

St Mary Magdalene's Anglican Church

Moore Street, Adelaide



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

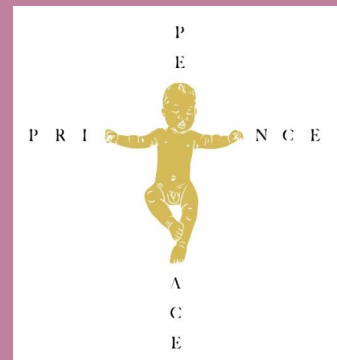
Keeping Community Spiritual Resources & Reflections

Thursday 9 December 2021

Dear friends,

The relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions means 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.

These newsletters are intended to support the spiritual life of the community as we continue to cope with and respond to the pandemic.



1. From Fr Gwilym – Christmas Trees



Last week, Sue and I visited the Christmas Tree Festival at St Peter's church, Glenelg. Inside the church there were Christmas trees everywhere, along the walls, on the pews and filling the back of the church. Many of them were contributed by parishioners, but others were from schools, notably St Peter's Woodlands.

The trees were made of all sorts of materials, from ordinary artificial trees, to recycled materials, paper, cardboard and wire. There was even one which used a stepladder to make the tree shape!

And the trees were decorated using different themes, of the most amazing variety. One small tree was decorated with old watches, another with rings (costume jewellery, not the five gold rings delivered on the fifth day of Christmas!). There was a tree covered with pictures of the Greaves family, including Bishop Jeremy. To complete the famous people, there was also one dedicated to Doctor Who! (see the picture) I've never seen a Tardis tree before!

And many of the trees had handmade decorations, stars and angels and all sorts of things, made by children of all ages. It was great fun, and the church looked beautiful with all the glittering trees and sparkling lights.

In the chancel and around the altar, there were Nativity Sets, not just one, but twenty! All of different sizes, too! Well done, St Peter's!

The tradition of Christmas Trees comes from Germany, and the modern craze dates from the days of Prince Albert, husband of Queen Victoria, who set an example for the people of Great Britain and her colonies. From that time, Christmas Trees have been getting bigger and more elaborate.

They were not always popular with churches, because they were regarded by many as a pagan symbol. It was not until 1982 that the Vatican allowed one to be set up in St Peter's Square in Rome. But a tree, specifically a fir tree, has been a Christian symbol since 723 AD. The story is that Saint Boniface, who was bringing The Good News to the Germanic people, came across a pagan gathering in Geismar. A group of people were dancing under a decorated oak tree. They were about to sacrifice a baby in the name of Thor, but Saint Boniface seized an axe and called on the name of Jesus. In one swipe, he managed to take down the entire oak tree, to the crowd's astonishment. Behind the fallen tree was a baby fir tree. Boniface said, "Let this tree be the symbol of the true God, its leaves are ever green and will not die." He pointed out that the tree's needles pointed to heaven and its triangular shape represented the Holy Trinity.

The decorations on the tree are symbolic also. The candles (LED lights these days) represent the Light of Christ, and the baubles (apples in the old days) represented either the gifts of God or the temptation of Adam, depending on your theological bent! The star at the top was the Star of Bethlehem, or if you prefer an Angel, let it be Gabriel, announcing the birth of Christ.

I am not sure about the symbolism of the Tardis Tree, but Doctor Who has saved Earth from various intergalactic invasions on a number of occasions!

Attempts have been made to "Christianize" the Christmas Tree, calling it a Chrismon Tree, and restricting its decorations to white lights and white and gold symbols of Christ and his ministry: the dove descending, fish, Celtic cross, Jerusalem cross, shepherd's crook, chalice, shell, and others. In case you're wondering Chrismon is a portmanteau word, from Christ and monogram.

I think I prefer the exuberance of modern Christmas Trees, especially when they're set up in public places, like churches and shopping centres. I remember at St Paul's, Port Adelaide, we always had to have a Port Power Tree and a Crows Tree along with trees from the schools round about.

Christmas Trees are most certainly a Christian symbol and tradition, but they also celebrate the life of the community in all its dazzling facets. And why not?

Gwilym Henry-Edwards
Locum Priest

2. 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 the Anglican church's *A Prayer Book for Australia*, are available in either a fixed form (pages 3 – 33) or a different form for each day of the week (pages 383 – 424).

Online Resources

There is a complete 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. While the church cannot be open every day, you may like to join the wider community in praying the Angelus at 9 am, 12 noon and 6 pm.

3. Reflections and Meditations

Fr Gwilym and others within our community will continue to prepare Reflections for Sundays and Holy Days for posting on the web page. Fr Philip Carter's meditations and spiritual reflections are presented on our blog, <https://stmarymagdalenesadelaide.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.

4. Advent Prayer on Wednesdays

Each Wednesday during the Advent season, Alison McAllister and Leonie Zadow will be in the church at 7.30 am each Wednesday morning for 30 minutes of silent prayer.

You are welcome to join us.

Start at 7.30 am promptly ... Finish 8 am.

You can also join us remotely - you can be at home, or even in the car increasing the saints in the room!

If you would like to invite a friend that would be great too.

There are no special requirements; a short reading, 20 minutes of silent prayer and a chant to conclude.

If you would like to join us in the church just come – if you're late, just come in.

You don't need to come every week!

If you'd like to join in from home, and you'd like to follow what we are doing, either email or phone, and we'll send you the resources for the day.

Questions? Please talk to one of us at church or email leonie@redirt.com.au, phone 0409 691 651

P.S. If you do intend to join us remotely, we'd love to know!

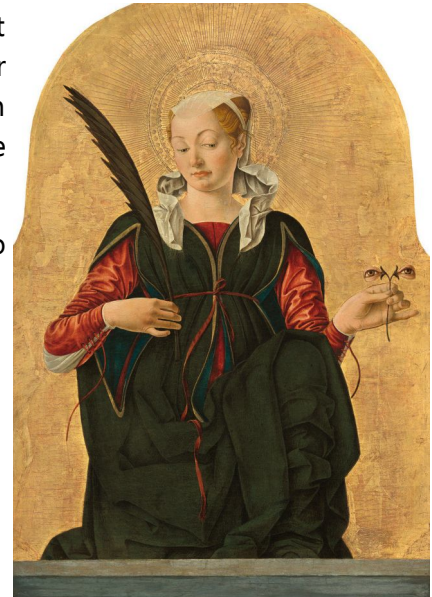
Alison and Leonie

5. In the Church's Calendar

In the first week of December, we remember the early church martyr St Lucy, and the 16th century mystic St John of the Cross.

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. And she is, of course, the subject of the popular song *Santa Lucia*.

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.

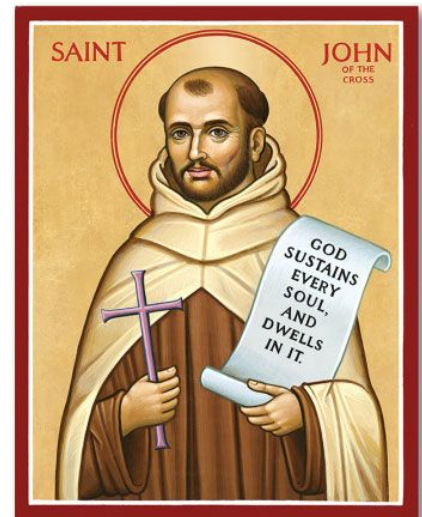


Lucy knew of the heroism of earlier virgin martyrs. She remained faithful to their example and to the example of the carpenter, whom she knew to be the Son of God.

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

prose 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. 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...”

7. For your prayers

We continue to 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 Ijebu South West (Nigeria). In our national church, pray for the Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn; and within the Diocese of Adelaide, for Anglican Chaplains in Private Hospitals: Adelaide Clinic and Fullarton Private, (Rev Dr Elizabeth McWhae).

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. For all those who are sick in body, mind or spirit, especially Paull, Valerie, Sim, Clarice, Dulcie, Jasmin, Henry, John Edwards (priest), Peter Garland (priest), Linda and Alex.

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 Casson and Ann Bednall, 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, StMMAdeelaide.Parish@outlook.com, by Tuesday evening at 5 pm.

