

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 12 January 2023

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.

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 provide some resources for prayer and reflection: enjoy!



St Paul addresses the Corinthians

1. From Fr Steven - Grace Under Pressure

The Bible readings used on Sundays and festivals in most mainline churches are based on the 1994 *Revised Common Lectionary*. The major principle behind the lectionary is that on a Sunday members of congregations should be able to hear the voice of each writer week by week. Thus, in any given year the writer of one of the first three gospels will be heard from beginning to end. Likewise the rest of the New Testament is heard, in some cases, virtually in total, in others in large part.

This year, the New Testament readings in the first few months of the lectionary are drawn from Paul's letters to the Corinthians. This Sunday, I will begin a three-part sermon series on Chapter 1 of the letter. The three sermons and texts are as follows.

1. Sunday 15 January *A community under grace* (1 Cor 1:1-9)
2. Sunday 22 January *The humanity of Corinth* (1 Cor 1:10-18)
3. Sunday 29 January *A shared sense of vocation* (1 Cor 1:18-31)

So, where is Corinth?

In the Roman empire, Corinth was a city state on the isthmus between Athens and Sparta. The modern city of Corinth is 5 kilometres north of the ancient City, about 80 km east of Athens. The old city was destroyed in 146 BCE and rebuilt by Julius Caesar in the year 44 as a colony for retired soldiers, emancipated slaves, and dispossessed peasants. It became a major commercial centre. It was ruled by rich families under the patronage of Rome.

And what is Paul's agenda?

Paul wrote two letters to this 'parish'. They predate the writing of the Gospels. Paul worked there—as he did in other places—by building a team of leaders.

Paul knew the Roman system. Paul knew how to work the system. His use of the concept of *ekklesia* provides us with an important insight into Paul's ministry.

In fifth/fourth century BCE Athens, *ekklesia* was a highly developed civic practice. The assembly met regularly. It was open to male citizens. The attendees were remunerated. The *agenda* was made available prior to the assembly. Its *business* came via a council.

In the assembly, participants were expected to speak with substance. In fact, the *ekklesia* was the place where free speech (*parrhesia*) was expected. Clearly, *ekklesia* is a political term, which makes its use in the early church a significant choice.

In first-century Christianity, the meaning of *ekklesia* had been adapted, in keeping with the practice of early Christian communities. In general, the term is best translated *assembly*, even though it has come to connote *Church*. In Paul, it came to mean the liturgical assembly, that is, it is the *ekklesia* of God in Christ.

Later, in his letter to the Galatians, the church as an *ekklesia* is very much an open space of freedom, where differences are accepted and celebrated (Gal 3:28).

The first letter to the Corinthians is valuable for its illuminations both of Paul's thoughts and of the problems of the early church. Our challenge today is to embrace its teaching and learning in the context of the real issues and real people of our own time.

Fr Steven

2. COVID-19 – Where are we now?

The ongoing impact of COVID-19 in the community has been considered by the Parish Council, which 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, in case of extreme weather!—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://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.

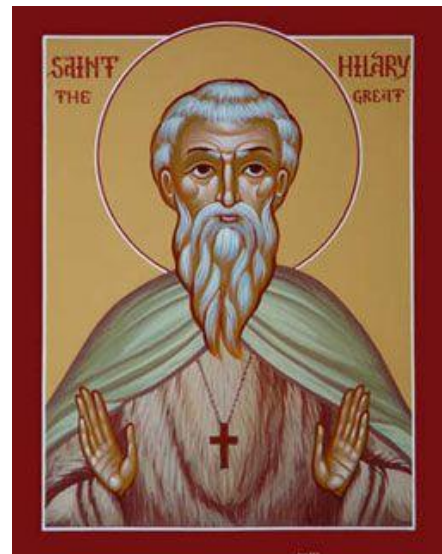
Service booklets as PDF files are still available for Sunday and weekday services on the web site and on the Parish's Facebook page.

5. This Week in the Calendar

This week in the church's calendar we celebrate St Hilary of Poitiers, bishop and teacher (d. 367), St Sava, first archbishop of Serbian Church (d. 1235), St Antony of Egypt, abbot (d. 356) and the Feast of the Confession of St Peter.

St Hilary (c.310-c.367) was a staunch defender of the divinity of Christ. His writings include some of the greatest theology on the Trinity, and while he was well regarded as a wise and gentle soul, he was, like his Master, labeled a "disturber of the peace."

Raised a pagan, he was converted to Christianity when he met his God of nature in the Scriptures. His wife was still living when he was chosen, against his will, to be the bishop of Poitiers in France. He was soon taken up with battling what became the scourge of the fourth century, Arianism, which denied the divinity of Christ. The heresy spread rapidly. Saint Jerome said "The world groaned and marvelled to find that it was Arian."



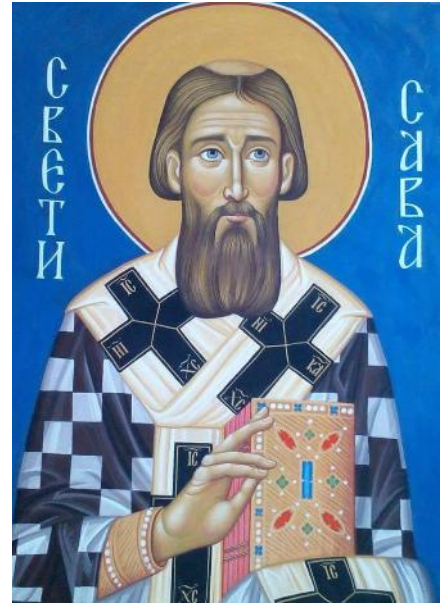
When Emperor Constantius ordered all the bishops of the West to sign a condemnation of Athanasius, the great defender of the faith in the East, Hilary refused and was banished from France to far off Phrygia.

While writing in exile, he was invited by some semi-Arians (hoping for reconciliation) to a council the emperor called to counteract the Council of Nicea. But Hilary predictably defended the Church, and when he sought public debate with the heretical bishop who had exiled him, the Arians, dreading the meeting and its outcome, pleaded with the emperor to send this troublemaker back home. Hilary was welcomed by his people.

Christ said his coming would bring not peace but a sword (see Matt. 10:34). The Gospels offer no support for us if we fantasize about a sunlit holiness that knows no problems. Christ did *not* escape at the last moment, though he did live happily ever after—after a life of controversy, problems, pain and frustration. Hilary, like all saints, simply had more of the same.

Nobly born, **St Sava** travelled at a young age to Mount Athos in Greece to lead a monastic life. There he was later joined by his father who assisted him in establishing a monastery which became a focal point of medieval Serbian culture and ecclesiastical leadership. In about 1208 he returned to Serbia to become superior of the monastery of Studenica, a centre of influence in the emerging Serbian church.

The southern part of the Serbian nation wavered for long periods in their ecclesiastical allegiance between Rome and Constantinople, and the matter came to a head when in 1217, Sava's brother Stefan was appointed king of the Serbian nation by the Pope. To counter the affinity to the Roman Catholic Church, Sava travelled in 1219 to Nicae, the refuge of the exiled patriarch of Constantinople, where he received the title of autocephalous archbishop of Serbia. Upon his return to Serbia, he crowned his brother again.



Sava organized the Serbian church into bishoprics headed by his former monastic colleagues and students. He then embarked on a cultural and ecclesiastical renaissance that included the establishment of schools and the beginnings of a medieval Serbian literature.

Having finished his work in his native land, the saint appointed a successor, then set off on a journey of no return, desiring "to end his days as a wanderer in a foreign land." He passed through Palestine, Syria and Persia, Babylon, Egypt and Anatolia, everywhere visiting the holy places, conversing with great ascetics, and collecting the holy relics of saints. Sava finished his wanderings at Trnovo in Bulgaria, where he died in 1237. The legacy of Saint Sava lives on in the Orthodox Church traditions of the Slavic nations.

The life of **St Anthony** will remind many people of Francis of Assisi. At 20, Anthony was so moved by the Gospel message, "Go, sell what you have, and give to [the] poor", that he actually did just that with his large inheritance. He is different from Francis in that most of Anthony's life was spent in solitude. He saw the world completely covered with snares, and gave the Church and the world the witness of solitary asceticism, great personal mortification and prayer. But no saint is antisocial, and Anthony drew many people to himself for spiritual healing and guidance.

At 54, he responded to many requests and founded a sort of monastery of scattered cells. Again, like Francis, he had great fear of "stately buildings and well-laden tables."



At 60, he hoped to be a martyr in the renewed Roman persecution of 311, fearlessly exposing himself to danger while giving moral and material support to those in prison. At 88, he was fighting the Arian heresy, that massive trauma from which it took the Church centuries to recover. "The mule kicking over the altar" denied the divinity of Christ.

Anthony is associated in art with a T-shaped cross, a pig and a book. The pig and the cross are symbols of his valiant warfare with the devil—the cross his constant means of power over evil spirits, the pig a symbol of the devil himself. The book recalls his preference for "the book of nature" over the printed word. Anthony died in solitude at age 105.

The Confession of Peter is a celebration of the role and office of Peter within the Church. The Catholic Church has long celebrated this festival as the “Chair of St Peter”, making a more direct reference to the Papacy.

We celebrate the feast for several reasons. Principally, it is a celebration of the authority of the bishop in the universal church, the authority which episcopal churches (including the Catholic, Orthodox and Anglican churches) hold was given by Jesus to Peter to lead and guide the Church in Jesus’ place. For Jesus told Peter that “you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church ...” (Mt 16:18). In the Letter to the Galatians, we see St Paul acknowledging this fact by seeking Peter’s approval for his ministry, for he recognized Peter as the first among the apostles (Gal 1:18).

The feast is also a celebration of the historic primacy of the Bishop of Rome. This has been a source of schisms and indeed wars throughout history, though in our time the work of bodies such as the Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission and the Orthodox-Catholic Consultations convened on several continents have all come



to acknowledge the historic role of the Bishop of Rome as the “first among equals”. It is a celebration of the role of shepherd or bishop of the world-wide Church.

Finally, we are celebrating the unity that the Chair of Saint Peter symbolizes. Since apostolic times, the various Churches founded by the original apostles were somewhat independent—partly due to distance and the lack of communication systems—yet united in faith under the leadership of Saint Peter.

Ecumenically speaking, many of the churches have come to accept the value of the Confession of Saint Peter and all that it stands for, especially as a sign of unity without uniformity. It is a unity that does not depend on the person who presently holds the office of Pope, for it is an authority and a unity that is bigger than any one person. Everything pointing to the fact that it is the Holy Spirit who truly runs the Church, but through various human beings who, of course, have their gifts and foibles.

We celebrate the feast of the Confession of Saint Peter rejoicing in the guidance and the role of the Holy Spirit, thanking Jesus for the authority he shares with we mere humans.

6. **St Hilary of Poitiers on the Holy Trinity**

May I serve you by making you known

I am well aware, almighty God and Father, that in my life I owe you a most particular duty. It is to make my every thought and word speak of you.

In fact, you have conferred on me this gift of speech, and it can yield no greater return than to be at your service. It is for making you known as Father, the Father of the only-begotten God, and preaching this to the world that knows you not and to the heretics who refuse to believe in you.

In this matter the declaration of my intention is only of limited value. For the rest, I need to pray for the gift of your help and your mercy. As we spread our sails of trusting faith and public

avowal before you, fill them with the breath of your Spirit, to drive us on as we begin this course of proclaiming your truth. We have been promised, and he who made the promise is trustworthy: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Yes, in our poverty we will pray for our needs. We will study the sayings of your prophets and apostles with unflagging attention, and knock for admittance wherever the gift of understanding is safely kept. But yours it is, Lord, to grant our petitions, to be present when we seek you and to open when we knock.

There is an inertia in our nature that makes us dull; and in our attempt to penetrate your truth we are held within the bounds of ignorance by the weakness of our minds. Yet we do comprehend divine ideas by earnest attention to your teaching and by obedience to the faith which carries us beyond mere human apprehension.

So we trust in you to inspire the beginnings of this ambitious venture, to strengthen its progress, and to call us into a partnership in the spirit with the prophets and the apostles. To that end, may we grasp precisely what they meant to say, taking each word in its real and authentic sense. For we are about to say what they already have declared as part of the mystery of revelation: that you are the eternal God, the Father of the eternal, only-begotten God; that you are one and not born from another; and that the Lord Jesus is also one, born of you from all eternity. We must not proclaim a change in truth regarding the number of gods. We must not deny that he is begotten of you who are the one God; nor must we assert that he is other than the true God, born of you who are truly God the Father.

Impart to us, then, the meaning of the words of Scripture and the light to understand it, with reverence for the doctrine and confidence in its truth. Grant that we may express what we believe. Through the prophets and apostles we know about you, the one God the Father, and the one Lord Jesus Christ. May we have the grace, in the face of heretics who deny you, to honour you as God, who is not alone, and to proclaim this as truth.

7. Hymn to St Sava

The first "Life of St Sava" written by Domentijan tells us that a disciple of St Sava named Atanasije delivered a eulogic hymn to the Saint on the occasion of the return of his relics from Trnovo to the Monastery Mileševa in Raška where the commander of the Ottoman army ordered his bones to be burnt, in the hope that the emerging desire for Serbian freedom might be extinguished.

*O divine, O beloved,
O sweet and most holy voice,
O God-glorifying Sava,
you have firmly promised
to be with us until the end of this world,
O divinely-adorned Sava,
and we, your beloved children,
who have you as our strength
and our divinely inspired hope,
are rejoicing now.
O what a wonder, brethren,
more splendid than any other wonder,
awesome and filled with ineffable amazement.*

*O, great is the power of God
and ineffable are His wonders,
so that one who loves God
and abides by His will
cannot be destroyed even by the grave
and the earth cannot imprison him.*

8. From the Life of Saint Anthony by St. Athanasius

Saint Anthony receives his vocation

When Anthony was about eighteen or twenty years old, his parents died, leaving him with an only sister. He cared for her as she was very young, and also looked after their home.

Not six months after his parents' death, as he was on his way to church for his usual visit, he began to think of how the apostles had left everything and followed the Saviour, and also of those mentioned in the book of Acts who had sold their possessions and brought the apostles the money for distribution to the needy. He reflected too on the great hope stored up in heaven for such as these. This was all in his mind when, entering the church just as the Gospel was being read, he heard the Lord's words to the rich man: If you want to be perfect, go and sell all you have and give the money to the poor – you will have riches in heaven. Then come and follow me.

It seemed to Anthony that it was God who had brought the saints to his mind and that the words of the Gospel had been spoken directly to him. Immediately he left the church and gave away to the villagers all the property he had inherited, about 200 acres of very beautiful and fertile land, so that it would cause no distraction to his sister and himself. He sold all his other possessions as well, giving to the poor the considerable sum of money he collected. However, to care for his sister he retained a few things.

The next time he went to church he heard the Lord say in the Gospel: Do not be anxious about tomorrow. Without a moment's hesitation he went out and gave the poor all that he had left. He placed his sister in the care of some well-known and trustworthy virgins and arranged for her to be brought up in the convent. Then he gave himself up to the ascetic life, not far from his own home. He kept a careful watch over himself and practised great austerity. He did manual work because he had heard the words: If anyone will not work, do not let him eat. He spent some of his earnings on bread and the rest he gave to the poor.

Having learned that we should always be praying, even when we are by ourselves, he prayed without ceasing. Indeed, he was so attentive when Scripture was read that nothing escaped him and because he retained all he heard, his memory served him in place of books.

Seeing the kind of life he lived, the villagers and all the good men he knew called him the friend of God, and they loved him as both son and brother.

9. St Leo the Great on the Confession of St Peter

The Church of Christ rises on the firm foundation of Peter's faith

Out of the whole world one man, Peter, is chosen to preside at the calling of all nations, and to be set over all the apostles and all the fathers of the Church. Though there are in God's people many shepherds, Peter is thus appointed to rule in his own person those whom Christ also rules as the original ruler. Beloved, how great and wonderful is this sharing of his power that God in his goodness has given to this man. Whatever Christ has willed to be shared in common

by Peter and the other leaders of the Church, it is only through Peter that he has given to others what he has not refused to bestow on them.

The Lord now asks the apostles as a whole what men think of him. As long as they are recounting the uncertainty born of human ignorance, their reply is always the same.

But when he presses the disciples to say what they think themselves, the first to confess his faith in the Lord is the one who is first in rank among the apostles.

Peter says: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"*. Jesus replies: *"Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father who is in heaven"*. You are blessed, he means, because my Father has taught you. You have not been deceived by earthly opinion, but have been enlightened by inspiration from heaven. It was not flesh and blood that pointed me out to you, but the one whose only-begotten Son I am.

He continues: *And I say to you*. In other words, as my Father has revealed to you my godhead, so I in my turn make known to you your pre-eminence. *You are Peter*: though I am the inviolable rock, *the cornerstone that makes both one*, the foundation apart from which no one can lay any other, yet you also are a rock, for you are given solidity by my strength, so that which is my very own because of my power is common between us through your participation.

And upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. On this strong foundation, he says, I will build an everlasting temple. The great height of my Church, which is to penetrate the heavens, shall rise on the firm foundation of this faith.

The gates of hell shall not silence this confession of faith; the chains of death shall not bind it. Its words are the words of life. As they lift up to heaven those who profess them, so they send down to hell those who contradict them.

Blessed Peter is therefore told: *To you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth is also bound in heaven. Whatever you lose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven.*

The authority vested in this power passed also to the other apostles, and the institution established by this decree has been continued in all the leaders of the Church. But it is not without good reason that what is bestowed on all is entrusted to one. For Peter received it separately in trust because he is the prototype set before all the rulers of the Church.

10. 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 Osun North East (Nigeria). In our national church, pray for the Diocese of Grafton; and within the Diocese of Adelaide, for the Parish of St Luke's, Adelaide.

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, 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 Hilary, St Sava, St Anthony, St Peter, 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.

