

# St Mary Magdalene's Anglican Church

Moore Street, Adelaide



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

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## Keeping Community                      Thursday 10 December 2020

### Spiritual Resources & Reflections

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Dear friends,

The relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions makes it possible to once again worship on Sunday, when Mass is sung at 10 am. The church is also open for private prayer and public worship on Tuesday and Thursday from 11.30 am to 1 pm, and Mass is offered at 12.10 pm after the Angelus at 12 noon.

The decision to return to worship in community, even for private prayer, is not a straightforward matter, so we will continue to produce these newsletters for now.

In these Thursday newsletters, we offer ideas and opportunities for nourishing our personal and communal spiritual lives.

#### 1. From Fr Graeme – Bossiness in Prayer

The Advent prophet, John the Baptist, can help us a lot with our prayer for others and, indeed, ourselves. Many of us have a great tendency to wish to instruct God about what we want of him. We forget that God knows our needs before we even think of them.

John the Baptist was a very self-effacing man who even when given the chance to assert his own merits would calmly state: "I am not the Messiah ... I am a voice crying out in the desert, Make straight the way of the Lord!"

When we pray to God about someone, we are bringing our concern for this person to God. This is part of our relationship with God, that we feel able to share with God our foremost and most concealed thoughts.

It is a pity and a misuse of prayer when we lay out before God a recipe for someone's own good as if we know all the solutions. This is something like John the Baptist acting uncharacteristically and pre-empting whatever Jesus may do or be to that person. The Baptist knew his place.

In prayer we can dream (or daydream) about our solutions for people with God but it is always important to make the prayer offered, in the end, one which hands the problem over to God's providence. Prayer can be a time when we can set about being the sort of people we ideally need to be in our work of commending the Gospel. It is by our examples and a strong confidence about life in general that we can draw other people to God.

A criticism of Christian people is the idea that they think they think they know better than others and that prayer is a chance for them to manipulate others - at least with that intention. Not only is this a classic misunderstanding of prayer it is a very prejudiced view of Christians.

One way of countering such criticism is to make sure we pray humbly - "allowing" God to have the last word.

Advent is a season to be aware of our shortcomings and to pray about them as we all prepare to make a new start at Christmas.

Fr Graeme Kaines  
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). The Bible readings for each day can be found in *The Australian Lectionary*, and for reference the readings for the coming week are:

	<b>Morning Prayer</b>	<b>Evening Prayer</b>
Thursday 10 December	Ps 92, 93 Isaiah 9.2-17 Mark 8.1-13	Ps 94 Isaiah 45.9-25 2 Thessalonians 3
Friday 11 December	Ps 85, 86 Isaiah 48.12-22 1 Thessalonians 4.1-12	Ps 82, 90 Isaiah 33.1-22 Matthew 15.29-39
Saturday 12 December	Ps 145 Isaiah 49.1-13 1 Thessalonians 4.13-18	Ps 93, 94 Isaiah 35 Matthew 16.1-12
Sunday 13 December <i>The 3rd Sunday of Advent</i>	Ps 126 Isaiah 61.1-4, 8-11 John 1.6-8, 19-28	Ps 18.1-6, 48-50 Isaiah 60.15-22 Luke 7.18-28
Monday 14 December <i>St John of the Cross</i>	Ps 40 Isaiah 49.14-25 1 Thessalonians 5.1-11	Ps 25, 26 Isaiah 38.1-8 Matthew 16.13-28
Tuesday 15 December	Ps 70, 74 Isaiah 50 1 Thessalonians 5.12-28	Ps 50, 54 Isaiah 38.9-20 Matthew 17.1-13
Wednesday 16 December	Ps 75, 96 Isaiah 51.1-8 2 Thessalonians 1	Ps 25, 82 Isaiah 39 Matthew 17.14-20
Thursday 17 December	Ps 76, 97 Isaiah 51.9-16 2 Thessalonians 2	Ps 77, 98 Isaiah 51.17-23 2 Thessalonians 3

### 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 (App Store or Google Play). The Divine Office of the Catholic Church is available online at [www.ibreviary.com](http://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 we cannot attend at the church at the present time, 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 Graeme 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 will in the future be presented on our blog, <https://stmarymagdalenesadelaide.org/>. To access the tab, 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, both on the web site and on the Parish's Facebook page.

### 4. In the Church's Calendar

This week in the church's calendar we celebrate St Lucy, one of the church's earliest martyrs for the faith, 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.

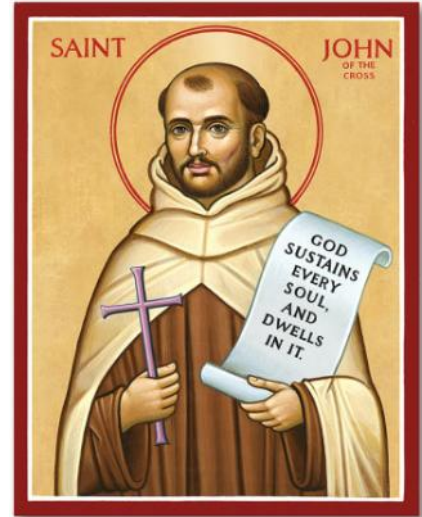


Lucy knew of the heroism of earlier virgin martyrs. She remained faithful to their example and to the example of the carpenter, whom she knew to be the Son of God.

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!

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## 5. From a *Spiritual Canticle* of St John of the Cross

*The knowledge of the mystery hidden within Christ Jesus*

Though holy doctors have uncovered many mysteries and wonders, and devout souls have understood them in this earthly condition of ours, yet the greater part still remains to be unfolded by them, and even to be understood by them.

We must then dig deeply in Christ. He is like a rich mine with many pockets containing treasures: however deep we dig we will never find their end or their limit. Indeed, in every pocket new seams of fresh riches are discovered on all sides.

For this reason the apostle Paul said of Christ: In him are hidden all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God. The soul cannot enter into these treasures, nor attain them, unless it first crosses into and enters the thicket of suffering, enduring interior and exterior

labours, and unless it first receives from God very many blessings in the intellect and in the senses, and has undergone long spiritual training.

All these are lesser things, disposing the soul for the lofty sanctuary of the knowledge of the mysteries of Christ: this is the highest wisdom attainable in this life.

Would that men might come at last to see that it is quite impossible to reach the thicket of the riches and wisdom of God except by first entering the thicket of much suffering, in such a way that the soul finds there its consolation and desire. The soul that longs for divine wisdom chooses first, and in truth, to enter the thicket of the cross.

Saint Paul therefore urges the Ephesians not to grow weary in the midst of tribulations, but to be steadfast and rooted and grounded in love, so that they may know with all the saints the breadth, the length, the height and the depth – to know what is beyond knowledge, the love of Christ, so as to be filled with all the fullness of God.

The gate that gives entry into these riches of his wisdom is the cross; because it is a narrow gate, while many seek the joys that can be gained through it, it is given to few to desire to pass through it.

## **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. Intentions for Your Daily 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 medical researchers, that they may be granted knowledge and wisdom as they search for a vaccine and cure. For refugees and asylum seekers, that they may find places of safety and welcome.

*For the church.* For all those who are challenged to be church in a different and unfamiliar way. In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, pray for the Dioceses of Singapore (South East Asia); Egbu (Nigeria); Egypt (Jerusalem & Middle East). In our national church, pray for the Bishop to the Armed Forces; and within the Diocese of Adelaide, for the Parish of Warradale.

*For our local community.* For the Collective as it resumes its ministry to the community in the Drop-In Centre is suspended, and for its guests as they seek places to eat and rest. 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. For all those affected by the COVID-19 coronavirus and all who care for them. For those who are commended to our prayers, especially Paull, Valerie, David, Sim, Chris, Clarice, Philip, Phyllis, Dulcie, Jasmin and Henry.

*For those who have died.* For those who have worked and worshipped in this place before us; all those who have died recently, especially June Schaeffer; those who have died as a result of COVID-19; and those whose anniversaries of death occur at about 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.

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This newsletter will normally be distributed weekly on Thursday. Any appropriate items should be emailed to the Parish Office, [omarymag@anglicaresa.com.au](mailto:omarymag@anglicaresa.com.au), by Tuesday evening at 5 pm.

