

St Mary Magdalene's Anglican Church
Moore Street, Adelaide

**An open, welcoming and inclusive community
in the heart of the City of Adelaide**



**Keeping Community
Spiritual Resources & Reflections**

Thursday 3 August 2023

Dear friends,

This newsletter was developed as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold and our ability to gather for worship was so severely challenged. Thanks be to God, we are now able to gather together to celebrate the Word and Sacraments, and to come to church for private prayer. But the demand for and appeal of these newsletters has continued.

Sunday Mass is offered weekly at 10 am, and the church will also be open on Thursday between 11.30 am and 1 pm, with the Angelus at noon and Mass at 12.10 pm.

These newsletters are intended to provide some resources for prayer and reflection: enjoy!



1. Fr Steven writes ... It is a mystery

Clergy are encouraged to undertake study leave – the relevant ordinance calls it “continuing ministry education” – for two weeks (ten working days) including one Sunday in each calendar year. I will be commencing study leave on Tuesday 8 August. How that is used varies. In my case, it is a chance to read some works in depth. I am also working on an article for a journal on political philosophy. There are five of us writing articles. I am the only theologian; the rest are philosophers. It began about 18 months ago, when a friend asked me to join a panel to review his latest book. The panel was a great success. In the process, we realized there was more to this than meets the eye. But let me put this in context.

In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a rumour going around in academic circles and the public square that religion was on the way out. Or at the least, religion was irrelevant. This was known as the secularisation thesis. But scholars found that it is hard to get rid of religious ideas. For example, populist leaders, the so-called strongmen, often present themselves in messianic terms as called personally to fulfil the destiny of their people. Trump’s 2016 inauguration speech was a classic example of this religious embellishment. In other words, religion will not go away.

In our post-secular age, the obvious instance of incorrigible religion is the rise of religious fundamentalism and more generally the rise of the religious right. Even White supremacists are prone to claim that they are good faithful evangelical Christians (even if they have not been to church for decades, not to mention the appalling racism).

My interest is in the concept of *atheism*. On the one hand, atheism is generally understood as meaning that there is no God. On the other hand, and this is a more nuanced issue, it is not God *per se*, but certain interpretations of the divine that are repudiated. On this note, *theism*

is the view of God separate from the world, but with the capacity to intervene. Since WW2, this view of God has been challenged because of widespread violence and suffering.

In the Anglican tradition, however, we are conscious that faith begins and ends in mystery. From Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 4) to our Celtic and Medieval mystics, as well as our theologians, poets, musicians, and liturgists, mystery of the divine is vital. The divine mystery created the cosmos and fills our lives with wonder and delight. Often, in the face of mystery, the best response is silence.

I see myself as in the tradition of negative theology. This is the tradition of not-knowing. That is, we cannot put divine mystery into a box. In some cases, moreover, it is a matter of taking the divine out of the box (e.g., God as judge). This is the practice of un-knowing. From this point of view, a-theism means not putting God in a box.

The older I get, the more I try to immerse myself in divine mystery. It is more about what Karl Rahner described as the mystagogical process. That is, the life of faith is where, in the footsteps of Christ and the apostles, we live in, and we are transformed by divine mystery. Of course, this is where being part of a compassionate and inclusive faith community, with its shared stories, symbols, music, and rituals, is so important. In fact, our Sunday liturgy has a lot to offer. It preserves and celebrates that past but is open to the new.

It is a mystery indeed.

Fr Steven

2. Fr Steven writes ... A Very Special Vestry

Thank you to all those who contributed to the Special Vestry Meeting on 9 July. Thanks, once again, to our wonderful catering and cleaning-up team. Moreover, if you were not able to be there on Sunday, this is your chance to join in.

At the Special Vestry, we began to develop our parish's theology, where theology is about our shared reflections on life and faith. It is important to do this for its intrinsic worth, but it will also help in the future with planning and priorities.

In technical terms, we are developing an ecclesiology. Ecclesiology is a theology about what it means to be a church. It comes from the word *ecclesia*, which means *assembly*, and it is derived from ancient Greek democratic gatherings in the public square. The apostle Paul uses the term as a way of describing the church, where *church* means an open assembly rather than a building (e.g., Galatians).

Our theology encompasses our experience and our questions, as well as Scripture, tradition, and reason. In the spirit of Rahner's notion that God works from the inside out, we began on Sunday by sharing our values and our passions. Specifically, I was asking about our core values. Here are the key ideas/themes from Sunday:

- Acceptance, an open space, a multi-space, welcoming, learning, sacramentality, inclusion, questioning, clarity, service, volunteering, reflection, advocacy, challenging, witnessing, mystery, divine other, liturgy, music, arts, past-present, capacity to make public statements.

I am putting these ideas/themes in a format (below) we can work build on. I am also inviting you to reflect on this, passing on to me your questions, comments, and suggestions as this is a living document. I have added some theological commentary: -

- St Mary Magdalene's is a welcoming and inclusive Anglican faith community. We follow Jesus, the human one, who worked and died for others in the name of love. His humanity, compassion, and courage shape our faith and practice.
- As a faith community, we are part of a (holy) open space. This is a space for learning, sharing, growing, caring, grieving, and celebrating. We are committed to a life of care, generous service in the church and the wider community. This care is grounded in a commitment to love, social justice, challenging injustice, and advocacy in the public square.
- We are grounded in the life of divine mystery, the divine other, which is disclosed to us in the life of Jesus, and his friends from Galilee. We know and celebrate this mystery in daily life, in friendship and in solitude, in our liturgies, our music, and the arts. All this represents, what we call our sacramental view of life, which is honoured in our sharing of bread and wine.

Please let me know what you think.

Fr Steven

3. Daily Prayer

Most Christian denominations have forms for prayer in the morning and the evening, and at other times of the day. Morning and Evening Prayer in *A Prayer Book for Australia*, are available in either a fixed form (pp 3-33) or a form for each day of the week (pp 383-424).

Online Resources

There is an online version of Daily Prayer from *A Prayer Book for Australia* for each day available at Australian Daily Prayer <https://dailyprayer.ampers.x10.mx/>. There is also a free app for mobile devices from the App Store or Google Play.

The Church of England provides an online version of its orders for Daily Prayer at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>. This is also available as a free app. The Divine Office of the Catholic Church is available online at www.ibreviary.com and is also available as a free app (App Store or Google Play).

Times of Prayer

Many people find it helpful to make a particular time daily for prayer and reflection. One option might be to join your prayer with those of the wider world at some special times during the day, especially the [Angelus](#) at 9 am, 12 noon and 6 pm.

4. Reflections and Meditations

In addition to Fr Steven's regular reflection in this newsletter, which is uploaded to the web page for wider accessibility, Fr Philip Carter's meditations and spiritual reflections are presented on our blog, <https://stmarymagdalenesadelade.org/>.

To access these meditations, simply go to the blog and select the "Spirit matters" tab on the top. If you would like to receive an email update when there is a new posting on the blog, whether for a Sunday or weekday service, or for meditations and other supports for prayer, please subscribe to the blog using the box on the right-hand side of the page.

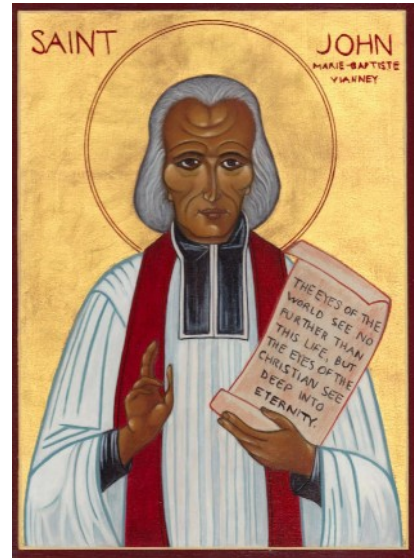
Service booklets as PDF files are still available for Sunday and weekday services on the web site and on the Parish's Facebook page.

5. This Week in the Calendar

In the coming week we celebrate the mysterious event in Jesus's life known as the Transfiguration, one of the major milestones in the gospel narrative of the life of Jesus. We also celebrate the Celtic king Oswald, the medieval priest and friar Dominic, and from the 19th century, John Vianney, the Cure d'Ars.

St John Vianney wanted from his childhood to become a priest. But he had to overcome his meagre formal schooling, which inadequately prepared him for seminary studies. His failure to comprehend Latin lectures forced him to abandon his studies. But his vision of being a priest urged him to seek private tutoring. After a lengthy battle with the books, John was ordained.

As pastor of the parish at Ars, John encountered people who were indifferent and quite comfortable with their style of living. But over the years, his work as a confessor was to become his most remarkable accomplishment. In the winter months he was to spend 11 to 12 hours daily reconciling people with God. In the summer months this time was increased to 16 hours.



Indifference toward religion, coupled with a love for material comfort, seem to be common signs of our times. A person from another planet observing us would not likely judge us to be pilgrim people, on our way to somewhere else. John Vianney on the other hand, was a man on a journey, with his goal before him at all times.

The Transfiguration was a special event in which God strengthened the wavering faith of some of his apostles, in order that they might be emboldened for the challenges they would later endure.

In the same way, at certain times in this life, God may give certain members of the faithful (not all of the faithful, all the time), special experiences of his grace that strengthen their faith.



We should welcome these experiences for the graces they are, but we should not expect them to continue indefinitely, nor should we be afraid or resentful when they cease.

The Transfiguration has long been celebrated on 6 August. In the East, the Early Church fathers interpreted the thematic linking of the transfiguration and crucifixion as meaning the Transfiguration preceded the crucifixion by 40 days. But here, it was not so much a link to Good Friday as to the Feast of the Holy Cross – 14 September – hence the date.

In the West, the narrative of the transfiguration of Christ is anticipatory of the transfiguration of Christ through death and resurrection, and our engagement in that transformation, and was more closely aligned with the season of Lent. In some places it preceded the season, in others it was within the season, on the 2nd Sunday. A prayer that has its foundation in the words of St Leo the Great, used as the Collect, states the matter clearly: "Almighty God, whose Son was revealed in majesty before he suffered death upon the cross, give us faith to

perceive his glory, that being strengthened by his grace we may be changed into his likeness, from glory to glory.”

By the 13th century, the entire Western church acknowledged the Feast Day of 6 August, but also retained the transfiguration reading for the 2nd Sunday of Lent. And so it remains to this day in some churches. The Revised Common Lectionary has revived the tradition of celebrating this feast on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday.

Much about **St Oswald** is conjectural, no doubt a mix of fact and pious fantasy, but we know he was the son of Aethelfrith, Anglo-Saxon king of Northumbria, who had massacred Christian monks who opposed his warring ways.

When Aethelfrith was killed in battle, his children fled, and against all the odds were received kindly by the monks on the island of Iona.

Oswald’s meeting with the monks of Iona was a moment of destiny. For through that moment came the conversion of the greater part of England to the Christian faith.

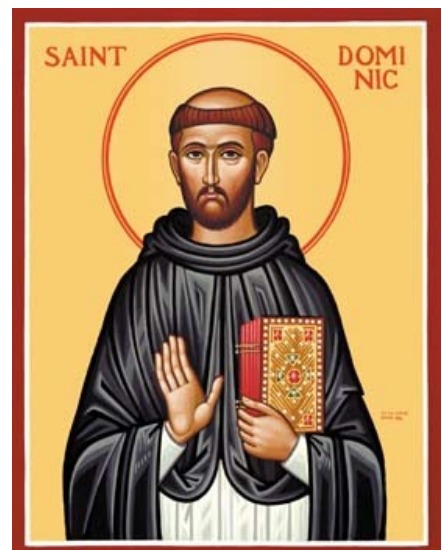
Like all Anglo-Saxon kings Oswald was a warrior. Like other kings he expected to die on the battlefield, and so indeed in the end he did. But unlike other kings, before he died Oswald had won for himself the reputation of being a saint, and his death in battle against Penda the heathen king of Mercia was seen as a martyr’s death.



History can tell us of King Oswald, one of the most powerful of all the northern kings skilful in both war and diplomacy. Such rulers do not find it simple to be Christian, beset as they are by all the difficult decisions and ambiguities that face anyone who wields great earthly power. How much easier to be a Christian bishop than a Christian king! But Bede’s story invites us to see in Oswald more than the king: to see the saint who gave his life to God and the martyr who gave his death, and who therefore in life or after death could be called on with confidence by those in need

St Dominic preached for many years against heresy in the church, realising early on that the warm reception his preaching received within the wider community was not always shared by the officialdom of the church. He nonetheless persevered in his ministry, and in 1215 founded a religious house at Toulouse, the beginning of the Order of Preachers or Dominicans

Dominic’s ideal, and that of his Order, was to organically link a life with God, study, and prayer in all forms, with a ministry of salvation to people by the word of God. His ideal: *contemplata tradere*: “to pass on the fruits of contemplation” or “to speak only of God or with God.” The Dominican life combines contemplation and activity, which together are the wellspring of all their works.



6. From the Catechetical Instructions by St. John Mary Vianney, priest

The glorious duty: to pray and to love

My little children, reflect on these words: the Christian's treasure is not on earth but in heaven. Our thoughts, then ought to be directed to where our treasure is. This is the glorious duty of man: to pray and to love. If you pray and love, that is where a man's happiness lies.

Prayer is nothing else but union with God. When one has a heart that is pure and united with God, he is given a kind of serenity and sweetness that makes him ecstatic, a light that surrounds him with marvelous brightness. In this intimate union, God and the soul are fused together like two bits of wax that no one can ever pull apart. This union of God with a tiny creature is a lovely thing. It is a happiness beyond understanding.

We had become unworthy to pray, but God in his goodness allowed us to speak with him. Our prayer is incense that gives him the greatest pleasure.

My little children, your hearts are small, but prayer stretches them and makes them capable of loving God. Through prayer we receive a foretaste of heaven and something of paradise comes down upon us. Prayer never leaves us without sweetness. It is honey that flows into the soul and makes all things sweet. When we pray properly, sorrows disappear like snow before the sun.

Prayer also makes time pass very quickly and with such great delight that one does not notice its length. Listen: Once when I was a purveyor in Bresse and most of my companions were ill, I had to make a long journey. I prayed to the good God, and believe me, the time did not seem long. Some people immerse themselves as deeply in prayer as fish in water, because they give themselves totally to God. There is not division in their hearts. O, how I love these noble souls! Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Colette used to see our Lord and talk to him just as we talk to one another.

How unlike them we are! How often we come to church with no idea of what to do or what to ask for. And yet, whenever we go to any human being, we know well enough why we go. And still worse, there are some who seem to speak to the good God like this: "I will only say a couple of things to you, and then I will be rid of you." I often think that when we come to adore the Lord, we would receive everything we ask for, if we would ask with living faith and with a pure heart.

7. From a sermon on the transfiguration of the Lord by Anastasius of Sinai

It is good for us to be here

Upon Mount Tabor, Jesus revealed to his disciples a heavenly mystery. While living among them he had spoken of the kingdom and of his second coming in glory, but to banish from their hearts any possible doubt concerning the kingdom and to confirm their faith in what lay in the future by its prefiguration in the present, he gave them on Mount Tabor a wonderful vision of his glory, a foreshadowing of the kingdom of heaven. It was as if he said to them: "As time goes by you may be in danger of losing your faith. To save you from this I tell you now that *some standing here listening to me will not taste death until they have seen the Son of Man coming in the glory of his Father.*" Moreover, in order to assure us that Christ could command such power when he wished, the evangelist continues: *Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter, James and John, and led them up a high mountain where they were alone. There, before their eyes, he was transfigured. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light. Then the disciples saw Moses and Elijah appear, and they were talking to Jesus.*

These are the divine wonders we celebrate today; this is the saving revelation given us upon the mountain; this is the festival of Christ that has drawn us here. Let us listen, then, to the sacred voice of God so compellingly calling us from on high, from the summit of the mountain, so that with the Lord's chosen disciples we may penetrate the deep meaning of these holy mysteries, so far beyond our capacity to express. Jesus goes before us to show us the way, both up the mountain and into heaven, and – I speak boldly – it is for us now to follow him with all speed, yearning for the heavenly vision that will give us a share in his radiance, renew our spiritual nature and transform us into his own likeness, making us for ever sharers in his Godhead and raising us to heights as yet undreamed of.

Let us run with confidence and joy to enter into the cloud like Moses and Elijah, or like James and John. Let us be caught up like Peter to behold the divine vision and to be transfigured by that glorious transfiguration. Let us retire from the world, stand aloof from the earth, rise above the body, detach ourselves from creatures and turn to the creator, to whom Peter in ecstasy exclaimed: *Lord, it is good for us to be here.*

It is indeed good to be here, as you have said, Peter. It is good to be with Jesus and to remain here for ever. What greater happiness or higher honour could we have than to be with God, to be made like him and to live in his light?

Therefore, since each of us possesses God in his heart and is being transformed into his divine image, we also should cry out with joy: *It is good for us to be here* – here where all things shine with divine radiance, where there is joy and gladness and exultation; where there is nothing in our hearts but peace, serenity and stillness; where God is seen. For here, in our hearts, Christ takes up his abode together with the Father, saying as he enters: *Today salvation has come to this house.* With Christ, our hearts receive all the wealth of his eternal blessings, and there where they are stored up for us in him, we see reflected as in a mirror both the first fruits and the whole of the world to come.

8. St Dominic – from various writings on the history of the Order of Preachers

He spoke with God or about God

Dominic possessed such great integrity and was so strongly motivated by divine love, that without a doubt he proved to be a bearer of honor and grace. He was a man of great equanimity, except when moved to compassion and mercy. And since a joyful heart animates the face, he displayed the peaceful composure of a spiritual man in the kindness he manifested outwardly and by the cheerfulness of his countenance.

Wherever he went he showed himself in word and deed to be a man of the Gospel. During the day no one was more community-minded or pleasant toward his brothers and associates. During the night hours no one was more persistent in every kind of vigil and supplication. He seldom spoke unless it was with God, that is, in prayer, or about God, and in this matter he instructed his brothers. Frequently he made a special personal petition that God would deign to grant him a genuine charity, effective in caring for and obtaining the salvation of men. For he believed that only then would he be truly a member of Christ, when he had given himself totally for the salvation of men, just as the Lord Jesus, the Saviour of all, had offered himself completely for our salvation. So, for this work, after a lengthy period of careful and provident planning, he founded the Order of Friars Preachers.

In his conversations and letters he often urged the brothers of the Order to study constantly the Old and New Testaments. He always carried with him the gospel according to Matthew

and the epistles of Paul, and so well did he study them that he almost knew them from memory.

Two or three times he was chosen bishop, but he always refused, preferring to live with his brothers in poverty. Throughout his life, he preserved the honour of his virginity. He desired to be scourged and cut to pieces, and so die for the faith of Christ. Of him Pope Gregory IX declared: "I knew him as a steadfast follower of the apostolic way of life. There is no doubt that he is in heaven, sharing in the glory of the apostles themselves".

9. Intentions for Your Daily Prayers

We pray throughout the week for the world and the church. These intentions may be helpful in your private or family prayers.

Pray for the world. For the leaders of the world as they seek to respond to the challenges that beset the international community. For refugees and asylum seekers, that they may find places of safety and welcome. For all who work for peace and justice. For reconciliation with the first custodians of this land.

Pray for the church. For all those who are striving to be church in the modern world, that we may be alert to the signs of the times and their interpretation in the light of the Gospel. In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, pray for the Diocese of Washington (USA). In our national church, pray for the Diocese of Armidale; and in our own Diocese of Adelaide, for St Peter's College.

Pray for our local community. For the Collective as it manages the delivery of the Saturday Night Mary Mags Dinner. For the Magdalene Centre, its customers, staff and volunteers, as they minister in God's name among those in crisis and in need of support and assistance.

Pray for those in need. Pray for all those who are troubled in body, mind or spirit, especially Paull, Sim, Jasmin, John Edwards (priest), Peter Garland (priest), Robert Whalley (priest), John Parkes (bishop), Stephan Clark (priest), Mark, Olivia, Nance, Neil, Elaine, Neil, Hugh, Bart O'Donovan (priest) and Prue O'Donovan (Priest).

For those who have died. Those who have worked and worshipped in this place before us; those who have died as a result of COVID-19 and in other tragic circumstances; those who have died recently, especially James King and Christina Theseira, and those whose anniversaries of death occur at this time. ✠ *Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.*

For the saints. For the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Joseph, St Mary Magdalene, and holy women and men of every time and place.

This newsletter will normally be distributed weekly on Tuesday. Any appropriate items should be emailed to the Parish Office, StMMAdeelaide.Parish@outlook.com, by Tuesday evening at 5 pm.

Directory

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Hon Assisting Priests	Revd Sr Juliana SI, Fr Philip Carter, Fr Graeme Kaines
Churchwardens	Peter Burdon ☎ 0414 471 894, Alison McAllister ☎ 0433 551 267
Parish Council	The Priest and Wardens <i>ex officio</i> ; Catherine Freriks, Alison McAllister, Hamish McLachlan, Peter Turner.
Nomination Committee	John Dow, Catherine Freriks, Annemarie Van Putten
Synod Representatives	Ashley Durham, Catherine Freriks