



Keeping Community Spiritual Resources & Reflections

Thursday 15 July 2021

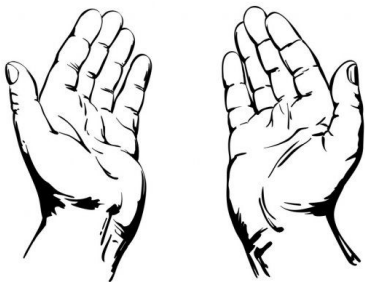
Dear friends,

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 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 Gwilym – A Reflection on Prayer



It is a brave, foolhardy or presumptuous person who gives advice on how to pray. Grahame Brady wrote "Trying to define prayer is like trying to define eating. Whatever we say about it does not begin to describe the myriad experiences which come under the umbrella of the word 'prayer'. Prayer, like eating, comes naturally to all human beings. We are all children of the one God and we seem to have, built into us, the need and ability to pray."

And yet, we all also feel the need to ask for advice about prayer. Luke records that Jesus' disciples asked him, "Teach us how to pray, just as John taught his disciples." Jesus answer was to teach them what we now call "The Lord's Prayer." But he didn't stop there, he continued with a parable about someone woken from sleep by a neighbour who wanted to feed a guest. The New International Version of the Bible refers to the neighbour's "shameless audacity" which produces the desired result.

It seems to me that there are two points which can be made. One is that prayer is a communication with God. Desmond Tutu has written, "There is something about becoming a baby in the presence of God; being embraced, being cradled and being made to know that you are special and precious and loved." Isaiah, in chapter 43, verses 1 to 4, hears God saying, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" finishing with the words, "You are precious in my sight and honoured and I love you." It's one of my favourite passages (of which there are many) and it refers to Jacob and Israel, but I am happy to take it for myself, putting my own name in the passage to make it mine. I have also taken the passage to others, and given God's love to their name.

The second point is the message of the parable, which Luke alone records. Some call it the Friend at Midnight, or the Importunate Friend and compare it with the story of the Unjust Judge and the Importunate Widow in Luke 18. Luke connects the parable with the teaching, "seek and you shall find..." and it's often used to encourage persistence in prayer. This is a really good teaching, because the best way to learn how to pray is by praying. We almost always learn best by doing.

But the message which jumps out at me, personally, from this parable is that part of prayer is the action which accompanies it. The Prophets, Israel's people of prayer, insisted that prayer without action is repugnant to God. See Amos 3:21 to 24 which ends with the memorable word, "let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

This is a frightening message, indeed. It is certainly "shameless audacity" for me to ask God to do something when the solution lies in my hands. But it is also right and proper for me to hand over to God those things which I cannot do anything about. This is the essence of intercessory prayer. I commit to God those things which lie beyond my ability to cope. They may be personal or cosmic, local or worldwide; they may be things where I am involved but feel that my efforts are going nowhere.

Nobody can teach another the best way to pray. God knows our needs even before we open our hearts or our lips. And even if we think or say or do nothing at all, the Holy Spirit is there to intercede for us, "with sighs too deep for words". (from Romans 8:26-27)

Peace be with you,

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 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 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://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.

4. In the Church's Calendar

In the coming week we celebrate our patron, St Mary Magdalene. By way of a reflection, here is a commentary by the American artist Richard Stodart on his 1995 image of St Mary Magdalene. A copy of this stands on the voice candle-stand near the shrine of St Mary Magdalene.

Often conflated with the penitent Mary in the Bible, Mary Magdalene was a wealthy woman from the city of Magdala, Galilee, who was healed by Jesus of an illness of possession by seven demons. She subsequently dedicated herself to Jesus, following Him everywhere, listening to His divine teaching, and serving His ministry with her estate. She accompanied Jesus to Golgotha, succored Him during His suffering on the cross, and was present when His body was taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb. After His Resurrection, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene in the sepulchre and requested her to tell the disciples about His Resurrection. Complying with His request, she said to them, "Christ is risen!"



My painting of Mary Magdalene is based on a story in which Mary Magdalene is said to have travelled to Rome to spread news of the Resurrection. While in Rome, Mary Magdalene testified to Tiberius Caesar about the Resurrection. Doubting her testimony, Tiberius Caesar said to her: "There is as much chance of Jesus rising from the dead as an egg in the basket you are carrying turning red." Whereupon, Mary Magdalene held up an egg and it turned red.

In this painting, the egg is white to express Mary Magdalene's faith that it will turn red and confirm the truth of the Resurrection. Her gaze is one of sacred power, beauty, and compassion. Centered in the blue vertical column that pierces her corona are three vertical marks at her heart—signifying entwined body, mind, and spirit.

Mass on St Mary Magdalene's Day, Thursday 22 July, will be at 12.10 pm. We will also celebrate the Patronal Festival on Sunday 25 July.

5. Mary Magdalene – 21st century recognition

On 16 June 2016, Pope Francis raised the status of the Church's annual commemoration of the Mary Magdalene from a Memorial to a Feast. In doing this, she gained a dignity to the liturgical celebration of St. Mary Magdalene similar to that of the apostles. As she is our Patron, we have always celebrated her festival with great solemnity, but now the rest of the world shares a greater awareness of the woman famous called the "apostle to the apostles" by St Thomas Aquinas.

According to the Gospel, the first person to encounter the risen Christ is the female disciple Mary of Magdala, also known as Mary Magdalene. John recounts the amazing story in the Gospel passage proclaimed at Easter Sunday Mass: "On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb" (Jn 20:1).

Nothing in the Gospel occurs by mere chance. It is highly significant that in a society where men wielded power in almost every aspect of life, Christ chose a woman to be the first to see him after his resurrection and to announce the news to his apostles.

In Mary's life, we glimpse "the greatness of the mystery of mercy," as Archbishop Arthur Roche, the secretary of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, mentioned in his explanation of the pope's decision. "St. Mary Magdalene, who proclaimed life from the tomb, a place of death, is a model for all Christians to trust in Christ who is alive and risen." St. Mary Magdalene matters in God's dramatic designs for the world's salvation in and through Christ.

6. On Mary Magdalene – From a Homily by St Gregory the Great

She longed for Christ, though she thought he had been taken away

When Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and did not find the Lord's body, she thought it had been taken away and so informed the disciples. After they came and saw the tomb, they too believed what Mary had told them. The text then says: "The disciples went back home," and it adds: "but Mary wept and remained standing outside the tomb."

We should reflect on Mary's attitude and the great love she felt for Christ; for though the disciples had left the tomb, she remained. She was still seeking the one she had not found, and while she sought she wept; burning with the fire of love, she longed for him who she thought had been taken away. And so it happened that the woman who stayed behind to seek Christ was the only one to see him. For perseverance is essential to any good deed, as the voice of truth tells us: "Whoever perseveres to the end will be saved."

At first she sought but did not find, but when she persevered it happened that she found what she was looking for. When our desires are not satisfied, they grow stronger, and becoming stronger they take hold of their object. Holy desires likewise grow with anticipation, and if they do not grow they are not really desires. Anyone who succeeds in attaining the truth has burned with such a great love. As David says: "My soul has thirsted for the living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" And so also in the Song of Songs the Church says: "I was wounded by love;" and again: "My soul is melted with love."

"Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?" She is asked why she is sorrowing so that her desire might be strengthened; for when she mentions whom she is seeking, her love is kindled all the more ardently.

"Jesus says to her: Mary." Jesus is not recognised when he calls her "woman"; so he calls her by name, as though he were saying: Recognise me as I recognise you; for I do not know you as I know others; I know you as yourself. And so Mary, once addressed by name, recognises who is speaking. She immediately calls him "rabboni," that is to say, "teacher," because the one whom she sought outwardly was the one who inwardly taught her to keep on searching.

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. For all those who are challenged to be church in a different and unfamiliar way. In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, pray for the Diocese of Cyprus and the Gulf (Jerusalem & the Middle East). In our national church, pray for the Diocese of Melbourne; and within our own Diocese, for the Parishes of Salsibury and Parafield Gardens.

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. 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, Sym, Dulcie, Jasmin, Henry, Fr Gary Priest, Fr Bart O'Donovan, Beth, Linda, and Fr Peter Garland.

For those who have died. For those who have worked and worshipped in this place before us; all those who have died recently, 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, 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, omarymag@anglicaresa.com.au, by Tuesday evening at 5 pm.

