

# St Mary Magdalene's Anglican Church

Moore Street, Adelaide



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

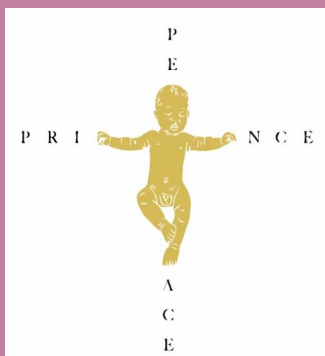
## Keeping Community      Thursday 16 December 2021

### Spiritual Resources & Reflections

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 – Mysticism – A few brief notes



Tuesday 14 December is the Feast Day of St John of the Cross, who was a Spanish Catholic priest, mystic, and a Carmelite friar, born in 1542. His family was of *converso* origin, meaning that at some time in the past, they had converted from Judaism, either pragmatically or forcibly. He is a major figure of the Counter-Reformation in Spain, and one of the thirty-six Doctors of the Church. He died on 14 December 1591, and his relics were quarrelled over by his followers and devotees. His head, trunk, arms and legs were variously distributed!

He is best known for his writings, although he was very active in the reforming of the Carmelite Order, striving to restore its original spirituality and discipline. In particular his *Dark Night of the Soul* is still very influential today. You will perhaps remember that I referred to it in a sermon! (You do remember all my sermons, don't you?)

This article today is a reflection on Mysticism, the spiritual discipline which seeks to go beyond the physical world and explore the spiritual dimension of being. Mysticism has been and still is an important part of most religions. This is largely due to the human desire to draw close to God and either to be taken up into the deity, or to become united spiritually with the deity.

The picture above shows Hildegard of Bingen, (1098–1179), an amazing woman, whose writings, paintings and music show a profound mystical understanding. Here she is being inspired by the Holy Spirit as tongues of fire.

Mysticism is also very influential in other spiritual practices not associated with particular religions. Hallucinogenic drugs, such as LSD, and plants (the so-called "magic mushrooms") are

associated with the desire to attain an altered state of consciousness and a sense of unity with "the Other".

Some Christian Mystics, such as Malcolm Fox, have suggested that these methods are not inappropriate for use by Christians.

The information we have about Christian Mystics comes largely from their writings, either compiled by themselves or by their followers.

Walter Hilton for example (c. 1340/1345 – 24 March 1396) was an English Augustinian mystic, whose works gained influence in 15th-century England and Wales. His book, *The Ladder of Perfection*, was written "to be of immediate practical help in the struggle for spiritual growth." Its theme is the gradual progress of the soul towards illumination and union with God.

Another medieval mystic was Margery Kempe (c.1373–after 1438), known for writing through dictation *The Book of Margery Kempe*, a work considered by some to be the first autobiography in the English language. Her book chronicles Kempe's domestic tribulations, her extensive pilgrimages to holy sites in Europe and the Holy Land, as well as her mystical conversations with God.

Julian of Norwich, (1343–after 1416), was an English anchoress of the Middle Ages, who wrote a record of her "Showings", calling them *Revelations of Divine Love*. Her reflection on a hazelnut is rightly famous: "... a little thing, the quantity of a hazel nut, lying in the palm of my hand, as it seemed. And it was as round as any ball. I looked upon it with the eye of my understanding, and thought, 'What may this be?' And it was answered generally thus, 'It is all that is made.' I marvelled how it might last, for I thought it might suddenly have fallen to nothing for littleness. And I was answered in my understanding: It lasts and ever shall, for God loves it."

In modern times, Evelyn Underhill (6 December 1875 – 15 June 1941) was an English AngloCatholic writer and pacifist known for her numerous works on religion and spiritual practice, in particular Christian mysticism. She was a poet and novelist as well as a pacifist and mystic. An only child, she described her early mystical insights as "abrupt experiences of the peaceful, undifferentiated plane of reality—like the 'still desert' of the mystic—in which there was no multiplicity nor need of explanation". The meaning of these experiences became a lifelong quest and a source of private angst, provoking her to research and write.

In the English-speaking world, she was one of the most widely read writers on such matters in the first half of the 20th century. No other book of its type matched that of her best-known work, *Mysticism*, published in 1911.

I hope this brief insight into Christian mysticism is interesting and helpful,

God bless you all,

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](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 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](mailto:leonie@redirt.com.au), phone 0409 691 651

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

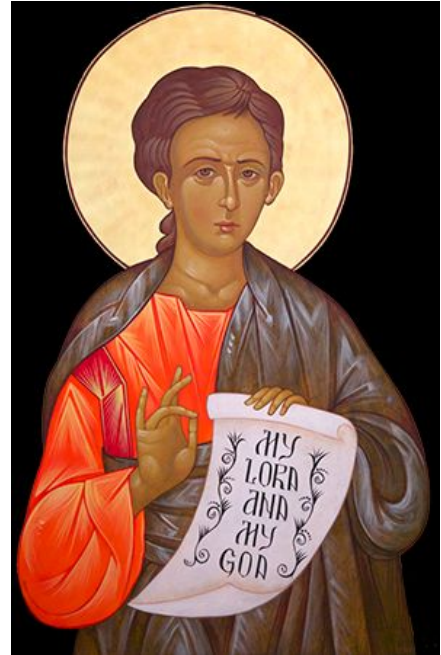
Alison and Leonie

## 5. In the Church's Calendar

In the week before Christmas, the church celebrates only a single saint, St Thomas the Apostle.

**St Thomas** has long been known mainly for a single remark that caused him to be named "Doubting Thomas." But if he doubted, he also believed. He made what is certainly the most explicit statement of faith in the New Testament: "My Lord and My God!" and, in so expressing his faith, gave Christians a prayer that will be said till the end of time.

Thomas should be equally well-known for his courage. Perhaps what he said was impetuous—and along with the other disciples, he ran away from danger—but he can scarcely have been insincere when he expressed his willingness to die with Jesus. The occasion was when Jesus proposed to go to Bethany after Lazarus had died. Since Bethany was near Jerusalem, this meant walking into the very midst of his enemies and to almost certain death. Realizing this, Thomas said to the other apostles, "Let us also go to die with him" (John 11:16b).



The example of St Thomas is one which we later Christians can all take to heart. Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." (John 20:29). A salutary lesson to us all, two thousand years on.

Thomas shares the lot of Peter the impetuous, James and John, the "sons of thunder," Philip and his foolish request to see the Father—indeed all the apostles in their weakness and lack of understanding. We must not exaggerate these facts, however, for Christ did not pick worthless men. But their human weakness again points up the fact that holiness is a gift of God, not a human creation; it is given to ordinary men and women with weaknesses; it is God who gradually transforms the weaknesses into the image of Christ, the courageous, trusting, and loving one.

St Thomas's Day was long a popular day for ordinations, so that the newly ordained clergy could officiate for the first time at Christmas.

---

## 6. The Church Fathers on St Thomas

*From a homily on the Gospels by Saint Gregory the Great*

Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. He was the only disciple absent; on his return he heard what had happened but refused to believe it. The Lord came a second time; he offered his side for the disbelieving disciple to touch, held out his hands, and showing the scars of his wounds, healed the wound of his disbelief.

Dearly beloved, what do you see in these events? Do you really believe that it was by chance that this chosen disciple was absent, then came and heard, heard and doubted, doubted and touched, touched and believed? It was not by chance but in God's providence. In a marvellous way God's mercy arranged that the disbelieving disciple, in touching the wounds of his master's body, should heal our wounds of disbelief. The disbelief of Thomas has done more for our faith than the faith of the other disciples. As he touches Christ and is won over to belief, every doubt is cast aside and our faith is strengthened. So the disciple who doubted, then felt Christ's wounds, becomes a witness to the reality of the resurrection.

Touching Christ, he cried out: My Lord and my God. Jesus said to him: Because you have seen me, Thomas, you have believed. Paul said: Faith is the guarantee of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. It is clear, then, that faith is the proof of what can not be seen. What is seen gives knowledge, not faith. When Thomas saw and touched, why was he told: You have believed because you have seen me? Because what he saw and what he believed were different things. God cannot be seen by mortal man. Thomas saw a human being, whom he acknowledged to be God, and said: My Lord and my God. Seeing, he believed; looking at one who was true man, he cried out that this was God, the God he could not see.

What follows is reason for great joy: Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed. There is here a particular reference to ourselves; we hold in our hearts one we have not seen in the flesh. We are included in these words, but only if we follow up our faith with good works. The true believer practises what he believes. But of those who pay only lip service to faith, Paul has this to say: They profess to know God, but they deny him in their works. Therefore James says: Faith without works is dead.

## 7. The last days of Advent – The “O” Antiphons

Every day, the church celebrates “The Divine Office”, the daily round of prayer at morning, throughout the day, and at night.

In the last days of Advent, from 17 December, a custom arose as early as the 8th century whereby the daily singing of the Magnificat, Mary’s song “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord”, was preceded by a special “antiphon” that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament. These antiphons were the first of their type, ancient poems written in the early centuries of the Church for reading in this time of preparation.

Each antiphon begins with an exclamation of a title for the Messiah drawn from the Old Testament, a deliberate way of connecting the coming of Christ with the prophetic writings of the Hebrews scriptures, and to proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfilment not only of Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well.

- *O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love: come to teach us the path of knowledge!*
- *O Leader (Lord) of the House of Israel, giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai: come to rescue us with your mighty power!*
- *O Root of Jesse’s stem, sign of God’s love for all his people: come to save us without delay!*
- *O Key of David, opening the gates of God’s eternal Kingdom: come and free the prisoners of darkness!*
- *O Radiant Dawn, splendour of eternal light, sun of justice: come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.*
- *O King of all nations and keystone of the Church: come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!*
- *O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law: come to save us, Lord our God!*

Along with these exclamations, the repeated use of the imperative “Come!” embodies the longing of all for the Divine Messiah.

The popular hymn “O come, O come, Emmanuel” draws on the O Antiphons for its inspiration. For some years – though not, of course, this year – we have sung verses of this hymn each week as we light the Advent candle. The repetition of the hymn and its beautiful tune anchors us firmly in the longing and anticipation of Advent, and also connects us to the evening prayer of the whole Church in the last week of Advent.

*A Meditation on the O Antiphons*

**O Wisdom,**

*Sophia's child,  
and Mary's too,  
bring us back to you.*

**O Adonai,**

*set us free  
of fear, despair,  
misogyny.*

**O Justice Flower,**

*of Jesse tree,  
uproot our hatreds.  
Wash us clean  
in just-reign waters,  
plant us deep in Thee.*

**O Key of David,**

*open heaven's gate  
unlock, unblock,  
a captive people  
too long enthralled  
by hate.*

**O Radiant Dawn,**

*light the way  
of all who long  
to preach, to teach,  
to consecrate  
heavenly hosts  
of God's indwelling.*

**O Emmanuel,**

*strengthen weary arms,  
steady trembling knees  
bring surcease of sorrow.*

**O Advent Light,**

*dispel death's dark shadow.  
Awaken a waiting world  
to life's fresh-blessed tomorrow.*

Sr Christine Shenk CSJ

---

## 8. 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 Ikka (Nigeria). In our national church, pray for the Diocese of Newcastle; and within the Diocese of Adelaide, for AnglicareSA and its Administrative Staff.

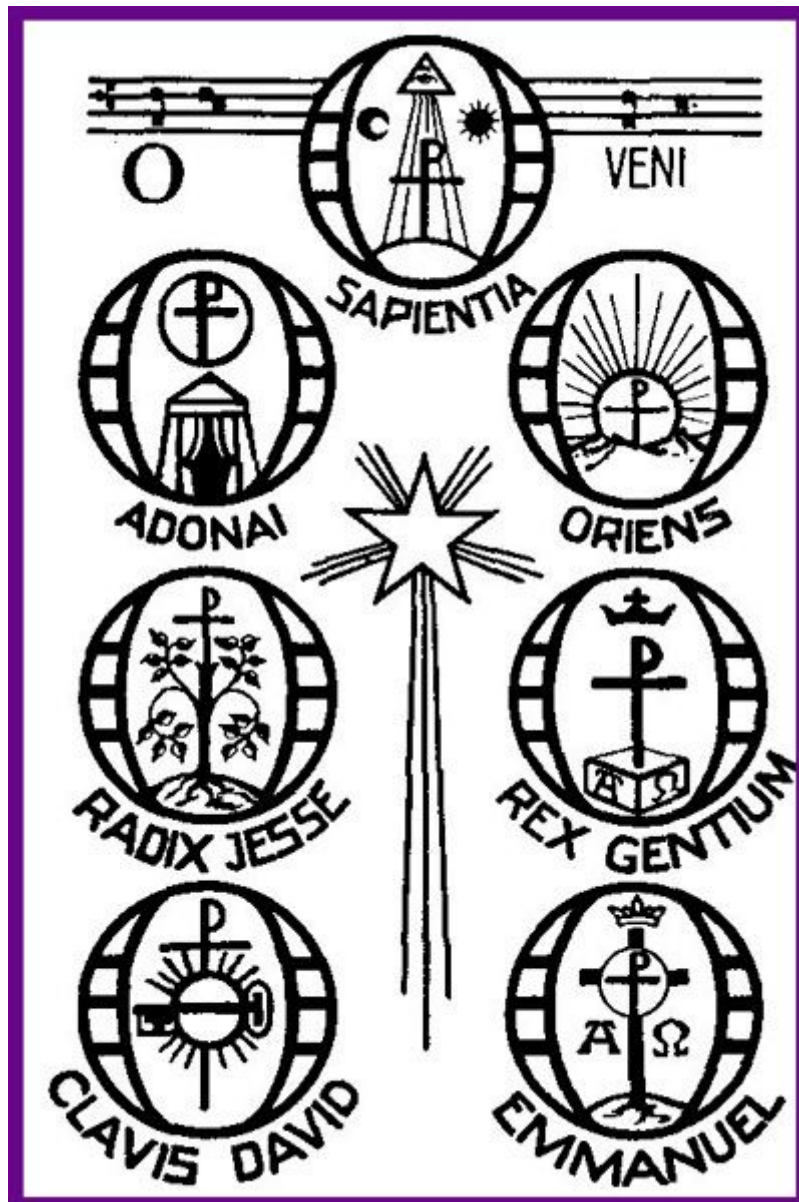
*For our local community.* For the Collective and its ministry in the local community. For the Magdalene Centre, as it deals with the need to change the way it delivers services in order to safeguard the health of customers, staff and volunteers.

*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, 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 Thomas, 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](mailto:StMMAdeelaide.Parish@outlook.com), by Tuesday evening at 5 pm.