

The Works of Mercy by Jen Norton (2016).

Sunday greetings to the members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ.

1. **LITURGY BRISBANE**, from our own archdiocese, provides the Sunday Readings for home reflection. Click on the link below for today's texts.

The first link contains the Sunday readings with associated commentaries and prayers. It is suggested that families gather to read the Scriptures aloud together:

<https://litedliturgybrisbane.weebly.com/sunday-readings-at-home.html/>

The second resource is designed for families with young children. An extract from the Sunday gospel is provided, along with several reflection questions, a family activity and a worksheet for children:

<https://litedliturgybrisbane.weebly.com/family-prayer-week-by-week.html/>



2. **REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY WORD.** We share two reflections on the Sunday scriptures our church chooses for this special celebration of the Sunday eucharist.

We are able to hear the Word being reflected upon from female and male faith perspectives . . . and both are recordings for this Sunday!

Today's Sunday preaching is offered by Susan Haarman. Susan is the associate director at Loyola University Chicago's Center for Experiential Learning, facilitating faculty development and the service-learning program. The link offers a video of the reflection, the text and some background of the preacher:

<https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/06142020>



Fr. Bill Grimm MM offers his Sunday gospel reflection for this solemnity. The introduction reads: *Fortunately, Christ is not so choosy. He is willing to be present in the bread and wine that his people share. He is willing to be present in that people and in what they do as individuals and a community to show the love of God to the world.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5e7PfscLTIW#action=share>



3. We pray with and for those who are sick in our parish and beyond: all across the globe infected with COVID-19; former pastor of Boonah parish Fr. Ellis Clifford, Chris Healy, Bill Castley, Paul White, Thyrlene Devin, Bridget Muller, Liliana Toohill, Libby Shields, Jonathon Hancock, Marko Babic, Dermot Peters, Max Gardiner, Nicole Wimmer, Bernice Lippiatt, Pat Toohill, Trish Merlehan, Kath Pascoe, Suzy Collyer, Pat Shannon, and Paul Maschio.

*I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life-giving stream;
Me thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in him.*

I HEARD THE VOICE OF JESUS SAY (WORDS: HORATIUS BONAR 1808-1889)
from *Together in Song Australian Hymn Book II* (1999)

4. Our Parish Pastoral Council met on Thursday evening for the first time in many months. It was good to see one another again. Yes – we set-up the hall with the 1.5 metre distancing between each person. That felt odd. Yet it reinforced this is serious stuff!

We had one agenda item: scoping out various options for the celebration of eucharist in this time of COVID-19.

I thank Shane Seymour, principal of our parish school, for preparing some documents, being willing to present ‘facts’ regarding gatherings, and drawing on his real experience as he and his staff have implemented these laws at our school.

Thanks to the councillors for assessing the options available to us now and for sharing their own responses to the many issues this current experience raises. More than a few of us have been talking with other parishioners and so a wide range of responses was aired in our time together.

We share the following from our discernment:

- the eucharist will not be celebrated over the next few weeks as the health of people at eucharist is of the utmost concern;
- Archbishop Mark has dispensed all Catholics from the obligation of celebrating Sunday eucharist;
- a small group from the PPC will attend to all the documentation from both the State and our local Church of Brisbane and develop necessary steps to gather again soon;
- there is strong interest in gathering outdoors on a Sunday for Sunday eucharist – one gathering at either Peak or H’ville and one gathering at Boonah;
- times for possible outdoor Sunday eucharist will be different from the usual 0730 and 0930 starts and will take into account the cooler times we are expecting at this time of the year.

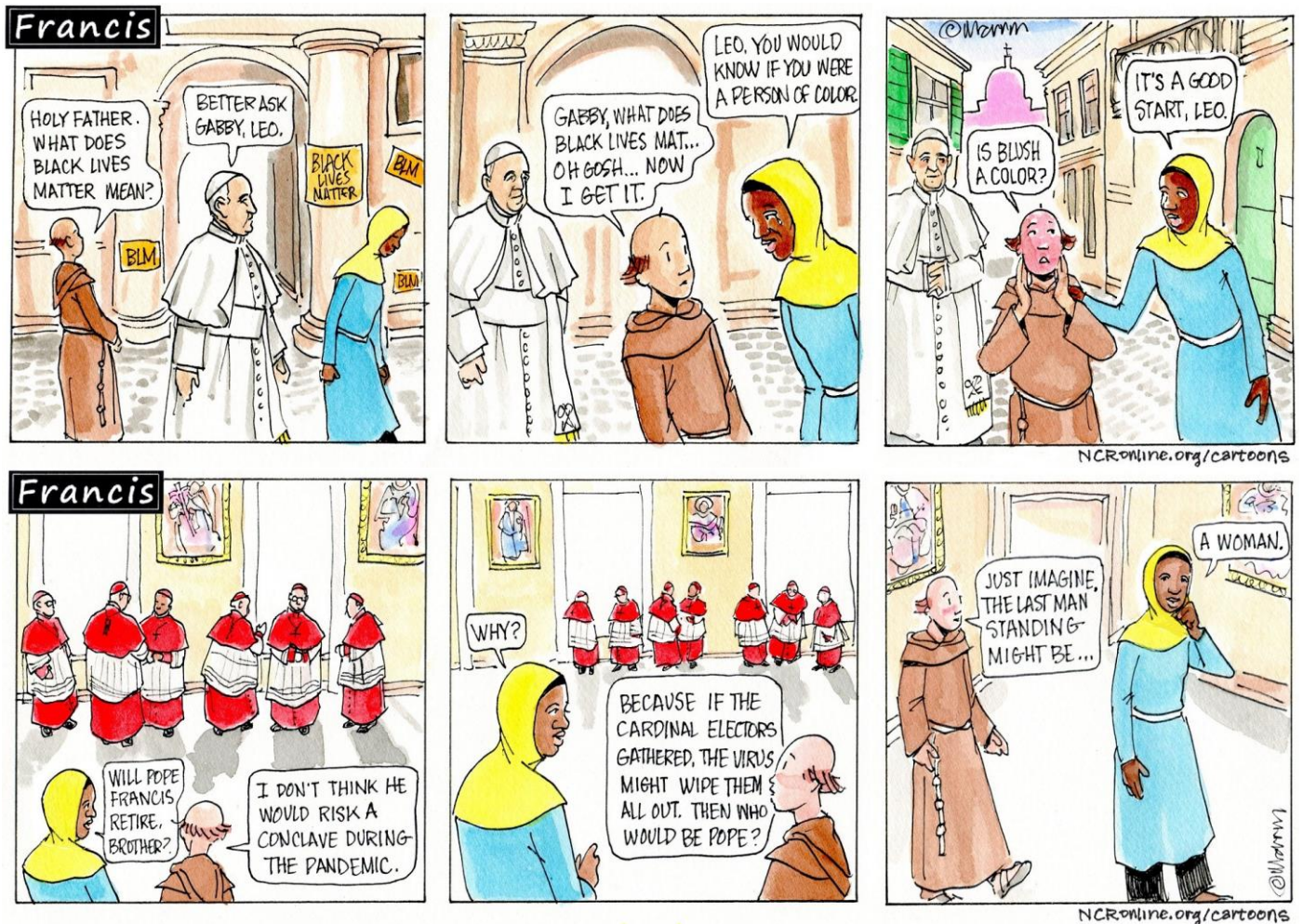
In the event of State law changing in the next few weeks, the basic work needs to be done whether we can gather in groups of 50 or 100.

So I encourage us to continue praying at home in our households. If it helps you to pray, prayerfully watch live-recordings of communities celebrating eucharist especially in our Cathedral of St. Stephen, Brisbane.

This link takes you to the live-streaming page:

<https://www.cathedralofststephen.org.au/mass-times.html>

5. FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP by Pat Marrin.



9th and 11th June 2020

6. The month of May marked the fifth anniversary of *Laudato Si* – Pope Francis' letter to all people of good-will concerning human care for creation *for the common good*. It was groundbreaking and remains so. For five Sundays starting on the Ascension, we are promoting the anniversary of *Laudato Si*.

This Sunday the article is again taken from the *National Catholic Reporter* and the writer is Jason King, a teacher of theology at St. Vincent's College, Latrobe, PA. This is a handy summary of five themes that emerged from the collection of papers presented at a conference to examine the impact of this document:

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/earthbeat/laudato-si-five-years-out-five-themes-scholarly-review-its-impact>



6. Page one of THE SATURDAY PAPER one week ago was stark:

There cannot be 432 victims and no perpetrators . . .

Interestingly, a writer this week revised this number to 437.

Each one of us has had to navigate our way through the questions being asked of our self, our community, our nation and our world.

If 'answers' were easy then it is right to assume they would have been acted upon asap.

But that seems to be an underlying concern: inaction, or worse still, the same action/s that prevents the God-given dignity of human persons and communities from flourishing.

I have searched this week for *signs of hope* and *voices of hope*. From our perspective, we are invited to hold the person of Christ Jesus and God's *vision* and *voice* at the centre of all we think, do and say.

7. One of the better pieces that has been offered for our discipleship this week is an opinion piece by Fr. Bryan Massingale SJ. I read his book a few years back: *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church*.

This article is long and at times raises very difficult human issues, especially for the church in the USA, and by extension, the churches beyond their shores . . .

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/assumptions-white-privilege-and-what-we-can-do-about-it>



8. Back in 1986, I went to a concert in Inala parish. The artist was Peter Kearney. Like many of us, we sang hymns and songs composed by Peter: *Fill My House* and *The Beatitudes*. Since those early compositions, he has been writing songs which I find are very accessible musically and have strong lyrics. Peter's full-time vocation is music and his output has been considerable.

Each week, Peter posts a song on his website. You might like to visit his web-page and 'catch-up' on what he has done and what he is doing. Perhaps you might also like to support him by purchasing one or more of his music collections. They make great presents and also help us to tune into the gospel invitation to work for the flourishing of life in a real world:

<https://peterkearneysongs.com.au/home>

Here's a song from Peter's album *Signs of Hope*. The song is *John and Jesus*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvC6TccVzlQ>

9. **THE CATHOLIC LEADER** digital edition is currently delivered free to your inbox every Thursday morning while we have these restrictions. A free subscription is available while Masses are suspended across the Archdiocese of Brisbane due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sign up on <https://bit.ly/2ShdcSZ>. The editor and his team hopes this offer gives us all a sense of connection, inspiration and renewal in the faith, at a time when living the faith has changed.

10. On Tuesday afternoon last week, the All Saints' School staff and I spent the weekly meeting attending to the celebrating life of our parish school. I thank the teachers for engaging in the process which reviewed the liturgical possibilities for our children and families.

As the school is an extension of the parish, I wanted to share with us all some steps we will take forward this year. We have to remember that 2020 is by no means 'normal' yet we do the best we can under these new circumstances.

So we have decided the following:

- Each class (Prep to Year 6) will celebrate a class liturgy in Term 3 and 4, 2020;
- The preparation will involve myself as pastor and presider with the teacher and with the support of Karen, our APRE;
- Our preparation will not not with the question *What will we do?* but *How are the children going in their learning? What are the signs of life and hope in this class? What are signs of difficulty? How are they going at home? What are their anxieties?* Then we can ask: *What might we be called by God to celebrate here-and-now?*
- Class liturgy will ordinarily be celebrated in the church. However, at times the class liturgy may be celebrated in the class-room and the room will be prepared for celebration;
- Maximum participation by all is the goal to be considered above all else;
- Liturgy + food: hospitality will occur afterwards with the sharing of food for children and adults present;
- Families and parishioners will be invited by the children;
- There will be a developmental approach to celebration which is the norm for learning.

11. The **PARISH GIVING APP** is now up and working. Choose **BOONAH PARISH**. If you are having problems with the app, call the Archdiocese for some help!

<https://parishgiving.brisbanecatholic.org.au/slides/> Thanks again to all who are continuing their weekly giving. The rates are now due as well as the monthly insurance bill!

12. Please enjoy this reflection on the eucharist by Irish priest, Fr Tom O'Loughlin:

"All Masses Cancelled." That sign went up today outside my local church. Who could have imagined it just a couple of weeks ago? Most Catholics recognise it's a sensible decision: large gatherings are just what we do not want at the moment. The loving thing right now is to keep our distance, lest we transmit the virus.

There are those who do not like the idea of "missing Mass". Could they "get Mass", they ask anxiously, even if they are not able to be physically present at a service? I have heard priests saying that they will not have "the state" – imagined as somehow the enemy of the Church – ordering them to close, and talking of "defending the freedom of religion" by "providing Mass", even though it would be endangering the very people they are claiming to serve.

But the fact that many regular Mass-goers will not be in a church this weekend – and most likely not even over Easter – might actually help us to broaden our understanding of the Eucharist and deepen our spirituality. For too long – some historians would say since the seventh century – Latin Christians have tended to think about the Eucharist as an object (something that happens due to the activity of the priest, which the lay faithful observe rather like the audience at a play or a concert) or as a commodity (with those present behaving as religious consumers). The language we use is the giveaway. We talk about "getting Mass" and "attending a Mass", of "getting Communion" and "taking Communion". The image in our minds is that the Eucharist is something "out there", which we watch or somehow obtain and make our own, as if we were theatregoers or consumers.

But the word "Eucharist" relates to a verb: it is something we, the whole People of God, do. It is the activity of thanking God the Father as a gathered community – and we offer this praise and thanks through Christ our Lord. The focus is on thanking the Father. The access to the Father is provided to us in the Spirit through Jesus Christ – and the prayers

are led by the priest. It is our basic activity as Christians, not some "thing" that the priest does for us or makes for us.

So if we cannot gather because of the coronavirus, can we still offer thanks to the Father through Christ? Let's relearn some basics.

First, Jesus is present with us. Many Catholics treat church buildings as if they were pagan temples: as if God is only "in there". But God's presence is everywhere and the risen Christ is not limited by space. This presence of the risen Jesus among the community is captured in this saying preserved in Matthew's Gospel: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (18:20). Even the smallest gathering – just two people standing two metres apart so as not to spread the virus – has the risen Lord among them. It might be two people in a house together; it might even be two people talking together on their mobile phones or on Skype. This is expressed in another ancient Christian saying – preserved in the *Didache* (a first-century new disciples' guide): "Wherever the things of the Lord are spoken about, there the Lord is present" (4:1).

Second, your room is a basic place of prayer. We sometimes think that we are only commanded to pray in a church building – we have grown up with the idea of attendance at Mass on Sunday as a regulation – but it is sobering to recall this instruction by Jesus: "And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the gatherings and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you" (Matthew 6:5-6). We are now being advised not to go to work or use public transport, not to attend church services and to keep our distance from people. It's a moment for us to rediscover the art of closing the door and praying alone – knowing that the Father will listen to our prayers.

Third, we describe the Eucharist as “the centre and summit of our Christian lives”, which is true, but we often make the mistake of regarding it as the whole of our religious life. This crisis calls on us to build up the surrounding foothills, by caring for one another and thanking God at home and in our place of study or work as well as in church. *If we are not thankful for the meals and the friendship we share at home, we are hardly ready to be thankful at the Great Thanksgiving that we call “the Eucharist”.*

And **finally**, *every table is a sacred place*. Jesus encountered people and taught at their tables: every table is a place where we can encounter the Lord in those with us. We will not be eating together as sisters and brothers in a church for the next few months, so let’s start recalling that whenever we eat, we should be thankful: “You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you” (Deuteronomy 8:10). We should always be thankful for the food we eat (saying grace before meals) and for the pleasure of eating and being together (grace after meals).

Most Catholics today can barely remember the time when few of those present at Mass actually ate or drank. This was partly because of fear of condemnation for “unworthy reception” – based on a misreading of 1 Corinthians 11:27 – or for an imagined breach of the fasting regulations. An idea had also taken root that one could gain grace by attending additional Masses (or at least consecrations) – a work of “supererogation” at which one could never “receive” – which led to the development of the notion that one could obtain the spiritual blessings through a mental act of intentional volition without any physical contact. These ideas can be traced, not surprisingly, back to the Cartesian world of seventeenth-century France,

and the rarefied and cerebral spirituality that flourished in the Jansenist community at Port Royal near Paris. They belong to a world that saw faith as an action of the intellect, and which placed minimal value upon the liturgy as a holistic encounter of the actual body of the Church. (Since we will all be staying in for the next few months, you might want to read the two brilliant and surprisingly entertaining chapters on Jansenism in Ronald Knox’s *Enthusiasm*.)

Some have been tempted to reach for the idea of “spiritual communion” as a sort of “fix” in this emergency. Better to simply acknowledge that this is a weird time: we cannot meet up, we cannot shake hands, and we are temporarily – for very good reasons – unable to behave in the normal human way. So we cannot behave in a liturgically normal way, gathered as a people, as sisters and brothers, to be together, to sing together, to listen together while sitting in a group, to shake hands with our neighbours as friends (John 15:15) and then to share a loaf and a common cup. Until we can get back to normal, let’s just note its loss, concentrate on what we can do while we are living in isolation from one another, and then, when the restrictions are lifted, rejoice that our fellowship is restored.

We will not be gathered as large groups for the next few months – let’s use this experience to rediscover that we are the Church (it is not a building, or the preserve of the clergy), that we must be eucharistic every day (it is an act of attitude of thankfulness for all the good things of creation, particularly meals, not a performance we “attend” or an object we “get”, “take” or “receive”), and that the risen one is with us, interceding for us with the Father, in these worrying times.

13. Today’s solemnity of The Body and Blood of Christ invites us into the reality of God’s love for us in a holy community gathered to be renewed through holy texts and holy food, as well as by holy song. This holy action is intended to confirm God’s call to us to be holy with others in the world – a world which both is and is not holy. Anything less diminishes the gift of God’s very self to us. This week I have been gob-smacked by so many images of eucharist that exclude the people – the gathered church, the believers, the baptised. Such images are being live-streamed in many ‘Masses’. Some even add to this a late medieval focus (16th century) on ‘processing’ the eucharist as the be all and end all of this solemnity. Nothing is further from the truth. This is why I have chosen the first image in our bulletin as an image of eucharistic living.

Even on the battlefield, as difficult as this image may be for some, this photographer got it:



Peace to you and yours this week.

John

pastor, Boonah Catholic community

