godself) with the economic Trinity (the action of the Triune God in the world) to mean that the latter is the ‘intra-trinitarian self-communication present in the world in a new way, namely, under the veil of historical words, signs and actions, and ultimately in the figure of the man Jesus of Nazareth’ (Kasper 1984, 276).

LaCugna understands Rahner’s ‘rule’ to mean ‘God’s way of being in relationship with us—which is God’s personhood—is a perfect expression of God’s being as God. In God alone is there full correspondence between personhood and being’ (LaCugna 1991, 304-5).

The meaning of ‘Person’

The terminology of fatherhood, sonship and passive spiration has been coined to describe the three mutually-opposed relations in God referred to as ‘the three divine persons’ (Kasper 1984, 280-1). However, Kasper points out that the idea of three persons in one nature became ontologically and psychologically impossible when, in the modern period, person came to be defined as ‘a self-conscious free centre of action and as individual personality’ (Kasper 1984, 285). Later, modern personalism made it ‘entirely clear that person exists only in relation; that in the concrete, personality exists only as interpersonality, subjectivity only as intersubjectivity’ (Kasper 1984, 289).

LaCugna sees parallels between the Cappadocians’ insights in proclaiming personhood rather than substance as the ultimate principle of being, and the breakthrough in modern Western thought from person as a ‘self’, ‘an individual centre of consciousness and a free intentional subject’, to a view (espoused by John Macmurray) of ‘self’ as a person with ‘personal existence…constituted by relationship with other persons’ (LaCugna 1991, 250 & 256). Because the character of a person is revealed by his or her actions and behaviour in relation to other persons, then LaCugna sees that the personal character of God is revealed by God’s acts in the economy (LaCugna 1991, 259).

From her wide considerations of contemporary thinking, LaCugna derives eight ‘notes’ of personhood. Because a person is someone who in essence relates to other persons, any reference to ‘an isolated person’ is self-contradictory. Each person is an unexplainable, real and unique product of creation having elements that of necessity include dimensions of reaching out to others; such elements include sexuality, purposeful intelligence and love, hopes and dreams, and freedom in will. Each person is the basis of a nature, so that ‘natural’ in this sense is that which leads each person to self-fulfilment as well as to communion with others. In each person there is a tension between self-love and self-gift which enables a freedom for and towards others, without that ‘freedom for’ over-riding the person’s other need, the need for self-interest. There

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are two ways in which persons are catholic; they are an inclusive part of all creation and each human is a unique example of what it means to be ‘human’, just as each divine person is a unique example of what it means to be ‘divine.’ To achieve personhood requires the exercise of discipline to rise above those aspects which of themselves would mean a person’s life was no more than mere biological existence. Each person is a rapidly developing entity in that each new relationship of itself adds to one’s personhood so that each person is a continually new and evolving entity. To live in right relationship in communion with other persons is what ‘salvation’ means and is the ideal of Christian faith (LaCugna 1991, 288-92).

LaCugna notes that if we use the term ‘person’ of God, whether we are referring to the three persons or one of them, we are not describing the essence of God as it is in itself, but using an expression that points beyond itself to God’s ineffability (LaCugna 1991, 305).

Kasper agrees that referring to the Trinity in terms of ‘persons’, while helpful to some extent, also has its limitations because ‘every similarity is accompanied by an even greater dissimilarity’ (Kasper 1984, 289). Kasper goes on to point out:

Since in God not only the unity but also the differentiation is always greater than in human interpersonal relationships, there is an infinitely greater inter-relationality and interpersonality in God and among the divine persons because of, not despite, their infinitely greater unity. The divine persons are not only in dialogue, they are dialogue (Kasper 1984, 290).

**Formulation of the Doctrine of the Trinity**

For Kasper, the doctrine of the Trinity must start ‘with the Father as the groundless Ground of a self-communicating love which brings the Son and the Spirit into being and at the same time unites itself with them in one love.’ Beginning with the freedom in love of the Father, who possesses the being of God, avoids many of the difficulties that arise if the nature of God is chosen as the starting point since love itself can only be thought of as personal and relational. In contrast, the theistic notion of a unipersonal God would require a counterpart for God and the obvious counterpart would be humanity, thus precluding the transcendence of God and God’s freedom in love (Kasper 1984, 299).

Kasper sees the high-priestly prayer in John 17 as the clearest New Testament basis for a doctrine of the Trinity because it summarises the saving work of Jesus in trinitarian form (Kasper 1984, 303). Within it, knowing and acknowledging the God of Jesus Christ as ‘the only true God’ results in the glorification of God and of the life of the world. While Jesus’ prayer specifically defines the oneness of God as a communion of Father and Son, it indirectly implies also a communion of Father, Son and Spirit—as a unity in love. God’s oneness is in the love that exists only in the giving of itself, the communion of love occurring within a single nature (Kasper 1984, 305-6).

Kasper adapts the reflections of Richard of St Victor to offer a plausible consideration of the mystery of the Trinity:

Each of the three modes in which the one love of God subsists is conceivable only in relation to the other two. The Father as pure self-giving cannot exist without the Son who receives. …[The Son] exists only in and through the giving and receiving… But this reciprocal love also presses beyond itself… [and] incorporates a third who therefore exists only insofar as he receives his being from the mutual love between Father and Son. The three persons of the Trinity are thus pure relationality; they are relations in which the one nature of God exists in three distinct and non-interchangeable ways. They are subsistent relations (Kasper 1984, 309).

In contrast to Kasper, LaCugna does not see ‘immanent Trinity’ as synonymous with the ‘inner life of God’ because that would suggest that the life of God is something that belongs to God alone. Rather than seeing two levels to the life of the Trinity, LaCugna points out that there is only one trinitarian life into which God has graciously chosen to include us as part-
ners. Thus, the doctrine of the Trinity is ‘a teaching about God’s life with us and our life with each other. It is the life of communion and indwelling—God is in us, we in God, all of us in each other’ (LaCugna 1991, 228).

So, instead of focussing on the persons or relations ‘in’ God, we should have a sense of God existing in the reality of human history, as persons in communion with other persons (LaCugna 1991, 225). The divine essence revealed in Christ is the ‘highest, most perfect realisation of personhood and communion: being-for-another and from-another, or, love itself’ (LaCugna 1991, 246).

Important for LaCugna’s (and Kasper’s) understanding of Trinity, perichoresis means being-in-one-another, permeation without confusion. Without losing the individuality of each person, there is also no disconnection as each takes meaning from the relationship with the other persons. ‘Perichoresis provides a dynamic model of persons in communion based on mutuality and interdependence’ (LaCugna 1991, 270).

Of all the images used to depict perichoresis, LaCugna favours ‘the divine dance’ which conveys ‘the dynamic and creative energy, the eternal and perpetual movement, the mutual and reciprocal permeation of each person with and in and through and by the other persons’ (LaCugna 1991, 270). Through the grace of God from all eternity, humanity has been included in the divine dance through the incarnation and life of Jesus (LaCugna 1991, 274). However, this is not to imply that humans are in any way necessary for God’s life of communion. Without contradicting her assertion that there is but one trinitarian life, LaCugna explains that the primary relationships of the divine community of persons are equally and mutually within itself, to itself, and the relationships with humanity are secondary (LaCugna 1991, 275).

For LaCugna, the essential practical aspect of the doctrine of the Trinity is about the shared life between God and humanity. ‘The form of God’s life in the economy dictates both the shape of our experience of that life and our reflection on that experience. Led by the Spirit more deeply into the life of Christ, we see the unveiled face of the living God’ (LaCugna 1991, 378).

**Practical Implications**

For Kasper, the development of the doctrine of the Trinity represents a changed understanding of reality from one which is focussed on subject and nature to one in which persons and relation have priority—‘the meaning of being is the selflessness of love.’ Kasper sees this confession leading to an inspiring model for Christian spirituality in which ‘trinitarian persons are characterised by their selflessness, pure surrender, self-emptying’ (Kasper 1984, 310). Taking a Roman Catholic doctrinal perspective, Kasper also sees the trinitarian confession as the ‘grammar’ for all other dogmatic statements and as the answer to modern atheism (Kasper 1984, 313-5).

More so than Kasper, LaCugna develops the practical implications for the lives of Christians and sees the doctrine of the Trinity as derived from the ongoing life of God with us (LaCugna 1991, 381). The doctrine of the Trinity pronounces that the true living God comes to us and saves us in Christ and remains with us as Spirit (LaCugna 1991, 380). It also demands that all understandings of God be scrutinised against what God has revealed in the economy of creation and salvation where there is the experience of ‘God’s very life, lived out by persons who love and exist together in communion’ (LaCugna 1991, 380, 382). LaCugna sees that for Christians to live as persons in communion in the image of the relational God is what is meant by salvation and is the ideal of our faith. As we humans are gradually perfected in that image, the communion of all creatures with one another becomes more real (LaCugna 1991, 292). If we cannot enter into a life of love and communion with others, then we cannot enter into divine life (LaCugna 1991, 382).
We are to relate to others in ‘words, actions and attitudes that serve the reign of God … where God’s life rules’ (LaCugna 1991, 383). Entering into divine life will depend on our relationship to others, ‘which is inseparable from our relationship to Jesus Christ’ (LaCugna 1991, 384). Our lives have significance only to the extent that they follow the life and teachings of Jesus in service to others, especially on the part of leaders (LaCugna 1991, 385). The characteristic feature of the reign of the God of Jesus Christ is the trinitarian model of communion among equals rather than a pattern of superiority of one over another (LaCugna 1991, 391). Forms of subordination such as sexism, racism, political exploitation and patriarchy are unnatural because they go against both the nature of God and the nature of persons who have been created in the image of God’ (LaCugna 1991, 398-9).

For LaCugna, living trinitarian faith means living ‘from and for God…from and for others…as Jesus Christ lived…according to the power and presence of the Holy Spirit…together in harmony and communion with every other creature [and free] from sin and fractured relationship’ (LaCugna 1991, 401).

In the past, some have viewed trinitarian theology as inherently sexist and patriarchal, largely because of its ‘Father-Son’ language. However, when properly understood, ‘trinitarian doctrine articulates a vision of God in which there is neither hierarchy nor inequality, only relationships based on love, mutuality, self-giving and self-receiving, freedom and communion’ (LaCugna 1992, 183).

Part Two of the series will identify twelve particular attributes from this re-vitalised understanding of Trinity and consider them from the perspective of their likeness to the marital relationship. Through these twelve attributes, it will be shown that, in their marital relationship, a man and a woman can together image the Trinity, albeit in a limited human way.

REFERENCES


Marriage and Communion Between God and People

*The communion of love between God and people, a fundamental part of the Revelation and faith experience of Israel, finds a meaningful expression in the marriage covenant which is established between a man and a woman.*

*For this reason the central word of Revelation, ‘God loves His people,’ is likewise proclaimed through the living and concrete word whereby a man and a woman express their conjugal love. Their bond of love becomes the image and the symbol of the covenant which unites God and His people.*

ANY YEARS AGO, when I was preparing for a thirty day retreat, The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, I was told that the word ‘meditation’ comes from the Latin ‘me ditare’, speaking to myself. It meant an inner monologue. For example, it might mean interrogating oneself about one’s conduct. That is one meaning, but more often it just means thinking. One may be meditating about a parable of Jesus, attempting to define the point of it.

Today, thousands of Australians attend meditation classes every week, but they are not being coached in Ignatian meditation or silent thinking. They are doing yoga. The aim is physical and mental relaxation. To this end, they do physical and mental exercises. The latter involves a gradual process of mind emptying until the empty mind contemplates itself. This results in a feeling of peace.

There are two routes to meditation in this sense in the Christian spiritual tradition. In monasteries and other religious houses it is customary to keep the Grand Silence, that is no speaking, from about 5.00 pm till after breakfast. Some generous people went a step further. Why not keep an inner silence to correspond with the external silence? This question was asked by a twelfth century Cistercian, Guerric of Igny, who had been a monk of St Bernard’s at Clairvaux. Guerric did not know it, but he was practicing yoga meditation. If we do that, he wrote, we may find the all powerful Word flowing into us from the Father’s Throne.

Another route to yogic meditation in the Christian tradition, more characteristic of Eastern than Western Christianity, is the constant inward repetition of the Jesus prayer. This was originally repetition of the word ‘Jesus’, and was later lengthened to ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.’ In the yoga tradition, such inward repetition is called a mantra, and is used as a mind emptying device.

The argument of this essay is that the western mystical tradition has a meditation component arrived at by following practitioners who had written about it. By ‘meditation’ is meant the elimination of mental states, followed by introversion. And that is yoga. It involves primarily stilling the thought stream. The great Hindu writer, S.N Dasgupta, expands usefully: ‘yoga concentration ...aims solely to stop the movement of the mind and to prevent its natural tendency towards comparison, classification, association, assimilation and the like.’ As thousands of people are now reminded every week in yoga classes, the point of meditation is to still the monkey mind.

If the yoga practitioner persists, something else may happen:

‘[he] steadily proceeds towards that ultimate stage in which his mind will be disintegrated and his self will shine forth in its own light and he himself will be absolutely free in bondless, companionless, loneliness of self illumination.’

‘His mind will be disintegrated.’ Can Dasgupta, the author of a famous five volume history of Indian philosophy, really mean that? What does he mean? He means that the discursive, thinking mind will be disintegrated. However, he doesn’t mean that it’s destroyed forever. He means that continual practice at meditation enables the practitioner to lay it aside temporarily, which may permit something else to come to light. On the next page: ...

...as a result of the gradual weakening of the constitution of the mind, the latter ceases to live and work and is dissociated forever from spirit or the self. It is then that the spirit shows forth in its own lonely splendor...

And the spirit is revealed as having splendor. It has a ‘self- shining which is unique.’ And
that is enlightenment.

Zen Buddhism is in fundamental agreement. Thus a Zen master, Rosen Takashina in 1954, advises us to be without thoughts. That is the secret of meditation:

It means to cut off at the root and source, all our discriminating fancies. If we really cut them off at the root, then of itself the freedom of thought will come, which means that our own true nature appears, and this is called enlightenment... the radiance of the Buddha heart breaks forth from ourselves. We come to know that the majesty of Buddha is our own majesty also.4

How meditation got into the western mystical tradition is a curious story. The key figure is the philosopher Plotinus [205-270 A.D.], a Greek speaking Egyptian who taught the Roman elite. He was interested in Indian thought, so he decided to go to India to find out more about it. To that end, he joined the military expedition of the emperor Gordianus against the Persians, but it was defeated in what is now Iraq, and Plotinus returned, with great difficulty, to Rome.

Recognizably Indian practices, especially deliberate mind emptying, figure importantly in his philosophy. In his great work, The Enneads, he advises his reader to ‘sever the agent [the self] from the instrument, the body’, which it does by eliminating ‘the desires that come by its too intimate commerce with the body, emancipated from all the passions, purged of all that embodiment has thrust upon it , withdrawn, a solitary, to itself again.’5

When you are ‘self gathered in the purity of your own being,’ you may notice a light not of a spatial nature:

When you find yourself wholly true to your essential nature, wholly that only veritable Light which is not measured by space, not narrowed to any circumscribed form nor again diffused as a thing void of term, but ever unmeasurable as something greater than all measure and more than all quantity...6

And there it is, all the way back to Hinduism. Plotinus was a ‘pagan’ i.e., he was not a Christian. His school was read by another pagan, Augustine of Hippo, who was interested in becoming a Christian, but was impeded by two intellectual difficulties, one of which was that he could form no idea of a spiritual, as opposed to a material, object. Their books solved that problem for him:

These books served to remind me to return to my own self...I entered the depths of my soul [and]...and saw the light that never changes casting its rays ...over my mind. It was not the common light of day that is seen by the eye of every living thing of flesh and blood, nor was it some more spacious light of the same sort, as if the light of day were to shine far, far brighter than it does and fill all space with its brilliance. What I saw was something quite different from any light we know on earth.7

As St. Augustine was by far the most influential of the Fathers of the Western Church, and as The Confessions are among the most accessible of his books, this passage ensured that meditation was transmitted to the western mystical tradition.

And it keeps on turning up. Thus in England, St Edmund Rich [1180-1240], an Archbishop of Canterbury, is instructing the soul on the third step of contemplation which is to strive to see two things ‘its Creator and His own nature’:

But the soul can never attain to this until it has learned to subdue every image, corporeal, earthly and celestial, to reject whatever may come to it through sight or sound or hearing or touch or taste or any other bodily sensation, and to tread it down, so that the soul may see what it itself is outside of its body.8

Plotinus lives in mediaeval England! And there are traces of him in Eckhart. In the twentieth century, Meister Eckhart [1260-1329], known to his contemporaries as ‘the man from
whom God hid nothing’, attracted two studies comparing him to eastern mystics: Rudolph Otto’s Mysticism East and West, and Suzuki’s Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist. Otto points to a position shared by Eckhart and the Indian mystic Sankara:

Thus withdrawn inwards, free from inclinations and attachments, stripped of all sense impressions and thoughts...the atman [inner self] shines forth in its own light as pure consciousness.9

When writing about Plotinus and Eckhart, it is customary to mention that they were neo-Platonists, as indeed they were. Both adopt the neo–Platonic metaphysical scheme of emanation from the One and return to it. Both use neo-Platonic concepts. But there is no special neo-Platonic experience. Insofar as neo-Platonism is experiential, it derives from meditation.

Finally, there is St. Teresa of Avila[1515-1582]. In some ways she is the most interesting of all western mystics, since she has the greatest variety of experiences. Here is the meditation component of her preparation:

The words of the Lord are like acts wrought in us, and so they must have produced some effect in those who were already prepared to put away from them everything corporeal and to leave the soul in a state of pure spirituality, so that it might be joined with Uncreated Spirit in this celestial union.10

One of St.Teresa’s experiences, a trance experience in which the body grows cold, has Western commentators scratching their heads. They recognize it in India. Thus Paramhansa Yogananda, in that challenging book, Autobiography of a Yogi:

[some] Christian saints have been able to enter the breathless and motionless trance [Sabilka Samadhi], without which no man can attain God perception...Among Christian mystics who have been observed in Sabilka Samadhi may be mentioned St Teresa of Avila, whose body would become so immovably fixed that the astonished nuns in her convent were unable to alter her position or to arouse her to outward consciousness.11

I conclude that meditation has been frequently used by western mystics. But for all that, it remains a side stream in western mysticism, the mainstream of which, is a mysticism of prayer. And the mystical experience attendant on that is an experience of God’s love. As a result of this experience, the mystics love God and the things of God, the world and the people in it, and want to do them good.12 Hence the experience inspires social action, which, it seems, the meditation experience identified by Dasgupta does not. However, it is possible to be both kinds of mystic, as St. Teresa was. Its lack of social import does not mean that meditation is without value, for it is capable of disclosing a spiritual reality, and that is of perennial value, especially in a materialistic society like ours.

It is noteworthy that meditation, as with the mysticism which depends on prayer, has, as a pre-requisite, careful attention to virtue, or, as we would now say, good character formation. Meditation can help prayerful mysticism in two ways. Firstly, the mental discipline which meditation develops can help in ridding prayer of that old bug-bear, distractions, and secondly, the inwardness which it fosters can help make prayer less superficial.

2. Ibid.p.80
3. Ibid p.81
6. Ibid. 1.6.8
12. A developed account of this may be found in my paper ‘Mysticism and the Kingdom of God’, this journal, 2010 No.2.
QUICK LOVING

The Prayer of Quiet in Teresa of Jesus

KERRIE HIDE

‘I sat in the silence and prayed; … then a veil lifted and I could see’ (Ps 73)

RAY. BE PRESENT to the presence of divine love. ‘Pray’ is a cry of the yearning heart. It is an expression of our deepest reality. We are human beings created in the ecstatic and tranquil embrace of the Trinitarian love that gives and receives love in an eternal making one. Created from the prayer of the Trinity, for prayer, we long to return to this source of infinite peace. This longing for the quiet of the Godhead is at the source of who we are. As our sacred scriptures identify, Jesus longed to go to a quiet place to rest a while with his God, (Mk 6:31). His followers begged ‘Lord teach us to pray’ (Lk11:1). Grounded in this same source, we are restless until we learn to ‘pray without ceasing’ (1Thes5:17). We yearn to be who we really are in ‘sighs too deep for words’ (Rom 8:26). ‘Pray’ is an evocation, a demand to be true, to fulfill the desire of Jesus that we be ‘consecrated in truth’ (Jn17:19), one (Jn17:21) in him as he is one in the infinite silence that spoke him into creation. ‘To pray’ is to surrender in love into a quiet that makes all things one. In this article we will reflect on how Teresa of Avila teaches us to pray.

When You Pray Go to Your Room

The foundational teaching about prayer uttered by Jesus ‘when you pray go to your room’ (Mt6:6) takes on a wonderful nuance in Teresa of Jesus, a doctor of the Church and one of the most celebrated guides for the spiritual journey. She blends together this invitation of Jesus for us to go into our heart and encounter him in the centre of the heart, and Jesus’ words: ‘in my Father’s house there are many dwelling places’ (Jn14:2). In her first book, The Book of Her Life Teresa describes prayer as ‘an intimate sharing between friends… taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us’ (L.8.5). This cherished friendship becomes more intimate as we are faithful to entering into our heart, into the inner rooms of our soul. In her Interior Castle, Teresa envisages the inner depths of our heart or soul as like a glorious, many roomed castle. She shows us how, through prayer, we enter the castle (C2.1.11), learn to turn our eyes towards the centre (C1.2.8) and take the great pilgrimage into the centre of the castle where Jesus, the majestic king of the castle dwells with the Trinity. Teresa stresses that all we need to do is ‘go into solitude and look at Him within oneself, and not turn away from so good a guest’ (P28.2). ‘I’m not asking you to do anything more than look at Him’ (P 26.3). In the measure you desire him you will find him (P28.3).

Teresa speaks to us in conversational style as she describes the castle as like ‘a diamond or very clear crystal’ (C1.1.1). It is ‘brilliantly shining and beautiful…a pearl from the orient, a tree of life planted in the very living waters of life—that is—in God’ (C1.2.1). Although inside the castle are many dwelling places, Teresa focuses on seven, a symbol for perfection. We journey through each dwelling place through contemplation in the prayer of quiet, until we reach the seventh dwelling place of the castle, or the centre of our soul, our home. This inner centre is full of light and love, as it is the dwelling place of the Trinity. In this silent centre of absolute love we commune with God in quiet in the secret silent language of love.
Before we focus on the prayer of quiet that prepares us to dwell in our deep inner centre, one in the quiet waters of Trinitarian love, it is helpful to have an overview of the seven dwelling places of The Interior Castle that Teresa illustrates and the prayer that accompanies each dwelling place. In the first three dwelling places of our soul that is like a many roomed castle, Teresa expounds on the early phases of meditation that prepare us for the prayer of quiet. She vividly describes how, though we choose time for prayer, the outer world has an alluring attraction. Because the courtyards are dark and confusing, creeping with the vermin of poisonous distractions, it can look safer for us not to take this journey to the centre and so remain busy with many things. If we step into the second dwelling place, however, there are chambers set apart for prayer. As we learn how to stay in these quiet places within, we hear the voice of Jesus inviting us to come. Desire increases. Prayer becomes more silent.

Teresa then outlines how once we begin to have a routine of prayer, and open the door into the third dwelling places, we cross a threshold. Though we may expect prayer to become more peaceful, because we must de-centre in order to re-centre in Jesus, prayer feels dry. An inner disquiet undermines certainties. Destabilized, there is a great temptation to seek consolations of the past, but no matter what we do, prayer no longer satisfies. In the confusion between a barren ache to have our thirst quenched in waters of love, and the pull to remain active in the world, Teresa advises compassion (C3:2.2). If, then, we compassionately surrender ourselves for the sake of our God, into the unknown way to the centre, faithful to prayer no matter how searing, and risk entering the unfamiliar fourth dwelling place, we begin a new phase of contemplation.

Midway to the centre of our soul, the fourth cycle of dwelling places, marks a major transition into contemplative prayer. This occurs, Teresa explains, because we are closer to where Jesus in the Trinity dwells in the centre. These beautiful fourth dwelling places are filled with things to see and understand, but they are delicate, so gracious, that the intellect cannot find a way to explain them. We begin to sense a loving presence far beyond the limits of sensual knowing and intellectual comprehension. Our desire to be one with the centre becomes stronger than external desires. We seek solitude and our capacity for recollecting matures. Recollection, Teresa explains, is the turning within to the presence of Christ in our soul’s depths, gathering together all discursive thought, gently drawing inward. ‘I have read where it is compared to a hedgehog curling up or a turtle drawing into its shell,’ (C4.3.3) she says. Recollection gradually deepens into the prayer of quiet that is like water gently flowing into our heart through a spring rising from our depths.

The extravagance of the treasures and delights of divine love saturate us in love in the fifth dwelling place, as we experience more absorption and union with God. We come to know irrevocably that God is in the depths of our soul and our soul is in God. There is a certitude remaining in the soul that only God can place there. Teresa uses the captivating image of the life cycle of a silk worm to describe the metamorphosis we experience as we prepare for union. She outlines how the little seed like eggs of the silk worm lie on the leaves of the mulberry tree. When warm weather comes: ‘they go about spinning the silk and making some very thick little cocoons in which they enclose themselves. The silkworm which
is fat and ugly, then dies and a little white butterfly, which is very pretty, comes forth from the cocoon.’ (C5.2.2) This transformation from a silk worm to a butterfly encapsulates for Teresa how, in order to reach the centre we must draw opposites together, integrate our memories, weaving and cocoon. The cocoon then transforms into Christ. ‘Once this silk-worm is grown … it begins to spin the silk and build the house wherein it will die. I would like to point out that this house is Christ…our life is hidden in Christ or in God…, or…our life is Christ’ (C5.2.5). This being hidden in Christ, dying in Christ, makes us Christ-like. When the butterfly emerges we are ready to enter the sixth dwelling place, until the butterfly dies again as we reach the centre. Prayer unfolds into a silent and still transforming union.

Knowing that ultimately our life is in Christ, in God we become betrothed to Christ as we enter the more silent atmosphere of sixth dwelling places that are very close to the centre. Intoxicated by the love of Christ our spouse, we now strive for more opportunities to be alone. We seek to rid ourselves of everything that is an obstacle to solitude. In Teresa’s words, ‘the beloved makes us desire vehemently by certain delicate means the soul itself doesn’t understand… These are impulses so delicate and refined, for they proceed from the very depth within the interior part of the soul.’ (C6.2.1). Teresa continues: ‘This action of love is so powerful that the soul dissolves with desire’ (C6.2.4). Teresa likens this to being enkindled in a brazier of God where a spark sets the soul aflame. Nevertheless, although this enflaming is delightful, because we are not yet totally enflamed, we feel the pain of the wound, for the purifying work of love is not complete. Teresa describes how ‘just as the soul is about to start, the spark goes out and the soul is left with the desire to suffer again the loving desire the spark causes.’ (C6.2.4). The intensity of pain and joy magnifies, nourishes and inspires. Now espoused, we are ready for the spiritual marriage.

Christ, then takes us to the centre into the seventh dwelling places, where the Holy Spirit enkindles us in the union of the spiritual marriage. In this oneness of all in all we become awakened to our capacity to live in the eternal now. We see irrevocably that the Trinity dwells within us in our deepest centre. There is no need to enter any more doors. We simply abide, surrendering into our beloved. Drawn into an infinite becoming one we experience the sublime secret of love and know we are one in the Trinity as the Trinity is one in us. With all our faculties now absorbed in intimate union in Christ, we come to see how in our centre we are infused in the Trinitarian pattern of giving and receiving love. We long to live permanently grounded in this centre of love. Teresa invites us to realize a real living presence of Christ in the Trinity in our soul and to live from this presence in the enkindling depths of Trinitarian union.

With this overview of Christ in the Trinity as the centre of our soul and the dwelling places that surround this centre, we will now concentrate on what Teresa teaches about how we may turn towards this presence and make our home there through the prayer of recollection, the prayer of quiet and the prayer of union that stabilizes our gaze in this centre. First, we will enter into the garden of our own soul and draw on our deep inner wisdom of our experience of the prayer of quiet. Then, we will focus on the waters of love that quench our thirst in the prayer of recollection and see how recollection unfolds into the overflowing love of the prayer of quiet. Subsequently, we will concentrate on the tranquil union we experience in contemplation when we come home to the centre of our soul one in the Trinity by looking at a person’s reflection on an experience of prayer. Finally we will draw out implications for living life from this centre of quiet love. We do this from a place of humility and gaze with Teresa through the mirror of humility. She warns: ‘Without it (humility) everything goes wrong’ (C1.2.8).
Teresa’s Way of Prayer: Bathing in Waters of Love

In order to awaken the eye of the heart of her readers, so that we, her readers, may identify with the felt sense of what Teresa teaches about prayer, Teresa uses her much loved simile of water (C4:2.2), to signify the flowing love of God within our soul. Vividly, she evokes our imagination to expand and hold together the array of biblical allusions to water such as a deer thirsting for running streams (Ps62), come to the water (Is55.1), the dark waters of Christ’s baptism (Mk1:9-11), the living water of the I am (Jn4:10), the healing waters of Bethzatha (Jn5:2), the river of life flowing from the throne of God (Rev22:1) and the beauty of fountains, streams, gardens and pools of the Spanish landscape. In the Way of Perfection she describes the journey into the Trinity as the spiritual road we take ‘until God engulfs the soul and gives it to drink abundantly of the fount of living water’ (P42.5).

We see how these waters of contemplation give life and bring us to union in her first book, Life, where Teresa describes the soul as a garden with Christ the gardener. She outlines four ways in which the garden of our soul is watered: ‘by taking the water from a well (See L11-13); or by a water-wheel and aqueducts (See L14-15), or by a stream or a brook (L16-17), or by heavy rain, when the Lord waters it with no labor of ours’ (L18-19). Teresa delights in these sweet life giving waters as she sings in her Soliloquies:

O compassionate and loving Lord of my soul!
You likewise say: Come to me all who thirst,
for I will give you drink…. (S9.1)
O life who gives life to all!
Do not deny me this sweetest water
That you promise to those who want it.
I want it Lord and I beg for it,
and I come to you.
Don’t hide yourself Lord, from me,
since you know my need
and that this water is the true medicine
for the soul wounded in love for you (S9.2).

Teresa awakens our desire to be quenched with the waters of divine love through contemplation, where all words become absorbed into the quiet waters of Trinitarian love.

Within this awareness of the waters of contemplation that flow through our soul drawing us to quiet, we will now focus more intently on what Teresa teaches us about the Prayer of Quiet and the phases of recollection, quiet and union.

1. Being Quenched in Quiet Waters—The Prayer of Recollection

Teresa’s way of prayer is one of presence, of being fully present to God in our prayer, just as God is fully present to us. She teaches us how to be present within, to gaze upon Christ who dwells in our heart. Her teaching about recollection gives us a way of silencing our body, our mind, our soul, beginning with the outer world and moving within, from body to spirit to the inner depths of our soul. For Teresa, recollection is a collecting together or knitting all our senses into a single thread, to focus the gaze of our heart on Christ who dwells in our centre. At the beginning of this journey to the centre, recollection feels like carrying water with a bucket. Teresa explains how this involves a lot of work on our part, and we tire easily. It takes patience and time to ‘get accustomed to caring nothing about seeing or hearing, to practicing hours of prayer and thus to solitude and withdrawl’ (L11.9), she says. Act like a wise bee and enter the beehive to make honey and leave the intellect to wander aimlessly alone, (L15.6) she advises. As we have seen, in her Interior Castle, Teresa also likens recollection to a hedgehog curling up or a turtle drawing into its shell (C4.3.3). In the Way of Perfection, Teresa explains how in recollection, ‘the soul collects its faculties together and enters within itself to be with its God’ (P 28.4). She qualifies how this; ‘is not a silence of the faculties; it is an enclosure of the faculties in the soul’ (P 29.4) It is a closing and enclosing. This closing and enclosing awakens the spiritual sight of the eye of our soul, (See P 28) as in...
Ephesians (1:18) ‘may the eyes of your soul be enlightened’. Through recollecting we come to be comfortable and at home within our soul.

As time passes, the prayer of recollection feels more like Teresa’s second water of prayer, where we now turn the crank of a water wheel with our arms to draw water up from the well. The water then flows through aqueducts into our heart. Earlier in her Life, Teresa likens this phase of the prayer of quiet to water being driven by a waterwheel, emphasizing how the prayer of quiet is a gift of infused grace and cannot be attained by our efforts alone. In this prayer:

the water is higher and so labour is much less than that required in pulling it up from the well. I mean that the water is closer because grace is more clearly manifest to the soul. In this prayer the faculties are gathered within so as to enjoy the satisfaction with greater delight. But they are not lost, nor do they sleep. Only the will is occupied, in such a way that, without knowing it, it becomes captive; it merely consents to God allowing him to imprison it as one who well knows how to be the captive of its lover. Oh Jesus and my Lord! How valuable is your love to us here! It holds our love so bound that it doesn’t allow it the freedom during that time to love anything else but You (L14.2).

The water flows gently with very little work on our part. And we obtain more water. It is as if our senses are acting like channels, where grace can flow gently and freely enabling the water of contemplation to saturate the soul. As recollection becomes more organic, with silence and stillness naturally flowing through our sensual faculties of seeing, smelling, touching, tasting and listening, into the spiritual senses of our soul, we become centered in Christ and filled with his love. We are bound and captivated by his love. Once recollection becomes natural and we gather together our faculties and enclose them in our soul as a matter of course, very subtle changes begin to take place, until our mind and heart become more and more silent and still, infused in loving presence. The prayer of recollection unfolds into the prayer of quiet.12

2. Over-flowing Love—The Prayer of Quiet

The waters of love overflowing and infusing our soul in love through commitment to the prayer of recollection, soften the soil in the garden of our heart and prepare us to allow Jesus the gardener to take full charge of our soul. This prepares the way for the third way of collecting water that Teresa portrays in Life, where our soul is watered by a river or spring. Here the waters of grace rise up to the throat of our soul because we are no longer moving (L16.1). She then mixes her images and says how this deeper more all encompassing quiet is like ‘a person holding a candle and for whom little is left before dying the death that is desired’ (L16.1). The quiet is so quiet that we feel dead to anything that would disturb us. In her Interior Castle, Teresa likens the quality of this quiet to being like a cistern being filled noisely by a spring rising from its depths. The trough fills and overflows with water until it forms a large stream (C4.2.3). Prayer feels like being quietly filled with waters of love from the infinite source of the grace within us, without any effort on our behalf. This filling to overflowing occurs when our senses and spirit are recollected over the divine dwelling place within us. Teresa explains:

The water comes from its own source which is God… And since his Majesty desires to do so …he produces this delight with the greatest peace and quiet and sweetness in the very interior part of ourselves. …the delight fills everything; this water overflows through all the dwelling places and faculties until reaching the body. (C4.2.4)

This inflow of divine love imbues us in quiet. Soaked in these quiet waters of love we experience peace, calm, and sweetness penetrating within and without. These rising waters of encircling presence imbue us in quiet, as their love captures our desire for God in such a way that we long to be imprisoned in solitude with the one we love. As the quiet of infinite silence, stillness and rest of the Creative One intoxicates our will and breathes life,
beauty and connection into the chaos of depthless abyss, we seek more time for prayer. In the quiet the soothing stirrings of the waters of divine love, whose ecstatic loving culminates in rest, makes us tranquil and serene. These still waters fill and expand as they dilate our being and make us one with God.

Teresa gives a more formal definition of the prayer of quiet in the *Way of Perfection:*13

…the soul enters into peace or, better, the Lord puts it at peace by his presence…all the faculties are calmed. The soul understands in another way, very foreign to the way of the exterior senses, that it is now close to its God and that not much more would be required for it to become one with him in union. This is not because it sees him with the eyes either of the body or of the soul… the soul fails to understand how it understands, but it sees that it is in the kingdom at least near the King who will give the kingdom to the soul…The state resembles an interior and exterior swoon (P 31.2).

Notice how both descriptions stress that this inflow of the grace of quiet contemplation is a gift, bestowed by the presence of Christ. This presence floods us in waters of contemplation and we experience peace, a peace the world cannot give. Teresa explains: ‘The faculties are still. They wouldn’t want to be busy. …The will is the one who is captive here…. The intellect wouldn’t want to understand more than one thing, nor would the memory want to be occupied with anything else’ (P31.3). When we are quiet for a long time our will is united with God. Our desire and the divine desire become fused, as one (P31.4). Very close to God in quiet we are as we are. And this fusion of desire joins our active and contemplative dimensions, the Martha and Mary of ourselves into harmony (P31.5). The quiet overflows into our life in all that we are and all that we do. The one thing necessary for us is simply to be present, as we surrender into the quiet waters of love. Our detachment from all that disturbs, scatters and separates as we surrender into love, begins to blind the eye of our soul. We become intuitively aware in our spirit that this infinite source of quiet really is in the depths of our own soul.

In her *Meditations on the Song of Songs* Teresa extols the silent music of this quiet: ‘I call this prayer ‘quiet’ she says, because ‘of the calm caused in all the faculties…it’s as though there were poured into the marrow of one’s bones a sweet ointment with a powerful fragrance…God enters the soul and does so with the most wonderful sweetness. God pleases it and makes it happy (MSg4.2). The quiet seeps into the marrow of our bones and transforms us. Teresa continues to describe how we feel left suspended in the divine arms, leaning on that sacred side of those divine breasts. (MSg4.4). We feel ‘completely drenched in the countless grandeur of God’ (MSg4.4). Calm, intoxicated by divine fragrance, drenched through and through in quiet, our Beloved is preparing us for union.

Teresa speaks of her third water of prayer which identifies later phases of the prayer of quiet as like flowing water from a river or stream whereby:

the garden is irrigated, with much less labour, although some labour is required to direct the flow of the water. The Lord so desires to help the gardener that he himself practically becomes the gardener and the one who does everything. This prayer is a sleep of the faculties: the faculties neither fail entirely to function nor understand how they function. The consolation, the sweetness, and the delight are incomparably greater than that experienced in the previous prayer. The water of grace rises up to the throat of this soul since such a soul can no longer move forward; nor does it know how, nor can it move backward. It would desire to enjoy the greatest glory (L16.1).

This is a deep, wide all-encompassing quiet where we are content to allow Christ to be the gardener and to respond to his intimate presence as he tends our soul. In her *Interior Castle* Teresa quotes: *Dilatasti cor meum* ‘You have expanded my heart’ (C4.2.5)14 to explain. These boundless waters of grace originate from the deepest inner centre of our heart, expand our heart and flood us in joy. Teresa emphasizes how this spring is not outside our self
but rises from somewhere, deeper than the heart, ‘from another part still more interior, as from something deep. I think this must be the centre of the soul’ (C4.2.5), she says. Notice how the placement of the spring is deep within us not outside us. The sleeping of our faculties creates a stillness that opens and leaves the spring free to flow. The centre is beginning to be firmly established in us.

This dilation occurs, Teresa explains: ‘because the heavenly water begins to rise from the spring...that is deep within us, it swells and expands our whole interior being, producing ineffable blessings.’ (C4.2.6). We do not understand how or why, but we experience a fragrance ‘as though there were in our interior a brazier giving off sweet smelling perfumes. No light is seen, nor is the place seen where the brazier is; but the warmth and the fragrant fumes spread through the entire soul...and even... the body shares in them’ (C4.2.6). Waters of grace flow in, and then out of our soul, intoxicating us in the divine fragrance. Dark, fragrant, warm, love quietens. Teresa is speaking metaphorically, of course, to impart to us the spiritual delight that we experience when our will is completely absorbed in the spring of divine love.

This quiet affects our whole being and flows to the outer courtyards of our whole bodily demeanor. As our will becomes more captivated by Christ our memory and mind also are inebriated until recollection infuses all that is scattered in us into union and we passively allow the gardener of our soul to care for the garden. If our mind becomes distracted like doves flitting around a fountain we gently recollect and draw it to the source of the fountain. Teresa observes how the soul no longer desires to ‘undertake any labour, but only to take its delight in the first fragrance of the flowers. In any one of these visits, brief as its duration may be, the Gardener, being, as He is, the Creator of the water, gives the soul water without limit’ (P27). All we are invited to do is receive the gift and dwell in the quiet.

The limitless waters of the ever loving Creator transform, unite and expand our vision and become womb-like as they enable transforming union. The quiet is more all consuming, until it feels like our heart is awake but we are asleep. Teresa explains in this union our faculties:

... are asleep... - truly asleep - fast asleep, to the things of the world and to ourselves. As a matter of fact, during the time that the union lasts the soul is left as though without its senses, for it has no power to think even if it wants to. In loving, if it does love, it doesn’t understand how or what it loves or what it would want. In sum it is one who in every respect has died to the world so as to live more completely in God. Thus the death is a delightful one (C5.1.3).

This quiet of sleep, this delicious death, this absorption in God is so all encompassing that it is as if we are not breathing. All our faculties are suspended feeling nothing but an infusion in God. Our seeing becomes naked, dark, blind spirit seeing. Dead in Christ we belong entirely to God. This is the death of the silkworm dying to old ways of relating in order to form a cocoon. This death marks a turning point in shifting our vision and energy into the centre.

3. Tranquil Waters—Union in the Trinity

The gradual surrendering of all that we are into the total love of the gardener of our soul unfolds into the mystical marriage. In Life Teresa elucidates: ‘It’s like the experience of two persons here on earth who love each other deeply and understand each other well; even without signs, just by a glance, it seems, they understand each other’ (L27.10). Notice how this is a mutual glance between two lovers, not a one way glance. Well beyond the eyes of our body, or soul, this glance unites and melts. It soaks through us to the core of who we are. It is like Teresa’s fourth water of prayer where we are saturated in rain from heaven:

This water from heaven often comes when the gardener is least expecting it. True, in the beginning it almost always occurs after a long period of mental prayer. The Lord comes to take this tiny bird from one degree to another and to replace it in the nest so it may have repose. Since
he has seen it flying about for a long time, striv-
ing with the intellect and the will and all its
strength to see God and please Him, He desires
to reward it even in this life. And what a tre-
mendous reward; one moment it is enough to
repay all the trials that can be suffered in life!
(L18.9).

It is God’s pleasure to rain grace on us, to
saturate us in divine love. In response, we be-
come God’s pleasure, God’s delight, God’s joy.
The beauty and delight of this rain that cre-
ates union ‘removes the scale from the soul’s
eyes and lets it see and understand, although
in a strange way’ (C7.2.6), Teresa says. This
way of seeing seems strange because it is be-
yond images, beyond thought. It is being illu-
minated in divine loving in a light, lighter than
sunlight, in an enlightenment.16 We receive
the gift of this way of seeing when our spirit is
enkindled, set fire to by the living flame of the
Holy Spirit. This way of soul seeing with an
enkindled spirit frees us to see the indwelling
of the Trinity at home in the centre of our soul.
Teresa says:

First there comes an enkindling of the spirit in
the manner of a cloud of magnificent splendor;
and these persons are distinct, and through an
admirable knowledge the soul understands as a
most profound truth that all three persons are
one substance and one power and one knowl-
dge and one God alone. It knows in such a
way that what we know by faith, it understands,
we can say, through sight – although the sight
is not with the bodily eyes nor with the eyes of
the soul, because we are not dealing with an
imaginative vision. Here all three persons com-
municate themselves to it, speak to it, and ex-
plain these words of the Lord in the Gospel:
that Christ and God and the Holy Spirit will
come to dwell with the soul that loves and keeps
the commandments (7.1.6).

Notice the enkindling of our spirit that is si-
lent, still and quiet and yet dynamic. Once our
faculties know how to sleep, the Holy Spirit
sets fire to our spirit, enkindling our vision. In
our spirit we know we are being ‘consecrated
in truth’. This seeing Teresa qualifies is not
with our bodily eyes, nor the eyes of our soul,
but with enkindled spiritual eyes. We are en-
lightened and see the truth of who we are. Our
vision is now lost in the vision of Holy Spirit,
the one who enflames and enkindles love be-
tween the Father and the Son. Teresa identi-
fies the magnificent splendor of this vision of
oneness as an intellectual vision. An intellec-
tual vision is not so much knowing, but the
wisdom of unknowing. It is an experience of
transcendence beyond the limits of the mind
that imparts oneness. It is seeing with an ‘en-
kindled spirit’ light beyond light. Her fourfold
repetition of ‘one’ is significant. It echoes of
the great prayer of Jesus ‘Father, may they be
one as I am in you and you are in me’
(Jn17:17). ‘One’ in this gracious enkindling,
we realize we participate in this living flame
of one love. The fruit of this oneness is an ir-
revocable sense of being one in Christ, in a
way that we can never be separated, in
Trinitarian love.

Hauntingly, Teresa illustrates how in the
spiritual marriage, in the secret centre of the
soul, Christ appears, delicately without enter-
ing any doors. With echoes of the resurrected
Christ appearing to the disciples through
locked doors in John’s gospel, it is if he says
‘peace be with you’. In Teresa’s words:

What God communicates here to the soul in an
instant is a secret so great and a favor so sub-
lime—and the delight the soul experiences so
extreme—that I don’t know what to compare it
to. I can say only that the Lord wishes to reveal
for that moment in a more sublime manner than
through any spiritual vision or taste, the glory
of heaven. One can say no more—in so far as it
can be understood—than that the soul, I mean
the spirit, is made one with God’ (C7.2.3).

This dark, secret love imparts oneness in the
quiet centre of our soul where no disturbances
can reach. She further elaborates in some of
the later writing of her Spiritual Testimonies
about this enkindling union:

My soul began to enkindle, and it seemed to
me I knew clearly in an intellectual vision that
the entire Blessed Trinity was present. In this
state my soul understood by a certain kind of
representation (like an illustration of the truth),
in such a way that my dullness could perceive,
how God is three and one (ST13.1).

Teresa’s enkindled soul knows that she is participating in Trinitarian presence. She continues:

And so it seemed to me that all three Persons were represented distinctly in my soul and that they spoke to me, telling me that from this day I would see an improvement in myself in respect to three things and that each one of these Persons would grant me a favor: one, the favor of charity; another, the favor of being able to suffer gladly; and the third, the favor of experiencing this charity with an enkindling in the soul (ST13.1).

Enkindled in Trinitarian oneness, Teresa hears silent words in one love giving her the gift of love, a capacity to suffer, and to experience all things with an enkindling in her soul. These are not fleeting gifts but lasting patterns of Trinitarian loving fixed, engraved, imprinted in her soul. Now she knows that we can never be separated from this quiet and yet dynamic inter-relationship of love. Teresa affirms this ongoing presence: ‘Each day this soul becomes more amazed, for these persons never seem to leave it anymore, but it clearly beholds ‘that they are within it. In the extreme interior, in some place very deep within itself, the nature of which it doesn’t know how to explain’ (IC7.1.8). Teresa is conclusive. The Trinity dwells within the inner depths of our soul.

The Trinity at home in the centre of our soul is no passing vision, but the gift of an habitual awareness of this loving Trinitarian presence. Once we return to our quiet one source of love, the enkindling of the spiritual marriage imparts a new and distinctly Trinitarian appreciation of God, humanity and creation. Teresa uses a whole array of glorious metaphors to describe this one presence:

Let me say this union is like the joining of two wax candles to such an extent that the flame coming from them is one, or that the wick, the flame, and the wax are all one. But after that one candle can be easily separated from the other and there are two candles; the same holds for the wick (IC7.2.4).

Not two flames but one enkindled flame of love, one in the Trinity. We belong in them and yet are truly ourselves. She mentions the rain again: ‘In the spiritual marriage the union is like what we have when the rain falls from the sky into the river or fount; all is water, for the rain that fell from heaven cannot be divided or separated from the water of the river. Or it is like what we have when a little stream enters the sea, there is no means of separating the two’ (C7.2.4). This Trinitarian life is like water fusing into water. Furthermore, it is ‘like a bright light entering a room through different windows; although the streams of light are separate when entering the room (C7.2.4). In her Testimony she adds: ‘I have experienced this presence of the three Persons...They are very habitually present in my soul...It seemed to me there came the thought of how a sponge absorbs and is saturated with water; so, I thought, was my soul which was overflowing with that divinity and in a certain way rejoicing within itself and possessing the three Persons’ (ST 14). Each colourful metaphor imparts a maturing sense of fusion and infusion, in one relational Trinitarian union. On in this mystical marriage, everything now takes place with such quiet and so noiselessly that prayer seems as if we are building the temple of Solomon without a sound. We rejoice in the deepest silence (C7.3.11), Teresa affirms. Trinitarian oneness creates the deepest of deep silence. This pure quiet is cause for rejoicing.

Teresa emphasizes the habitual presence of the Trinity, when in the past she was usually accustomed only to the presence of Jesus. Wondering about the obstacles in her that prevented her living from this Trinitarian awareness, Teresa hears silent words of love resounding in her soul, ‘Don’t try to hold Me within yourself, but try to hold yourself within Me’ (T14). Teresa is identifying an important transition time where mutual reciprocal love comes into our awareness. This shifts our vision. We hold and behold ourselves held in the being of the Godhead, we no longer have the vision of the ego, the butterfly dies in Christ and Christ holds us in the Trinity. Held in the
Trinity our vision is one of alling, of union of communion of all things in the Trinity. Teresa says: ‘It seemed to me that from within my soul—where I saw these three Persons present—these persons were communicating themselves to all creation without fail, nor did they fail to be with me’ (ST 14). Teresa now realizes the mutuality of indwelling presence. Her great pilgrimage to the centre of her soul into the dwelling place of the Trinity imparts an awareness of her soul in the Trinity. Significantly the infusing waters of divine love are intimately part of her life and at the same time are communicating with all creation ceaselessly. This infusing, quiet, all embracing enkindling love holds us personally and communally and cosmically eternally.

**Living from the Centre of Quiet**

Teresa’s teaching about union with God, through her ever revealing image of water has so much to offer our world today, especially when we are so aware of the precious commodity of water. Although there are many wonderful implications for her way of prayer that can quench the thirst of our contemporary culture to learn how to meditate and contemplate, I wish to highlight four: the implications of living a prayer of quiet, of taking the journey to the centre, of living with an enkindled soul and sharing in the fullness of union with God.

• **Living a Prayer of Quiet.** Silence, serenity, calm, quiet are the gifts we receive as the mystery of our intimacy with Christ who dwells in the centre of our heart unfolds. A quiet that is the quiet of God. And as we enter into this quiet through our daily practice of prayer what we discover is that human beings are intrinsically quiet and peaceful. We all have our existential scream, the scream that has its source in our personal communal and cosmic roots and so often we resist coming to quiet for fear of what this scream may mean. Contemplation takes us beyond the scream. It soothes and quiets the scream and transforms it into a cry of love. Ultimately when we bring the gaze of our spirit to rest on the point of oneness in our centre we encounter intimately silent, unitive love. We awaken to the presence of the infinitely silent divine as the source of our soul, that floods us in quiet waters of love. Contemplative prayer prepares, softens, opens and frees us to receive this contemplative gift.

• **Taking the Journey to the Centre.** Teresa enlightens us. She sparks our imagination and enables us to envisage the journey to the centre of our soul as a glorious frolic through a mysteriously dark, and illuminatingly light, many roomed crystal like palace. She takes us on this journey step by step and shows us how to recollect and become focused in our desire, our gaze, and our actions to contemplate and be infused in the living waters of contemplation. She shows us how to follow the stirrings of love, to take the way of the cross, and like a silk worm who dies only to be reborn as a delicate white moth, to die to all that blinds and scatters so we may be permanently at home in our centre where our Beloved dwells. In this centre all is one. All is infused and fused in love. Time and eternity, dark and light, male and female become one. All that scatters and conflicts is unified in a harmonious oneness. We are one in a love that is pure, strong and serene. The centre then, by its very nature is perfectly silent, still, quiet and at the same time has a centrifugal force that enables us to return to the edges of life and be a point of quiet in lonely, disturbed and wounded humanity. Only one who has journeyed to the centre and dwelt in the embrace of the Beloved in quiet, can truly be ‘active’ and activate awareness of the indwelling presence in human lives.

• **Living with an Enkindled Soul.** Teresa shows us how, through our union in Christ who dwells in our centre, our soul is enkindled and transformed to see from the perspective of the one enkindled vision of the Trinity. Teresa shows us how to enkindle the eye of our soul through the prayer of recollection and quiet that organically imparts union in our bodily eyes, the eyes of our soul, the eyes of our spirit.
This enkindled vision is bound to the love of the Spirit that unites the three persons of the Trinity. This vision sees unity and oneness. It always looks with eyes of love. An enkindled soul lives in harmony with the loving of the Trinity. Our lives carry the perfume of the divine breath, our words flow from the centre of quiet, our actions are in rhythm with the gentle inter-relating of divine loving. We do not take breath to try to salvage our stressed ego, but rather enhance the life of each other. We live full to overflowing with waters of grace, intoxicated in love, quiet in demeanor, imparting peace wherever we are.

**• Sharing in the Fullness of Union with God.** Teresa shows us how we experience being in the presence of the living God who transforms us into union. Every person has existence within this divine life and reality. She draws us into the centre of our heart to encounter the presence of Christ who in the intimacy of mystical union awakens our inner eye to the presence of the Trinity. Then she awakens us to the birth of an even more unifying breaking through awareness that we are held in the divine life. We come to realize that God not only dwells within us but we dwell within the ever tranquil and ever dynamic life of the Trinity. We are held in that life and receive breath from the intimacy of their loving. Held in this oneness, it becomes violent to flip back into an ego centre. Held and beheld in love we are quiet, stable and serene. We discover that God is a Trinity of relating, so intimately present, we experience this presence in contemplation. Teresa emphasizes how the Trinity is ‘habitually’ present, reliably and consistently present. And this presence feels like her heart is a sponge absorbed and saturated with water, so much so that she feels her soul overflowing with divinity. This great overflow of divine love infusing her transforms her. It imbibes her in eternal joy.

Teresa gives us permission to be infused in these same saturating waters of love and to become an expression of the overflow of divine grace in our world. Our soul must be flooded in living water full and overflowing from the waters of contemplation of the Trinity. Only a full heart can share the truth of who we are in God. We organically participate in a loving relationship that is one and three. To be one and at the same time relational is intrinsic to what it means to be human. Awareness of oneness in being as the ground that hold us and the energy that gives life to us has enormous implications for the ecological crisis and world peace. May we become a waterfall of divine peace. And in Teresa’s words:

> Let nothing disturb you,  
> Let nothing affright you,  
> for everything passes  
> And God is unchanging  
> Through Patience  
> all things are obtained,  
> who holds fast to God  
> finds nothing is lacking.  
> God solely suffices.  

2. Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada was born in 1515 and died in 1582. She was canonized in 1622 and made the first woman Doctor of the Church in 1970. Teresa was a Christian of Jewish descent through her grandfather, who was a *converso*, a Jewish convert to Catholicism. She joined the Carmelite convent of the Incarnation at Avila and after 27 years when she was 47 began a reform, returning to the Primitive Rule of the Carmelites, the observances of the ancient Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, which dated back to the 12th century. Her reform emphasized a return to simplicity, with time for contemplative prayer. The first new house, dedicated to St Joseph, was established in Avila in 1562. By the time of Teresa’s death in October 1582, she had founded fourteen more houses.
3. Teresa mainly uses the word ‘soul’ rather than ‘heart’. ‘Heart’ in this context is our soul place where we are one with God.
of the contemplative ascent to God. Francisco
where he identified recollection as the first stage
and Gregory the Great's
in The Life of Anthony, Augustine's
10. Recollection has a long tradition described
7. In the
62.
her last and her most celebrated work, when she is
9.
[God] can do' (ST 24).
8. Teresa explains that 'humility... is an important
aspect of prayer and indispensable for all person
who practice it’ (P 17.1). She stresses: 'This is true
humility: to know what you can do and what I
[God] can do” (ST 24).
10. Recollection has a long tradition described
in The Life of Anthony, Augustine’s Confession
and Gregory the Great’s Homilies on Ezekiel,
where he identified recollection as the first stage
of the contemplative ascent to God. Francisco
Osuna, a Spanish Franciscan, who gives one of
the fullest treatment of recollection in his Spiritual Alphabet, influenced Teresa in her develop-
ment of recollection. He describes recollection
as the calming needed in our intellect,
memory and will if we are to attend to the image
of Christ within. Teresa acknowledges her in-
debtédness to de Osuna, (cf. L4). The Way of
Perfection, Chapters 28 and 29 deal mainly with
recollection.
11. In the tradition of Augustine the higher facul-
ties of the soul are memory, understanding and will
where the image of the Trinity dwells in the soul
Cf. De Trinitate XIV.
12. This invitation does not mean, however, that
we give up meditating and reading scripture at other
times in the day. Teresa would always have kept
saying the Liturgy of the Hours for example.
13. Chapters 31 and 32 of the Way of Perfection
give the most detailed description of the prayer of
quiet.
14. This is a reference to Confessions of St August-
ine, X.
15. Teresa acknowledges the influence of
Bernardino de Laredo, the author of The Ascent of
Mount Zion, for her development of the prayer of
union, (cf. L23). In Pt.111 ChXIX he speaks of
up-lifting our mind and remaining in pure love
without any thought, raised on the wings of love
united with God. He encourages sleep in quiet con-
templation in quiet silence.
16. Teresa follows Augustine De Genesi ad Litteram who distinguishes three kinds of visions:
intellectual, imaginative and corporeal. Cf. L27.3
for a summary of corporeal, seen with bodily eyes,
imaginative, seen with the eyes of the soul, and
intellectual visions. She says of an intellectual
vision: ‘I see with the eyes of neither the body nor
the soul…. It is not like those who are blind or in
dark… the vision is represented through knowl-
dge given to the soul that is clearer than sunlight.
I don’t mean that you see the sun or brightness…
but that the light without your seeing light, illumes
the intellect so that the soul may enjoy such a great
good. The vision bears with it wonderful bless-
ings’ (L27.3).
17. Flame of Love. Poems of the Spanish Mystics. San Juan De La Cruz Santa Teresa De Je-
sus. Translated by Loren G. Smith. New York:
Paulist Press, 93.
PART ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE READINGS

The following is a brief overview of the Liturgy of the Word for major celebrations proclaimed from the readings for Sundays between January and April, from the Feast of the Epiphany to Easter Sunday. Please feel free to use or adapt these reflections, with the customary acknowledgement of source.

Before Lent

Our selection in this period opens with the feast of Epiphany of Jesus, the ‘manifestation’ (ἐπίφανεια in Greek) of Jesus to the world. Rather than focussing on the historical or literal event of a star and its guidance of foreign magi to Jesus, in the early centuries this feast was so important that it outshone even Christmas. The Epiphany is the celebration of the universality of Jesus for a world in need of direction and spiritual nourishment. Epiphany is eternally relevant.

After the celebration of the Epiphany of Jesus (Jan 2) and with the beginning of Lent in early March and therefore later than other years, we are able to celebrate the first nine Sundays of Ordinary Time (OT). OT 1 is always the feast of the Baptism of Jesus (Jan 9). This feast provides an opportunity to celebrate the gift of baptism and renew its call to a leadership of the baptised in our Church. The renewal of baptismal vows and recommitment to ground all ministry in baptism is important in faith communities looking to renew leadership and ministry. All ecclesial ministry, including presbyteral and episcopal, is grounded in baptism.

In the following Sundays of OT (OT 3-9) leading to Lent we follow the opening Chapters of Matthew’s Gospel where Jesus calls his disciples (OT 3) and teaches them (OT 4-9). The themes of the gospel over these Sundays echo and continue in their unique way the call to discipleship celebrated through baptism. The second readings over these Sundays are from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. Paul’s struggle with the divided Corinthian followers of Jesus reveals his passion to have them come to unity, guided by the spirit and wisdom of Jesus. Similar tensions exist in our churches today. Paul’s insights continue to speak into our world.

Lent

1. The First readings over the Sundays of Lent are important opportunities to celebrate the sacred story of Israel’s relationship with God as witnessed through its Scriptures. There is no need to ‘Christianise’ them. They were the Bible readings which Jesus himself would have listened to. The First Testament readings in March and April during Lent are chosen to illustrate and reflect upon some of the most important religious stories and moments that formed God’s people: The mythological story that deals with the cause of evil (Lent 1), the call of Abram (Lent 2), Israel’s wandering in the desert (Lent 3), the anointment of King David (Lent 4) and God’s promise to bring Israel back from Exile (Lent 5).

2. The Second Reading over Lent allows us
to celebrate essential truths about our relationship with Jesus (Lent 1 and 2), God (Lent 3 and 4), and the Spirit (Lent 5) taken from the Pauline literature. Lent 1, 3 and 5 come from Paul’s important letter to the Romans. The other Lent Sundays are letters written by Paul’s disciples (2 Tim, Eph). Each of the selections is relevant for the respective Lenten theme celebrated.

3. The Gospel readings during the Lenten period are either from Matthew or John (a gospel composed in the late first and early second centuries to an ethnically and theologically diverse community with a rich religious history).

- Lent 1 and 2 conventionally look at the stories of Jesus’ temptation and transfiguration. In both stories in Mt, Jesus is portrayed as a faithful Jew, committed to God in the midst of temptation and struggle. The highlight of Mt’s gospel proclamation comes on Passion Sunday and Easter, with the story of Jesus passion, death and resurrection. Jesus dies as king, and God raises him to life.
- Lent 3-5 focus on important stories from John’s Gospel. These help us reflect on the journey of faith. They raise the key themes and questions of our Christian lives: For what do we thirst? (Lent 3—The woman at the well) What drives and enlightens us? (Lent 4—he man born blind) What gives us life? (Lent 5—The story of Lazarus). These gospel themes are particularly pertinent to those candidates journeying through Lent and preparing themselves for full initiation into the Christian community in the Easter vigil.

A final word about the Easter Gospel (April 23 and 24), the final gospel of this present selection. This is the most important gospel proclamation of the whole liturgical year. Matthew portrays the resurrection of Jesus as an event of victory in the face of evil and human machinations. Political power and military might, symbolised by the presence of the guards posted at the entrance of the tomb, are unable to prevent God’s action. This is an important and necessary truth we need to hear today, in a world and church entrapped by political power and might. God is the heart of everything and Matthew’s risen Jesus is testament to this fundamental truth.

PART TWO: NOTES ON THE READINGS

Jan 2, 2011—Epiphany of Jesus: Is 60:1-6. God’s light shines on creation and humanity. This makes a difference to how our world is perceived. Eph 3:2-3.5-6. The mystery of God’s universal and hospitable love means that we share in God’s life. Mt 2:1-12. The wise follow the stars; their eyes are on the heavens, their ear to the Scriptures and their desire on Jesus. Theme—Being Enlightened. At the core of every person is the inner light of God. We affirm our search for God and the way we draw close to God through Jesus. Epiphany is a continuous feast (however unrecognised) in the heart of every human being. Can we identify its manifestation today in the lives of those we know?

Jan 9—Baptism of Jesus: Is 42:1-4, 6-7 God delights in the Servant who brings liberation to the disconsolate. Acts 10:34-38. Peter acclaims to Cornelius’ Roman household that Jesus is God’s baptised and anointed one. All people, no matter their social or ethnic background, belong to God. Mt 3:13-17. Jesus is baptised and declared ‘beloved’. Theme—Being Beloved. In a world of turmoil, this celebration offers an opportunity for the baptised community to remember and celebrate its ‘belovedness.’ God delights in us. This is an important moment to name who God is for us, and we for God, especially when contrary voices seem to dominate.

Jan 16—Ordinary Time (OT) 2: Is 49:3, 5-6. The mission of God’s Servant chosen one is to restore a broken and dispersed people. 1 Cor 1:1-3. This is the beginning of a famous letter, in which the Corinthian Christians are reminded of their call to sainthood, and their relationship to God and Jesus. Jn 1:29-34. John the Baptist recognises Jesus
as the chosen one and possessor of God's Spirit. 

Theme—Spirit Possessed: Our communion with Jesus through baptism and Eucharist reminds us that we, like Jesus, possess the Spirit of God. We are called, like the Servant, to proclaim restoration and hope to people.

Jan 23—OT 3: Is 9:1-4. A beautiful poem of God's overwhelming vision for humanity: light, peace and freedom in the midst of oppression. 1 Cor 1:10-13.17-18. Paul addresses the problem at Corinth of division. The true source of unity is Jesus, the Good News. Mt 4:12-23. Jesus' presence and ministry echoes the Is reading of liberation. Jesus calls his first community of disciples. Theme—Liberation and Hope: The hope expressed in the vision of Isaiah in the first reading touches our deepest desires. Mt's Jesus expresses this as he calls his first disciples. How is our local faith community an expression of that hope and liberty, of Isaiah's vision?

Jan 30—OT 4: Zeph 2:3; 3:12-13. The humble are invited to seek God. They are God's true people. 1 Cor 1:26-31. Society's rejected and foolish ones reveal the power of God evident in Jesus, God's wisdom. Mt 5:1-12. Jesus speaks the essential qualities ('Beatitudes') at the heart of discipleship. Theme—Humility: Humility is not about putting ourselves down or allowing others to walk over us. It is the truthful realisation of who are before God: we are people of the earth ('humilis' Latin, 'earth') in communion with all people and creatures. Living by such an attitude opens us up to the power and action of God, which makes us 'blessed.'

February 6—OT 5: Is 58:7-10. The prophet reminds his people of the essentials of religious practice: justice and alleviation of poverty. 1 Cor 2:1-5. Paul preaches not from an elitist position, but with sensitivity to God's Spirit. Mt 5:13-16. Disciples are salt and light to the world. Theme—Commitment to the World: God's presence to the world is revealed through committed disciples who are people of justice, peace, light and truth. Several examples of such commitment abound in our faith communities.

February 13—OT 6: Sir 15:15-20. In this First Testament wisdom book the writer reveals how God's wisdom is given to enable faithful people to live with freedom. 1 Cor 2:6-10. Paul celebrates the wisdom of God, once hidden, now revealed in Jesus. Mt 5:17-37. Jesus affirms the teachings and wisdom of the OT and deepens their meaning for Matthew's Jewish audience. Rather than showing Jesus' teaching as antithetic to the OT, Mt emphasises Jesus in harmony with the OT and Torah teaching. The 'but' in the translation is neither accurate nor helpful. Theme—Wisdom: We all desire wisdom to live rightly, happily, in harmony with others and our world. All today's readings celebrate this search and locate true wisdom in God (Sirach) and Jesus. (1 Cor, Mt). What are signs of wisdom acting in our world? Who can we celebrate among us that reveal true wisdom to us?

February 20—OT 7: Lv 19:1-2.17-18. The Israelites are reminded that they are called to holiness. This spills over into community friendliness. 1 Cor 3:16-23. Paul teaches the Corinthian followers of Jesus that they are God's temples, revealers of God's holiness and possessors of God's spirit. They belong to God. Mt 5:38-48. Generosity and enemy forgiveness are essential qualities of discipleship. Theme—The call to holiness: We are all called to holiness, affirmed in the Second Vatican Council. This call finds its origins in the story of Israel, Jesus and his disciples. It is expressed through the way we live, act graciously and forgive.

February 27—OT 8: Is 49:14-15. God seeks to remember, console and celebrate. 1 Cor 4:1-5. Paul's relationship with God lies at the heart of everything he does. He will be judged simply by his fidelity to this relationship. Mt 6:24-34. Jesus teaches his disciples to trust in God and let go of unnecessary worries. Theme—Trust in God. Emphasis on material wealth and status can distract from true wealth and riches: one's relationship and intimacy with Isaiah's God, who wants to console and celebrate us. God is in love with us.

March 6—OT 9: Dt 11: 18. 26-28. 32. Moses teaches the heart of religion: a total focus on God. This is the heart of Judaism. Rom 3: 21-25. 28. Paul also teaches the heart of religion: Focus on God through Jesus. This is called ‘righteousness.’ Mt 7: 21-27. Jesus teaches the heart of discipleship: A focus on Jesus and his words. Theme—Focus on God. Living each day with an explicit consciousness of God is at the heart of Judaism, the faith life of Jesus and Mt's community. How can this awareness be encouraged and celebrated in our local Sunday Assembly?

March 13—Lent 1: Gen 2:7f. An ancient story seeking to explain the presence of evil and human's cooperation with it. Everyone gets blamed! Rom 5:12-19. The role of Jesus as God's obedient and righteous one in the plan of salvation. Mt 4:1-11 Jesus is tempted by the devil and remains faithful
to God. Theme—Evil & Fidelity. The great human experiences that cause suffering and misery are the focus for this first Sun of Lent. The call to repentance and fidelity to God might typify the message to the local community.

March 20—Lent 2: Gen 12:1-4. God calls Abram and the story of Israel begins. 2 Tim 1:8-10. The writer invites us to bring our struggles into communion with Jesus. Mt 17:1-9. Jesus is transfigured. Theme—Change: Abram and Jesus are both theological models of sacred change….open to God and God’s call. Local renewal relies on the ability to be open to change.

March 27—Lent 3: Ex 17:3-7. The people complain about their thirst in the desert. Rom 5:1-2,5-8. Paul affirms God’s love for us. This becomes the cause of hope. Jn 4:5-42. This is the great story of the woman at the well who meets the source of living water, Jesus. Theme—Thirst Quenching: For what do we thirst? What is our deepest desire? Today’s gospel invites us to renew our relationship with the source of Living Water, who satisfies us deeply.

April 3—Lent 4: 1 Sam 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13 The anointing of David, the unexpected and unrecognised one, as king. Eph 5:8-14. Living in the light of God. Jn 9. Another great story: the gradual insight into Jesus of the man born blind. Theme—Light & seeing: This Sunday can help us name the ways that we deeply see, interpret and know our lives and world. Today’s gospel invites us to come to the source of light, Jesus.


April 21—Holy Thursday. Ex 12:1-8,11-14. The Passover meal of deliverance. 1 Cor 11:23-26 Paul remembers Jesus’ last meal with his friends before death. Jn 13:1-15. Jesus’ act of foot-washing is a symbol of service and solidarity Theme—Leadership: Jesus is the one who leads us to God. Leadership is the cry of our Church, world, community. Who reveals to us the most authentic values of human existence?


April 23 & 24—Easter: Mt 28:1-10. The Risen Jesus brings joy to the women who come to the tomb Theme—Joy. In a world and among people that seem so sad and preoccupied with survival, the Easter message is central, offering a renewed vision: He is Risen!

—Michael Trainor, School of Theology, Flinders University at the Adelaide College of Divinity.

ASH WEDNESDAY

In the Roman Rite, the beginning of the forty days of penance is marked with the austere symbol of ashes which are used in the Liturgy of Ash Wednesday. The use of ashes is a survival from an ancient rite according to which converted sinners submitted themselves to canonical penance. The act of putting on ashes symbolizes fragility and mortality, and the need to be redeemed by the mercy of God. Far from being a
merely external act, the Church has retained the use of ashes to symbolize that attitude of internal penance to which all the baptized are called during Lent. The faithful who come to receive ashes should be assisted in perceiving the implicit internal significance of this act, which disposes them towards conversion and renewed Easter commitment.

Notwithstanding the secularisation of contemporary society, the Christian faithful, during Lent, are clearly conscious of the need to turn the mind towards those realities which really count, which require Gospel commitment and integrity of life which, through self denial of those things which are superfluous, are translated into good works and solidarity with the poor and needy.

Those of the faithful who infrequently attend the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist should be aware of the long ecclesial tradition associating the precept of confessing grave sins and receiving Holy Communion at least once during the lenten season, or preferably during Eastertide.

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The Via Crucis is a particularly apt pious exercise for Lent. The following may prove useful suggestions for a fruitful celebration of the Via Crucis:

• the traditional form of the Via Crucis, with its fourteen stations, is to be retained as the typical form of this pious exercise; from time to time, however, as the occasion warrants, one or other of the traditional stations might possibly be substituted with a reflection on some other aspects of the Gospel account of the journey to Calvary which are traditionally included in the Stations of the Cross;

• alternative forms of the Via Crucis have been approved by Apostolic See(138) or publicly used by the Roman Pontiff(139): these can be regarded as genuine forms of the devotion and may be used as occasion might warrant;

• the Via Crucis is a pious devotion connected with the Passion of Christ; it should conclude, however, in such fashion as to leave the faithful with a sense of expectation of the resurrection in faith and hope; following the example of the Via Crucis in Jerusalem which ends with a station at the Anastasis, the celebration could end with a commemoration of the Lord’s resurrection.

Innumerable texts exist for the celebration of the Via Crucis. Many of them were compiled by pastors who were sincerely interested in this pious exercise and convinced of its spiritual effectiveness. Texts have also been provided by lay authors who were known for their exemplary piety, holiness of life, doctrine and literary qualities. Bearing in mind whatever instructions might have been established by the bishops in the matter, the choice of texts for the Via Crucis should take a count of the condition of those participating in its celebration and the wise pastoral principle of integrating renewal and continuity. It is always preferable to choose texts resonant with the biblical narrative and written in a clear simple style.

The Via Crucis in which hymns, silence, procession and reflective pauses are wisely integrated in a balanced manner, contribute significantly to obtaining the spiritual fruits of the pious exercise.