

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

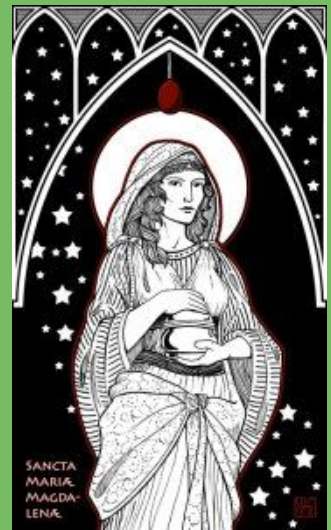
Thursday 26 August 2021

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.

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 keep our entire community informed on events in the life of the Parish: we will continue to produce these news bulletins for now.

We will respond to this challenge was we have done before. Please keep an eye on the [web page](#) and the [blog](#) for further information.



1. From Fr Gwilym – The Song of Songs



Surprisingly, there are two books included in the Bible which don't mention God. One is the book of Esther.

The second one is the book called the Song of Songs, or the Song of Solomon. This is a beautiful, evocative and passionate love song. It was included in the Hebrew Scriptures because it was believed to have been written by King Solomon, whose name appears several times in the book.

The Song of Songs stands alone among the books of the Bible because it simply celebrates the delights of human sexual love. The first verse makes this clear. A voice, presumably the bride's, says, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!" and she goes on to tell her friends about her wonderful lover. And then the groom describes the beauty of his bride and his desire for her.

The book continues, the lovers exchanging the most extravagant compliments, yearning for each other, desiring each other. The Song celebrates sexual love in the voices of the lovers and their companions. It is a book of joy and happiness, of harmony and intimacy, full of delightful and sometimes surprising imagery and sexual allusion; a properly and profoundly erotic work of art.

The Song shows no interest in Law or Covenant or the God of Israel, nor does it teach or explore wisdom like [Proverbs](#) or [Ecclesiastes](#), so, faced with such a banquet of allusion, what were the devout readers to do?

The Jewish scholars after much debate and controversy, decided to treat it as an allegory of the relationship between God and Israel. Many of the prophets referred to God as the husband of Israel, and Israel the sometimes unfaithful bride, so the analogy is consistent.

The Christian Church, likewise, faced with such a "garden of earthly delights" decided to treat the Song as an allegory of the Church as the Bride of Christ. Again, a thoroughly Biblical viewpoint.

But there were others who approached the Song as a mystical union between the soul and Christ. The Christian mystics delighted in allegory, dreams and visions, drawing on a rich and imaginative tradition which is found in most religions.

St John of the Cross was one such mystic, who, in the 16th century, wrote a poem called The Dark Night of the soul. It is an account of his soul's search for God expressed in terms of a lover leaving his sleeping household to be united with his lover in the garden. It has been movingly set to music and sung by Loreena McKenitt. The internet reference is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzHeT-Go4Zg>

The passage he used from the Song is also read on the Feast of St Mary Magdalene, chapter 3, verses 1 to 4a. Beginning "Upon my bed at night I sought him whom my soul loves" and finishing "I held him and would not let him go." This refers, of course to Mary's encounter with the Risen Christ at the tomb, where she sought to cling to him. Omitted is the second half of verse 4 and verse 5, which shows the original intent of the chapter, and which reads, "I brought him into my mother's house and into the chamber where my mother conceived me. I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready!"

A similar passage is to be read this coming Sunday, 29 August, in the only other appearance of a reading from the Song in the Sunday lectionary. The bridegroom is seen leaping over the mountains like a young stag, urging his beloved to come away with him. Combined with Mark 7:1-8 and 14-23, it invites a comparison between the wholesome and joyous love between lovers and the evil desires "which come from within and defile a person".

Let us give thanks to God who has made us body and soul, soul and body, and may we rejoice in the good things which delight them both.

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://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.

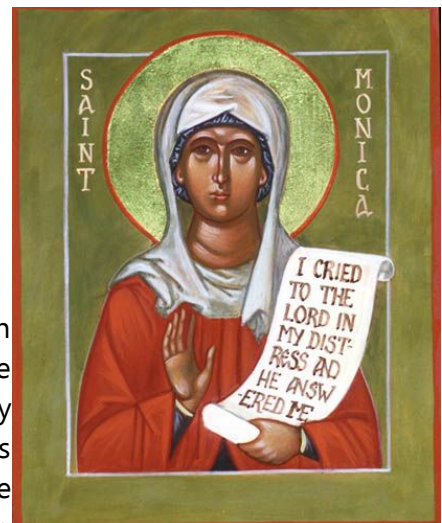
4. In the Church's Calendar

In the coming week we celebrate two remarkable figures of the early church in Africa, St Monica and her son St Augustine of Hippo, as well as the Irish monk and missionary St Aidan. We also commemorate the martyrdom of St John the Baptist.

St Monica was born in the city of Tagaste in North Africa. St Augustine was the oldest of her children, and for a time he led an immoral life. For a while, she refused to let him eat or sleep in her house. Then one night she had a vision that assured her Augustine would return to the faith. From that time on, she stayed close to her son, praying and fasting for him.

When he was 29, Augustine decided to go to Rome to teach rhetoric. Monica was determined to go along. One night he told his mother that he was going to the dock to say goodbye to a friend. Instead he set sail for Rome. Monica was heartbroken when she learned of Augustine's trick, but she still followed him. She arrived in Rome only to find that he had left for Milan. Although travel was difficult, Monica pursued him to Milan.

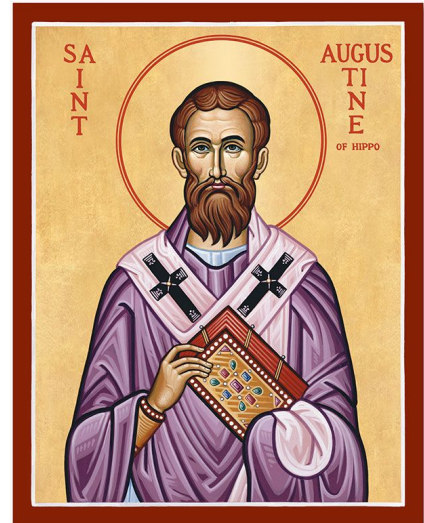
In Milan, Augustine came under the influence of the bishop, Saint Ambrose, who also became Monica's spiritual director. She accepted his advice in everything and had the humility to give up some practices that had become second nature to her. Monica became a leader of the devout women in Milan as she had been in Tagaste.



She continued her prayers for Augustine during his years of instruction. At Easter 387, Saint Ambrose baptized Augustine and several of his friends. Soon after, his party left for Africa. Although no one else was aware of it, Monica knew her life was near the end. She told Augustine, "Son, nothing in this world now affords me delight. I do not know what there is now left for me to do or why I am still here, all my hopes in this world being now fulfilled." She became ill shortly after and suffered severely for nine days before her death.

Almost all we know about St. Monica is in the writings of Saint Augustine, especially his *Confessions*.

St Augustine of Hippo (28 August) is a prophet for today, trumpeting the need to scrap escapisms and stand face-to-face with personal responsibility and dignity. A Christian at 33, a priest at 36, a bishop at 41: Augustine lived his life with great intensity, whether his path led away from or toward God. The tears of his mother, his instruction at the feet of St Ambrose and, most of all, God himself speaking to him in the Scriptures, redirected Augustine's love of life to a life of love. Augustine turned with a "holy fierceness" against the politically, socially, and morally corrupt leaders and institutions of his time. In his day, Augustine providentially fulfilled the office of prophet. Like Jeremiah and other greats, he was hard-pressed but could not keep quiet.



Augustine's writings are best known for their heroic assault on weak theology. But two of the most important subjects of Augustine's writings—at least in terms of subsequent history—were on the nature of the church and on grace.

St John the Baptist is among the few saints of the church who is celebrated both for his birth and his death.

The drunken oath of King Herod, with his shallow sense of honour, Salome's seductive dance and the hateful heart of Queen Herodias, combined to bring about the martyrdom of John the Baptist.

The greatest of prophets suffered the fate of so many Old Testament prophets before him: rejection and martyrdom.

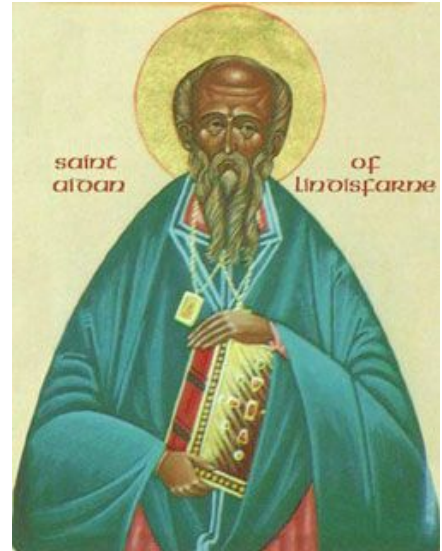
The "voice crying in the desert" did not hesitate to accuse the guilty, did not hesitate to speak the truth. But why? What possesses anyone that they would give up their very life? John the Baptist, perhaps more than any other, points the way to Christ.



John's life and death were a giving over of self for God and other people. His simple style of life was one of complete detachment from earthly possessions. His heart was centred on God and the call that he heard from the Spirit of God speaking to his heart. Confident of God's grace, he had the courage to speak words of condemnation, repentance, and salvation.

St Aidan (31 August) was the first bishop of the famous Lindisfarne monastery. He travelled ceaselessly throughout the countryside, spreading the gospel not only to the gentry, but to the poor and socially disenfranchised – including children and slaves. Under his direction and that of his successors, Lindisfarne flourished as a leading ecclesiastical centre until the Danish invasions began in 793.

From Lindisfarne, Aidan evangelized northern England. He founded churches, monasteries, and, on Lindisfarne, a school for the training of ministers, among whom were Chad (first bishop of Lichfield), his brother Cedd (who converted the East Saxons), and Eata, abbot of Melrose. The Venerable Bede praised Aidan for his learning, charity, and simplicity of life. Aidan is among the few English saints to be recognised in both the eastern and western churches.



5. St Monica – from the Confessions of St Augustine

Let us gain eternal wisdom

The day was now approaching when my mother Monica would depart from this life; you know that day, Lord, though we did not. She and I happened to be standing by ourselves at a window that overlooked the garden in the courtyard of the house. At the time we were in Ostia on the Tiber. And so the two of us, all alone, were enjoying a very pleasant conversation, "forgetting the past and pushing on to what is ahead.." We were asking one another in the presence of the Truth - for you are the Truth - what it would be like to share the eternal life enjoyed by the saints, which "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, which has not even entered into the heart of man." We desired with all our hearts to drink from the streams of your heavenly fountain, the fountain of life.

That was the substance of our talk, though not the exact words. But you know, O Lord, that in the course of our conversation that day, the world and its pleasures lost all their attraction for us. My mother said, "Son, as far as I am concerned, nothing in this life now gives me any pleasure. I do not know why I am still here, since I have no further hopes in this world. I did have one reason for wanting to live a little longer: to see you become a Catholic Christian before I died. God has lavished his gifts on me in that respect, for I know that you have even renounced earthly happiness to be his servant. So what am I doing here?"

I do not really remember how I answered her. Shortly, within five days or thereabouts, she fell sick with a fever. Then one day during the course of her illness she became unconscious and for a while she was unaware of her surroundings. My brother and I rushed to her side, but she regained consciousness quickly. She looked at us as we stood there and asked in a puzzled voice: "Where was I?"

We were overwhelmed with grief, but she held her gaze steadily upon us, and spoke further: "Here you shall bury your mother." I remained silent as I held back my tears. However, my brother haltingly expressed his hope that she might not die in a strange country but in her own land, since her end would be happier there. When she heard this, her face was filled with anxiety, and she reproached him with a glance because he had entertained such earthly thoughts. Then she looked at me and spoke: "Look what he is saying." Thereupon she said to

both of us, "Bury my body wherever you will; let not care of it cause you any concern. One thing only I ask you, that you remember me at the altar of the Lord wherever you may be." Once our mother had expressed this desire as best she could, she fell silent as the pain of her illness increased.

6. From the Confessions of St Augustine

O eternal truth, true love, and beloved eternity

Urged to reflect upon myself, I entered under your guidance into the inmost depth of my soul. I was able to do so because *you were my helper*. On entering into myself I saw, as it were with the eye of the soul, what was beyond the eye of the soul, beyond my spirit: your immutable light. It was not the ordinary light perceptible to all flesh, nor was it merely something of greater magnitude but still essentially akin, shining more clearly and diffusing itself everywhere by its intensity. No, it was something entirely distinct, something altogether different from all these things; and it did not rest above my mind as oil on the surface of water, nor was it above me as heaven is above the earth. This light was above me because it had made me; I was below it because I was created by it. He who has come to know the truth knows this light.

O Eternal truth, true love and beloved eternity. You are my God. To you do I sigh day and night. When I first came to know you, you drew me to yourself so that I might see that there were things for me to see, but that I myself was not yet ready to see them. Meanwhile you overcame the weakness of my vision, sending forth most strongly the beams of your light, and I trembled at once with love and dread. I learned that I was in a region unlike yours and far distant from you, and I thought I heard your voice from on high: "I am the food of grown men; grow then, and you will feed on me. Nor will you change me into yourself like bodily food, but you will be changed into me."

I sought a way to gain the strength which I needed to enjoy you. But I did not find it until I embraced *the mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who is above all, God blessed for ever*. He was calling me and saying: *I am the way of truth, I am the life*. He was offering the food which I lacked the strength to take, the food he had mingled with our flesh. For *the Word became flesh*, that your wisdom, by which you created all things, might provide milk for us children.

Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would not have been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. You breathed your fragrance on me; I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace.

7. The Passion of St John the Baptist – from a Sermon by the Venerable Bede

Precursor of Christ in birth and death

As forerunner of our Lord's birth, preaching and death, the blessed John showed in his struggle a goodness worthy of the sight of heaven. In the words of Scripture: *Though in the sight of men he suffered torments, his hope is full of immortality*. We justly commemorate the day of his birth with a joyful celebration, a day which he himself made festive for us through

his suffering and which he adorned with the crimson splendour of his own blood. We do rightly revere his memory with joyful hearts, for he stamped with the seal of martyrdom the testimony which he delivered on behalf of our Lord.

There is no doubt that blessed John suffered imprisonment and chains as a witness to our Redeemer, whose forerunner he was, and gave his life for him. His persecutor had demanded not that he should deny Christ, but only that he should keep silent about the truth. Nevertheless, he died for Christ. Does Christ not say: *I am the truth*? Therefore, because John shed his blood for the truth, he surely died for Christ.

Through his birth, preaching and baptizing, he bore witness to the coming birth, preaching and baptism of Christ, and by his own suffering he showed that Christ also would suffer.

Such was the quality and strength of the man who accepted the end of this present life by shedding his blood after the long imprisonment. He preached the freedom of heavenly peace, yet was thrown into irons by ungodly men; he was locked away in the darkness of prison, though he came bearing witness to the Light of life and deserved to be called a bright and shining lamp by that Light itself, which is Christ. John was baptized in his own blood, though he had been privileged to baptize the Redeemer of the world, to hear the voice of the Father above him, and to see the grace of the Holy Spirit descending upon him. But to endure temporal agonies for the sake of the truth was not a heavy burden for such men as John; rather it was easily borne and even desirable, for he knew eternal joy would be his reward.

Since death was ever near at hand through the inescapable necessity of nature, such men considered it a blessing to embrace it and thus gain the reward of eternal life by acknowledging Christ's name. Hence the apostle Paul rightly says: *You have been granted the privilege not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for his sake*. He tells us why it is Christ's gift that his chosen ones should suffer for him: *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us*.

8. From the History of the English Church by the Venerable Bede

Chap. V. Of the life of Bishop Aidan

From this island, then, and the fraternity of these monks, Aidan was sent to instruct the English nation in Christ, having received the dignity of a bishop. At that time Segeni, abbot and priest, presided over that monastery. Among other lessons in holy living, Aidan left the clergy a most salutary example of abstinence and continence; it was the highest commendation of his doctrine with all men, that he taught nothing that he did not practise in his life among his brethren; for he neither sought nor loved anything of this world, but delighted in distributing immediately among the poor whom he met whatsoever was given him by the kings or rich men of the world. He was wont to traverse both town and country on foot, never on horseback, unless compelled by some urgent necessity; to the end that, as he went, he might turn aside to any whomsoever he saw, whether rich or poor, and call upon them, if infidels, to receive the mystery of the faith, or, if they were believers, strengthen them in the faith, and stir them up by words and actions to giving of alms and the performance of good works.

His course of life was so different from the slothfulness of our times, that all those who bore him company, whether they were tonsured or laymen, had to study either reading the Scriptures, or learning psalms. This was the daily employment of himself and all that were with him, wheresoever they went; and if it happened, which was but seldom, that he was invited to the king's table, he went with one or two clerks, and having taken a little food, made haste to

be gone, either to read with his brethren or to pray. At that time, many religious men and women, led by his example, adopted the custom of prolonging their fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, till the ninth hour, throughout the year, except during the fifty days after Easter. Never, through fear or respect of persons, did he keep silence with regard to the sins of the rich; but was wont to correct them with a severe rebuke. He never gave money to the powerful men of the world, but only food, if he happened to entertain them; and, on the contrary, whatsoever gifts of money he received from the rich, he either distributed, as has been said, for the use of the poor, or bestowed in ransoming such as had been wrongfully sold for slaves. Moreover, he afterwards made many of those he had ransomed his disciples, and after having taught and instructed them, advanced them to priest's orders.

It is said, that when King Oswald had asked a bishop of the Scots to administer the Word of faith to him and his nation, there was first sent to him another man of more harsh disposition, who, after preaching for some time to the English and meeting with no success, not being gladly heard by the people, returned home, and in an assembly of the elders reported, that he had not been able to do any good by his teaching to the nation to whom he had been sent, because they were intractable men, and of a stubborn and barbarous disposition. They then, it is said, held a council and seriously debated what was to be done, being desirous that the nation should obtain the salvation it demanded, but grieving that they had not received the preacher sent to them. Then said Aidan, who was also present in the council, to the priest in question, "Methinks, brother, that you were more severe to your unlearned hearers than you ought to have been, and did not at first, conformably to the Apostolic rule, give them the milk of more easy doctrine, till, being by degrees nourished with the Word of God, they should be capable of receiving that which is more perfect and of performing the higher precepts of God." Having heard these words, all present turned their attention to him and began diligently to weigh what he had said, and they decided that he was worthy to be made a bishop, and that he was the man who ought to be sent to instruct the unbelieving and unlearned; since he was found to be endued preeminently with the grace of discretion, which is the mother of the virtues. So they ordained him and sent him forth to preach; and, as time went on, his other virtues became apparent, as well as that temperate discretion which had marked him at first.

9. 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 Egbu (Nigeria). In our national church, pray for the Diocese of the Northern Territory; and within our own Diocese, for St Barnabas' College.

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, Fr Peter Garland, Helen Carter 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 Monica, St Augustine, St John the Baptist, St Aidan, 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.

