

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 8 December 2022

Dear friends,

The relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions will make it possible to again open the church for private prayer and public worship.

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. During Advent, there is also a reflection each Wednesday at 8 am.

The decision to return to worship in community, whether for private prayer, or the public celebration of the Word and Sacraments, is not a straightforward matter.

These newsletters are intended to keep our entire community informed on events in the life of the Parish, so we will continue to produce these news bulletins for now.



1. From Fr Steven - Anticipating Re-Creation

The climate crisis is daunting? Where do we begin? What can I do? To begin, I suggest we embrace the season of Advent, and allow ourselves to be inspired and transformed.

Of course, many of the biblical texts used in Advent are difficult. Many of them are written in the apocalyptic genre, which is like a code written for the faithful living in a state of crisis. The roots of apocalyptic go back to the book of Daniel (11:32) culminating in the book of Revelation. As a people, these faith communities expected God to institute renewal. In this vein, Advent is about renewal. In Advent, we expect to experience divine re-creation.

The new creation is an earthy thing. The divine action is here and now on *terra firma*. What is more, our very renewal is linked to the renewal of the earth itself. The theme of re-creation is strong, for example, in the Gospel of John. John represents a radical and transparent alternative to the forerunners of Gnosticism. What exactly is Gnosticism?

After the time of Jesus, several religious groups emerged. They shared a pattern of belief. We refer to them under the banner of Gnosticism. Gnostic groups constituted a secretive *out-of-this-world* religion. The word *Gnostic* comes from the Greek word for knowledge (*gnosis*). This was a special (esoteric) knowledge, which could enable the soul to escape the body in order to return the divine realm.

One of the features of Gnosticism then was a contempt for the earth. For the Gnostics, there were two realms: the divine and the earthly. The divine realm was good. The earthly realm was evil. The material world was not to be trusted. This included the human body. So, the soul

was a divine spark, which was captive to the body. In particular, in a Gnostic interpretation of Christianity, Christ could not participate (fully) in the material world.

In John 1:14, God embraces the world through the Word (as the Word became flesh and dwelt among us). So, unlike Gnosticism, the earth is embraced. In the name of Christ, then, we are called to love the earth. In the name of God, then, we are called to be stewards of the earth. Certainly, the climate crisis is daunting. But we anticipate our re-creation. In other words, Advent is the season of new beginnings.

Fr Steven

2. COVID-19 Update

With the significant increase in COVID-19 infections being reported, the Parish Council has again considered the precautions we have put in place within our worshipping community. Parish Council, noting that we (like many church communities) have a number of older folk and others who might be regarded as vulnerable among our number, has agreed that we will continue to take a conservative approach for the time being, and to encourage precautions including Distancing, Ventilation and Facemasks: **DVM** for short. Distancing means maintaining a sensible distance of 1.5 metres between individuals or family groups; Ventilation means leaving some doors and/or windows open to allow a flow of air—and we have air conditioning, so we will neither freeze nor boil!—and Facemasks are obvious.

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 in praying 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.

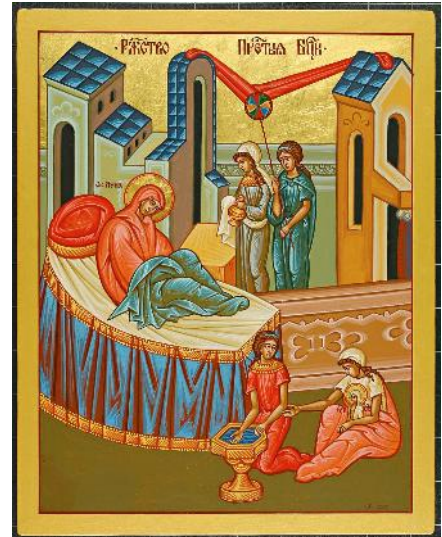
Service booklets as PDF files are still available for Sunday and weekday services on the web site and on the Parish's Facebook page.

5. This Week in the Calendar

In the coming week we celebrate the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the early church martyr St Lucy, and the 16th century mystic St John of the Cross.

The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Conception of Mary is one of the more misunderstood feasts in Anglicanism. It was present in the Book of Common Prayer of 1662, and remains in Anglican calendars throughout the world. The significance of the festival has been clouded by confusion over the Roman Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception which holds that Mary was sinless from the moment of her conception. A more authentically 'Anglican' understanding is found in the documents of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission which says: "Mary is marked out from the beginning as the one chosen, called, and graced by God through the Holy Spirit for the task that lay ahead of her."



Mary is important for us. First, because she is the Mother of the Lord. The oldest title applied to her by the Church is *Theotokos*, a Greek term that means 'God bearer' or 'Mother of God'. Secondly, because she is the example for all followers of Jesus. At the Annunciation, Mary responded to God's invitation to be mother of the Lord. Let us pray that we may bring birth to God's word in the world in our own time.

Some traditions exist about the life and times of **St Lucy**, but in fact all that is definitely known is that a disappointed suitor accused Lucy of being a Christian, and she was executed in Syracuse, Sicily, in the year 304.

One can easily imagine what a young Christian woman had to contend with in pagan Sicily around the year 300. To that community, Jesus was an obscure itinerant preacher in a far-off captive nation that had been destroyed more than 200 years before, yet Lucy believed with her whole soul that this man had risen from the dead. Heaven had put a stamp on all he said and did. To give witness to her faith she had made a vow of virginity – a bizarre and almost sinister decision in a community where the exclusion of marriage from one's life plan was unthinkable.



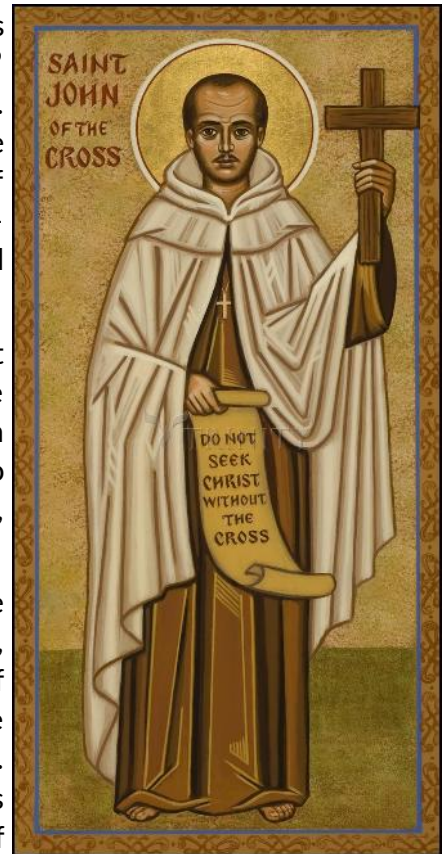
Lucy knew of the heroism of earlier virgin martyrs. She remained faithful to their example and to the example of the carpenter, whom she knew to be the Son of God.

Lucy means "light", with the same root as "lucid" which means, "clear, radiant, understandable." The story of Saint Lucy is one filled with many trials and tribulations. Even in times of darkness when she was being tortured she still remained steadfast in her faith. To us Saint Lucy reminds us that we always need to stay focus on the light of Christ and not let us waiver from our faith.

St John of the Cross (1542-1591). John is a saint because his life was a heroic effort to live up to his name: “of the Cross.” The folly of the cross came to full realization in time. “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34b) is the story of John’s life. The Paschal Mystery—through death to life—strongly marks John as reformer, mystic-poet, and theologian-priest.

Ordained a Carmelite priest in 1567 at age 25, John met Teresa of Avila and like her, vowed himself to the primitive Rule of the Carmelites. As partner with Teresa and in his own right, John engaged in the work of reform, and came to experience the price of reform: increasing opposition, misunderstanding, persecution, imprisonment.

John came to know the cross acutely—to experience the dying of Jesus—as he sat month after month in his dark, damp, narrow cell with only his God. Yet in this dying of imprisonment John came to life, uttering poetry. In the darkness of the dungeon, John’s spirit came into the Light. There are many mystics, many poets; John is unique as mystic-poet, expressing in his prison-cross the ecstasy of mystical union with God in the *Spiritual Canticle*.



But as agony leads to ecstasy, so John had his Ascent to Mt. Carmel, as he named it in his mprose masterpiece. As man-Christian-Carmelite, he experienced in himself this purifying ascent; as spiritual director, he sensed it in others; as psychologist-theologian, he described and analyzed it in his prose writings. His prose works are outstanding in underscoring the cost of discipleship, the path of union with God: rigorous discipline, abandonment, purification.

Uniquely and strongly John underlines the gospel paradox: The cross leads to resurrection, agony to ecstasy, darkness to light, abandonment to possession, denial to self to union with God. If you want to save your life, you must lose it. John is truly “of the Cross.” He died at 49—a life short, but full.

In his life and writings, John of the Cross has a crucial word for us today. We tend to be rich, soft, comfortable. We shrink even from words like self-denial, mortification, purification, asceticism, discipline. We run from the cross. John’s message—like the gospel—is loud and clear: Don’t—if you really want to live!

6. On the Feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary – from a Sermon by St Anselm

Virgin Mary, all nature is blessed by you

Blessed Lady, sky and stars, earth and rivers, day and night – everything that is subject to the power or use of man – rejoice that through you they are in some sense restored to their lost beauty and are endowed with inexpressible new grace. All creatures were dead, as it were, useless for men or for the praise of God, who made them. The world, contrary to its true destiny, was corrupted and tainted by the acts of men who served idols. Now all creation has been restored to life and rejoices that it is controlled and given splendour by men who believe in God. The universe rejoices with new and indefinable loveliness. Not only does it feel the unseen presence of God himself, its Creator, it sees him openly, working and making it holy. These great blessings spring from the blessed fruit of Mary’s womb.

Through the fullness of the grace that was given you, dead things rejoice in their freedom, and those in heaven are glad to be made new. Through the Son who was the glorious fruit of your virgin womb, just souls who died before his life-giving death rejoice as they are freed from captivity, and the angels are glad at the restoration of their shattered domain.

Lady, full and overflowing with grace, all creation receives new life from your abundance. Virgin, blessed above all creatures, through your blessing all creation is blessed, not only creation from its Creator, but the Creator himself has been blessed by creation.

To Mary God gave his only-begotten Son, whom he loved as himself. Through Mary God made himself a Son, not different but the same, by nature Son of God and Son of Mary. The whole universe was created by God, and God was born of Mary. God created all things, and Mary gave birth to God. The God who made all things gave himself form through Mary, and thus he made his own creation. He who could create all things from nothing would not remake his ruined creation without Mary.

God, then, is the Father of the created world and Mary the mother of the re-created world. God is the Father by whom all things were given life, and Mary the mother through whom all things were given new life. For God begot the Son, through whom all things were made, and Mary gave birth to him as the Saviour of the world. Without God's Son, nothing could exist; without Mary's Son, nothing could be redeemed.

Truly the Lord is with you, to whom the Lord granted that all nature should owe as much to you as to himself.

7. On the Feast of St Lucy - from a Sermon by St Ambrose

You light up your grace of body with your splendour of soul

You are one of God's people, of God's family ... you light up your grace of body with your splendour of soul. More than others you can be compared to the Church. When you are in your room, then, at night, think always on Christ, and wait for his coming at every moment.

This is the person Christ has loved in loving you, the person he has chosen in choosing you. He enters by the open door; he has promised to come in, and he cannot deceive. Embrace him, the one you have sought; turn to him, and be enlightened; hold him fast, ask him not to go in haste, beg him not to leave you. The Word of God moves swiftly; he is not won by the lukewarm, nor held fast by the negligent. Let your soul be attentive to his word; follow carefully the path God tells you to take, for he is swift in his passing.

What does his bride say? *I sought him, and did not find him; I called him, and he did not hear me.* Do not imagine that you are displeasing to him although you have called him, asked him, opened the door to him, and that this is the reason why he has gone so quickly; no, for he allows us to be constantly tested. When the crowds pressed him to stay, what does he say in the Gospel? *I must preach the word of God to other cities, because for that I have been sent.* But even if it seems to you that he has left you, go out and seek him once more.

Who but holy Church is to teach you how to hold Christ fast? Indeed, she has already taught you, if you only understood her words in Scripture: *How short a time it was when I left them before I found him whom my soul has loved. I held him fast, and I will not let him go.* How do we hold him fast? Not by restraining chains or knotted ropes but by bonds of love, by spiritual reins, by the longing of the soul.

If you also, like the bride, wish to hold him fast, seek him and be fearless of suffering. It is often easier to find him in the midst of bodily torments, in the very hands of persecutors.

His bride says: *How short a time it was after I left them.* In a little space, after a brief moment, when you have escaped from the hands of your persecutors without yielding to the powers of this world, Christ will come to you, and he will not allow you to be tested for long.

Whoever seeks Christ in this way, and finds him, can say: *I held him fast, and I will not let him go before I bring him into my mother's house, into the room of her who conceived me.* What is this "house," this "room," but the deep and secret places of your heart?

Maintain this house, sweep out its secret recesses until it becomes immaculate and rises as a spiritual temple for a holy priesthood, firmly secured by Christ, the cornerstone, so that the Holy Spirit may dwell in it.

Whoever seeks Christ in this way, whoever prays to Christ in this way, is not abandoned by him; on the contrary, Christ comes again and again to visit such a person, for he is with us until the end of the world.

8. Rowan Williams on St John of the Cross

Like everybody else in his generation of Catholic theologians [St John of the Cross] takes for granted a picture of the human mind which sees it as working in three basic ways: the human mind understands, it remembers and it wants. Or, in more abstract terms, the human mind is made up of the interaction of understanding, memory and will. And the distinctive and fresh insight that St John of the Cross offers, is that if you put together understanding, memory and will with faith, hope and charity you have a perfect picture of where we start and where we finish.

In the Christian life, faith (he says) is what happens to our understanding; hope is what happens to our remembering; and love is what happens to our wanting. To grow up as a Christian is to take that journey from understanding, into faith, from memory into hope and from will into love.

St John also believed that in that process of Christian growing-up, one of the very difficult things that happened was that we lost our bearings on the way. What we thought we understood we discover that we never did; what we thought we remembered is covered with confusion; and what we thought we wanted turns out to be empty. We have to be re-created in faith and hope and love for our understanding our memory and our will to become what God would really want them to be.

We've lost a lot of our bearings. The Church at large continues to say what it has said; it says what it has always said in the context of worship and it reads its Bible faithfully. And yet in so much of the life of the Church there is a degree of loss of nerve and loss of confidence ... Somewhere in ... talk about freedom; we lose touch with the sense of the deep desires that actually make us who we are. We lose touch with the sense that there is a current in our lives moving towards a goal ..."

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.

For the world. The leaders of the world as they seek to respond to the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. For refugees and asylum seekers, that they may find places of safety and welcome.

For the church. In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, pray for the Diocese of Ogbia (Nigeria). In our national church, pray for the Diocese of Bunbury; and within the Diocese of Adelaide, for Pedare College.

For our local community. For the Collective and its ministry in the local community. For the Magdalene Centre, as it deals with the need to change the way it delivers services in order to safeguard the health of customers, staff and volunteers.

For those in need. Pray for all those who are troubled in body, mind or spirit, especially Paull, Sim, Jasmin, Henry, John Edwards (priest), Peter Garland (priest), Robert Whalley (priest), John Parkes (bishop), Stephan Clark (priest), Mark, Olivia, Nance, Neil, Elaine and Edward.

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 Peter Bird, and Heide, 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, St Lucy, St John of the Cross, and holy women and men of every time and place.

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

