

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 18 January 2024

Dear friends,

This newsletter was developed as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold and our ability to gather for worship was so severely challenged. Thanks be to God, we are now able to gather together to celebrate the Word and Sacraments, and to come to church for private prayer. And the demand for and appeal of these newsletters has continued.

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 provide some resources for prayer and reflection: enjoy!



1. Study, share, reflect and grow

In the coming week, Parish Council will discuss in broad terms the parish program for 2024. This includes canvassing ideas about study and discussion groups. What ideas have you got?

Presently, the Adult Enquirer's course is in full flight. And, in terms of shared wisdom and passionate engagement, this has been a great success. Later this year, I will be running a long-term study on the sacraments, which is premised on a sacramental view of the world. In the process, this course honours the tradition, but addresses the contemporary world.

I am also keen to run a half-day workshop on masculinity for the church and the wider community.

So, what suggestions have you got for groups and courses? Lent is early this year, how do we honour our Lenten journey. The Gospel of Mark could make a great study? What about Advent? What about in-between? Last year, our half day Advent retreat was wonderful. What about this year? In addition, Pauline Smith has had experience in convening a poetry reading group, and is keen to start one here (see next Sunday's pew sheet for details).

Let me, and the Council Members know your ideas.

Fr Steven

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 *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 the [Angelus](#) at 9 am, 12 noon and 6 pm.

3. 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://stmarymagdalenesadeladeide.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. This Week in the Calendar

This week in the church's calendar we celebrate the ancient feast of the Confession of St Peter, and other saints of the early church including the martyrs St Agnes and St Vincent, and the companions of St Paul, including Timothy, Titus and Silas.

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 us mere humans.

St Agnes of Rome (c.291-c.304) Almost nothing is known of this saint except that she was very young—12 or 13—when she was martyred in the last half of the third century.

Legend has it that Agnes was a beautiful girl whom many young men wanted to marry. Among those she refused, one reported her to the authorities for being a Christian. She was arrested and confined to a house of prostitution. The legend continues that a man who looked upon her lustfully lost his sight and had it restored by her prayer. Agnes was condemned, executed, and buried near Rome in a catacomb that eventually was named after her. St Agnes is a symbol that holiness does not depend on length of years, experience, or human effort. It is a gift God offers to all.



St Vincent of Zaragoza (d.304). Most of what we know about this saint comes from the poet Prudentius, whose record of Vincent’s life seems to have been rather freely coloured by his own imagination. But Saint Augustine, in one of his sermons on Saint Vincent, speaks of having the Acts of his martyrdom before him. We are at least sure of his name, his being a deacon, the place of his death and burial. According to the story we have, Vincent was ordained deacon by his friend Saint Valerius of Zaragoza in Spain. The Roman emperors had published edicts against the clergy in 303, and Vincent and his bishop were imprisoned in Valencia. Valerius was sent into exile, and Dacian, the Roman governor, now turned the full force of his fury on Vincent, who was tortured to the point of death.



The martyrs are heroic examples of what God's power can do. It is humanly impossible, we realise, for someone to go through tortures such as Vincent had and remain faithful. But it is equally true that by human power alone no one can remain faithful, even without torture or suffering. God does not come to our rescue at isolated, "special" moments: God is with us for ever.

The Companions of Paul, including Timothy, Titus and Silas. What we know from the New Testament of **Timothy's** life makes it sound like that of a modern harried bishop. He had the honour of being a fellow apostle with Paul, both sharing the privilege of preaching the gospel and suffering for it. Timothy had a Greek father and a Jewish mother named Eunice. Being the product of a "mixed" marriage, he was considered illegitimate by the Jews. It was his grandmother, Lois, who first became Christian. Timothy was a convert of Paul around the year 47 and later joined him in his apostolic work. He was with Paul at the founding of the Church in Corinth. During the 15 years he worked with Paul, he became one of his most faithful and trusted friends. He was sent on difficult missions by Paul—often in the face of great disturbance in local churches which Paul had founded.

Timothy was with Paul in Rome during the latter's house arrest. At some period Timothy himself was in prison (Hebrews 13:23). Paul installed him as his representative at the Church of Ephesus.

Timothy was comparatively young for the work he was doing. Several references seem to indicate that he was timid. And one of Paul's most frequently quoted lines was addressed to him: "Stop drinking only water, but have a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent illnesses" (1 Timothy 5:23).

Titus was a close friend and disciple of Paul, as well as a fellow missionary. He was Greek, apparently from Antioch. Even though Titus was a Gentile, Paul would not let him be forced to undergo circumcision at Jerusalem. Titus is seen as a peacemaker, administrator, and a great friend.



Paul's second letter to Corinth affords an insight into the depth of his friendship with Titus, and the great fellowship they had in preaching the gospel.

When Paul was having trouble with the community at Corinth, Titus was the bearer of Paul's severe letter and was successful in smoothing things out. Paul writes he was strengthened not only by the arrival of Titus but also "by the encouragement with which he was encouraged in regard to you, as he told us of your yearning, your lament, your zeal for me, so that I rejoiced even more.... And his heart goes out to you all the more, as he remembers the obedience of all of you, when you received him with fear and trembling" (2 Corinthians 7:7a, 15).

The Letter to Titus addresses him as the administrator of the Christian community on the island of Crete, charged with organizing it, correcting abuses, and appointing presbyter-bishops.

5. 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.

6. St Ambrose on St Agnes

Too young to be punished, yet old enough for a martyr's crown

Today is the birthday of a virgin; let us imitate her purity. It is the birthday of a martyr; let us offer ourselves in sacrifice. It is the birthday of Saint Agnes, who is said to have suffered martyrdom at the age of twelve. The cruelty that did not spare her youth shows all the more clearly the power of faith in finding one so young to bear it witness.

There was little or no room in that small body for a wound. Though she could scarcely receive the blow, she could rise superior to it. Girls of her age cannot bear even their parents' frowns and, pricked by a needle, weep as for a serious wound. Yet she shows no fear of the blood-stained hands of her executioners. She stands undaunted by heavy, clanking chains. She offers her whole body to be put to the sword by fierce soldiers. She is too young to know of death, yet is ready to face it. Dragged against her will to the altars, she stretches out her hands to the Lord in the midst of the flames, making the triumphant sign of Christ the victor on the altars of sacrilege. She puts her neck and hands in iron chains, but no chain can hold fast her tiny limbs.

A new kind of martyrdom! Too young to be punished, yet old enough for a martyr's crown; unfitted for the contest, yet effortless in victory, she shows herself a master in valour despite the handicap of youth. As a bride she would not be hastening to join her husband with the same joy she shows as a virgin on her way to punishment, crowned not with flowers but with holiness of life, adorned not with braided hair but with Christ himself.

In the midst of tears, she sheds no tears herself. The crowds marvel at her recklessness in throwing away her life untasted, as if she had already lived life to the full. All are amazed that one not yet of legal age can give her testimony to God. So she succeeds in convincing others of her testimony about God, though her testimony in human affairs could not yet be accepted. What is beyond the power of nature, they argue, must come from its creator.

7. St Augustine of Hippo on St Vincent Martyr

Christ the king of martyrs

To you, said the Apostle Paul, it has been granted for Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.

Vincent had received both these gifts; he had received them, and he kept them. After all, if he had not received them, what would he have had? But he did have faithfulness in his words, he did have endurance in his sufferings.

So do not any of you be too self-assured when offering a word; do not be too confident in your own powers when suffering trials or temptations; because it is from him that we have the wisdom to speak good things wisely, from him the patience to endure bad things bravely.

Call to mind the Lord Christ warning and encouraging his disciples in the gospel; call to mind the king of martyrs equipping his troops with spiritual weapons, indicating the wars to be fought, lending assistance, promising rewards; first saying to his disciples, *In this world you will have distress*; then immediately adding words that would allay their terrors: *But have confidence: I myself have vanquished the world.*

So why should we be surprised, dearly beloved, if Vincent was victorious in him by whom the world was vanquished? *In this world*, he says, *you will have distress*; such that, even if it distresses, it cannot oppress you; even if it knocks you down, it cannot knock you out. The world mounts a double attack on the soldiers of Christ. It wheedles in order to lead them astray; but it also terrifies, in order to break them. Let us not be held fast by our own pleasures, let us not be terrified by someone else's cruelty, and the world has been vanquished.

At each attack, Christ comes running to the defence, and the Christian is not vanquished. If, in this passion of Vincent's, one only gave thought to human powers of endurance, it would begin to look unbelievable; but if one acknowledges divine power, it ceases even to be wonderful.

Such hideous cruelty was being unleashed on the martyr's body, and such calm serenity was displayed in his voice; such harsh, savage punishments being applied to his limbs, but such assurance echoing in his words, that we would have imagined that in some marvellous way, while Vincent was suffering, that it was someone else and not the speaker that was being tortured.

And indeed, my dearest brethren, that is how it was; undoubtedly that is how it was: someone else was speaking. Christ, you see, promised even this to his witnesses in the gospel, when he was preparing them for this sort of contest. For he said: *Do not think beforehand about how or what you are to speak. For it is not you that are speaking, but the Spirit of my Father who is speaking in you.*

So the flesh was suffering, and the Spirit was speaking. And while the Spirit was speaking, not only was ungodliness being confounded and convicted, but weakness was even being strengthened and comforted.

8. 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.

Pray for the world. For the leaders of the world as they seek to respond to the challenges that beset the international community. For refugees and asylum seekers, that they may find places of safety and welcome. For all who work for peace and justice. For reconciliation with the first custodians of this land.

Pray for the church. For all those who are striving to be church in the modern world, that we may be alert to the signs of the times and their interpretation in the light of the Gospel. In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, pray for the Diocese of Bungoma (Kenya). In our national church, pray for the Diocese of North-West Australia; and in our own Diocese of Adelaide, for the Parish of Glenelg.

Pray for our local community. For the Collective as it manages the delivery of the Saturday Night Mary Mags Dinner. For the Magdalene Centre, its customers, staff and volunteers, as they minister in God's name among those in crisis and in need of support and assistance.

Pray for those in need. Pray for all those who are troubled in body, mind or spirit, especially Paull, Sim, Jasmin, John Edwards (priest), Peter Garland (priest), John Parkes (bishop), Stephan Clark (priest), Nance, Graeme, Edward, Hugh, and Bart O'Donovan (priest).

Pray for those who have died. Those who have worked and worshipped in this place before us; 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, and holy women and men of every time and place.

This newsletter will normally be distributed weekly on Tuesday. Any appropriate items should be emailed to the Parish Office, StMMAdeelaide.Parish@outlook.com, by Tuesday evening at 5 pm.

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Synod Representatives	Ashley Durham, Catherine Freriks