

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 20 January 2022

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 Steven – The Extravagant Love of God

The Gospel of Luke is concerned about the experience of estrangement and its personal, social, and political implications. It is the focus of the ministry of Jesus and his friends from Galilee. So, then, the stranger is pivotal to the meaning and practice of Christianity. In order to appreciate this focus, it is important to start with the love of God, which underlines the importance of the stranger.

It is hard for us to appreciate the extravagant and unconditional love of God. The extravagant love of God lies at the heart of the Gospel of Luke. This love, for example, is the point of the parable of the lost son. That is, the return of the recalcitrant younger son is cause for celebration, not condemnation. However, this is not what the younger son expected. In fact, this is not what the elder son expected either. In telling this parable then, Jesus is saying to us 'this is what God is like'.

We see God in Luke's Gospel as a host, welcoming all and sundry. The lost, the poor, the sick, Samaritans and women, are made welcome. So, the hospitality of God is extended to strangers. A stranger is an outsider, a foreigner, or an alien. Our God welcomes the stranger. Interestingly, the words *stranger* and *estrangement* both come from the Latin *extraneus* meaning "that is outside".

It is important now to look at Luke 14:14-21, which is Sunday's gospel. Up to this point in the gospel, Jesus has been preparing for his public ministry. It all comes to a head as he reads the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue. In the process, he realizes his vocation in public. In that context, this is his inauguration speech.

An inauguration speech is more than a piece of oratory, it initiates something. In this case, Jesus initiates a liberation movement. And so, welcoming the stranger is not only a kind thing to do, which it is, but it also has social and political significance.

In the time of Jesus, strangers were defined as foreign on the basis of the purity code. Traditionally, ancient cultures developed purity codes to address the problem of dirt. Yes, dirt. This leads to the development of a series of practices that enshrine distinctions around clean/unclean, pure/polluted, and holy/unholy. In the name of the extravagant love of God then, Jesus undermines the purity code. Strangers are welcomed. Social and political structures are transformed.

When we encounter the stranger, something happens to us. A genuine encounter with a stranger will take us out of our comfort zone. In other words, we will be changed as we live out the extravagant love of God. In that sense, there is something profoundly sacramental about the experience of welcoming the stranger.

In the spirit of liberation,

Steven Ogden
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 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

Reflections for our two weekly newsletters will continue for the time being, and our Thursday "Spiritual Resources" newsletter will continue to be uploaded to the web page. Fr Philip Carter's meditations and spiritual reflections (in recess for January) 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

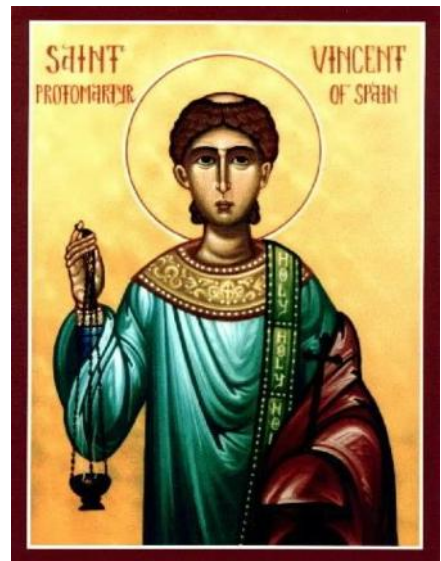
This week the Church celebrates many famous names of the early church, including St Agnes, martyred at Rome in 304, another martyr, St Vincent, who also died in 304, as well as the Conversion of St Paul, and feasts of his companions including St Timothy, St Titus and St Silas.

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 Saragossa (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.



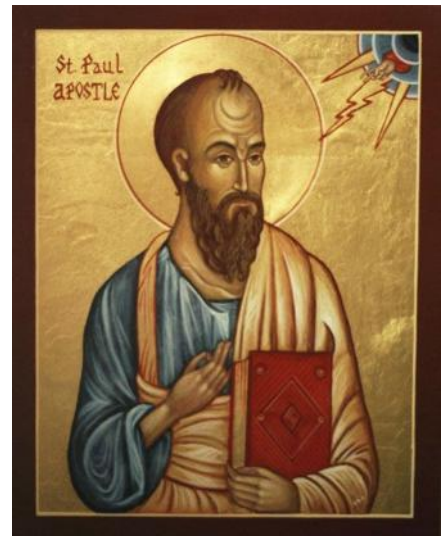
Paul's second letter to Corinth affords an insight into the depth of his friendship with Titus, and the great fellowship they had in preaching the gospel.

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.

St Paul the Apostle was the greatest of the early Christian missionaries. He first appears in the Acts of the Apostles under the name of Saul. Saul was raised in the Jewish faith as a Pharisee trained in the strict observance of God's Law. He believed the Law should be obeyed by himself and all Jews. Saul was upset by the early Christian Church, believing that the early Christians had broken away from their Jewish traditions. He actively persecuted the Church in Jerusalem.

Paul then travelled to Damascus to further persecute early Christians. On the road to Damascus, Saul had an encounter with the Risen Jesus. Jesus asked, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Paul replied, "Who are you, sir?" Jesus responded, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting." Saul was shaken and blinded by the experience.



When a Christian named Ananias came and baptized Saul, his blindness went away. As a result of this encounter Saul became a follower of Christ. He was now convinced that fellowship with the risen Jesus Christ, not the observance of the Law, was all that was needed to receive God's promise of salvation.

Paul spent the rest of his life journeying on his missions, establishing local churches, and writing to them when he heard of their accomplishments and failures. Paul's letters are the earliest records of the life and history of the early Church. As a record of the happenings in the early Church they are in invaluable record of the expansion of the Christianity.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. St John Chrysostom on St Paul

For love of Christ, Paul bore every burden

Paul, more than anyone else, has shown us what man really is, and in what our nobility consists, and of what virtue this particular animal is capable. Each day he aimed ever higher; each day he rose up with greater ardour and faced with new eagerness the dangers that threatened him. He summed up his attitude in the words: I forget what is behind me and push on to what lies ahead. When he saw death imminent, he bade others share his joy: Rejoice and be glad with me! And when danger, injustice and abuse threatened, he said: I am content with weakness, mistreatment and persecution. These he called the weapons of righteousness, thus telling us that he derived immense profit from them.

Thus, amid the traps set for him by his enemies, with exultant heart he turned their every attack into a victory for himself; constantly beaten, abused and cursed, he boasted of it as though he were celebrating a triumphal procession and taking trophies home, and offered thanks to God for it all: Thanks be to God who is always victorious in us! This is why he was far more eager for the shameful abuse that his zeal in preaching brought upon him than we are for the most pleasing honours, more eager for death than we are for life, for poverty than we are for wealth; he yearned for toil far more than others yearn for rest after toil. The one thing he feared, indeed dreaded, was to offend God; nothing else could sway him. Therefore, the only thing he really wanted was always to please God.

The most important thing of all to him, however, was that he knew himself to be loved by Christ. Enjoying this love, he considered himself happier than anyone else; were he without it, it would be no satisfaction to be the friend of principalities and powers. He preferred to be thus loved and be the least of all, or even to be among the damned, than to be without that love and be among the great and honoured.

To be separated from that love was, in his eyes, the greatest and most extraordinary of torments; the pain of that loss would alone have been hell, and endless, unbearable torture.

So too, in being loved by Christ he thought of himself as possessing life, the world, the angels, present and future, the kingdom, the promise and countless blessings. Apart from that love nothing saddened or delighted him; for nothing earthly did he regard as bitter or sweet.

Paul set no store by the things that fill our visible world, any more than a man sets value on the withered grass of the field. As for tyrannical rulers or the people enraged against him, he paid them no more heed than gnats. Death itself and pain and whatever torments might come were but child's play to him, provided that thereby he might bear some burden for the sake of Christ.

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 Kabba (Nigeria). In our national church, pray for the Diocese of Riverina; and within the Diocese of Adelaide, for St Peter's Cathedral.

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) and Mark.

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, especially Graham Cooling (priest), 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 Agnes, St Vincent, St Paul, St Timothy, St Titus, St Silas, 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, by Tuesday evening at 5 pm.

