

*CT scan of 4 vertically adjoining scans of wheat ~
Imagine a sower went out to sow . . . Mt. 13*

Sunday greetings to the members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on the 15th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

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 selects for this Sunday.

The first Sunday preaching is offered by **Molleen Dupree-Dominguez** is a teacher, writer, and minister living in the beautiful Bay Area of northern California.

She earned a Master of Divinity from the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara University in 2003, along with a Certificate in Spiritual Direction in 2004.

She teaches Christian Morality, Ethics & Media, Spiritual Ecology, and other courses in Religious Studies at Bishop O'Dowd High School.

You can find her latest podcast project, *On a Mission*, on iTunes. She speaks and writes on the topic of getting real and going deep with God and is an experienced retreat facilitator and spiritual director.

She is married and has one daughter.

<https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/07122020>



The disciples came and asked Jesus: "Why do you tell stories?" He replied: "You've been given insight into God's kingdom. You know how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight; it hasn't been given to them. Whenever a person has a ready heart for this, the insights and understandings flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That's why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge people towards receptive insight. In their present state they can stare till doomsday and not see it, listen till they're blue in the face and not get it." Matthew 13, 1-23

The parable of the sower is a parable with a difference. To begin with, it is the only parable to which Jesus himself gives an extensive explanation.

Moreover, as he begins to explain it, he refers to it as "the parable of the sower" (Matthew 13, 18). Yet, the main focus of the parable is on the seed and the soil. Interestingly, the word parable comes from Greek *parabolē*, which means "to throw alongside", and a lot of the seed thrown by the sower in the parable seems to end up alongside or only near where it would be most productive.

In our reading of the parable itself and in our considering Jesus' explanation of it, on which images are we being invited to reflect - on the sower, the seed, the soil or, indeed, on all three? In this parable, Jesus takes images from daily life, with which his hearers would have been familiar, and "throws" them next to a new

idea - the kingdom of God - which he wants his audience to think about. Many in the crowd would have been living in the hope that, when the Messiah eventually came, he would restore Israel to its former grandeur. In the parable, Jesus compares the kingdom of God, the new Israel, to something less spectacular. Put simply, Jesus is saying that God will sow the seeds of the new kingdom of God, but the harvest will depend on the receptiveness and quality of the soil on which the seed lands. This calls for further explanation.

To those of us who have a part-time interest in gardening or an invested interest in crop-growing, the parable sower's style of broadcasting seed might seem extravagant or wasteful. But perhaps Jesus is holding up to us a sower who is the image of a lavish and extravagant God whose generosity knows no bounds. Perhaps Jesus' sower represents the God of the creation story in Genesis, the God of abundance whose graciousness, love, mercy and compassion are limitless.

With that in mind, one meaning we can take from this parable is that Jesus is inviting us to imitate the God of abundance who scatters everywhere the gifts of mercy, love, compassion and forgiveness, so that they are available to everyone, even to those who are hiding away in the most unexpected of places. We have all had the experience of seeing flowers and other plants blooming in places we least expect - in cracks on well-used footpaths, in crevices on

building walls, in roof guttering. The way of nature is very different from that of well-organised gardeners. Seeds are scattered by wind and insects, and through bird droppings, sometimes falling on rich soil, at others landing in places where they simply do not stand a chance.

In these times when Covid -19 restrictions are being loosened in some locations, we see people returning to the familiar security of their churches and places of worship. I wonder what might happen if we were to move out instead of in, and take the seeds we carry - seeds of concern, of compassion, of listening ears, of encouragement, of brotherhood and sisterhood - to those who have been starved of healthy, wholesome human contact and of the simple items of food and toiletries they have done without. That doesn't look much like restoration to power and glory.

When needs become apparent in times of crisis, we are often inclined to place on government the responsibility for addressing them. And that is how it is now in many nations around the globe. Citizens are calling on their governments to feed the hungry, to protect the most vulnerable, to provide benefits for those whose jobs have been lost.

But our default position is that help is to be provided only for "the most deserving", and it lands to politicians and bureaucrats to decide who belongs in that category. We give lip service to the need for fiscal responsibility and watch

as available resources are spent on where, when and how public money is to be distributed. Yet a close look at this parable of the sower, seed and soil reveals that this is a parable that flies in the face of over-cautious, over-careful, calculated regulation. God gives freely and without calculation in the hope that divine beneficence will find good soil, but with no assurance that this will actually happen. After all, when we look at our own lives, we come to see that we have not always been good soil for the seeds God has scattered in our direction. The extravagance of God's distributing is surely a challenge to all of us who call ourselves Christians to distribute extravagantly in our turn.

But there is still one more facet of this parable that calls for exploration: What exactly does good soil look like? In what conditions does the seed that both God and we scatter

actually flourish? These are questions that Jesus does not address in his explanation of the parable. But surely a proper understanding of this parable implies that we have to take measures to stop the troubles and problems of our life circumstances from stifling our growth and the growth of those who depend on our care. It is surely our responsibility to create the conditions that will allow God's word to take root in our lives and produce the fruit that will transform our lives and convert our minds and hearts.

In his explanation of the parable, Jesus seems to equate the seed with the soil (the person) that receives it: "What was sown among briars is the one who hears the message, but then worldly anxiety and the lure of money choke it off. Such a one produces no yield" (Matthew 13, 22). Yet, isn't it true that when seed germinates both it and the soil combine to

produce something totally new? However, on reflection we can conclude that good soil needs nothing more than an openness to hear, the imagination and creativity to envision something new, and the conviction and resolution to act.

The source of good seed for all of us is the Gospel. It contains all we need for our growth and development as disciples of Jesus. Yet, we know that God's word can be stifled by our own assumptions and prejudices, and contamination by the expectations our culture can impose on us. While we all have our own favourite parts of scripture and our personal understanding of God, we still have to be ever open to be surprised by the ability of God's Spirit to show us new meaning in the readings we encounter Sunday after Sunday when we sit expectantly in the pews. How open are we to being surprised this week?

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, Suzy Collyer, Clare Conway and Pat Shannon.

Jesus had compassion on them . . .

4. For those of us unable to gather for Sunday eucharist today, you may wish to 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>

We will not begin to prepare for weekday eucharist until we have sorted ourselves out on and for Sunday eucharist. Until then, you may like to check-out the live-streamed daily eucharist at Lavender Bay, Sydney . . . prayerful and uplifting. Start time is 0730 Mon-Fri:

<https://www.northsydneycatholics.com/spirituality/liturgy/mass-on-demand>



5. *The celebration of Sunday eucharist the weekend of Sunday 12th July . . . reflections after 5pm eucharist*

I write this later on Saturday night after our first Sunday eucharist at 5pm Saturday night in our parish.

Firstly we had forty-eight people gather! We could take in any more than 50 people in total including the priest presider!

With the distancing measures in place our assembly was spread through All Saints church and we still felt like a community.

It felt really good to be gathered again as the church, the baptised. It is pity we couldn't sing . . .

Our celebration was simple and prayerful.

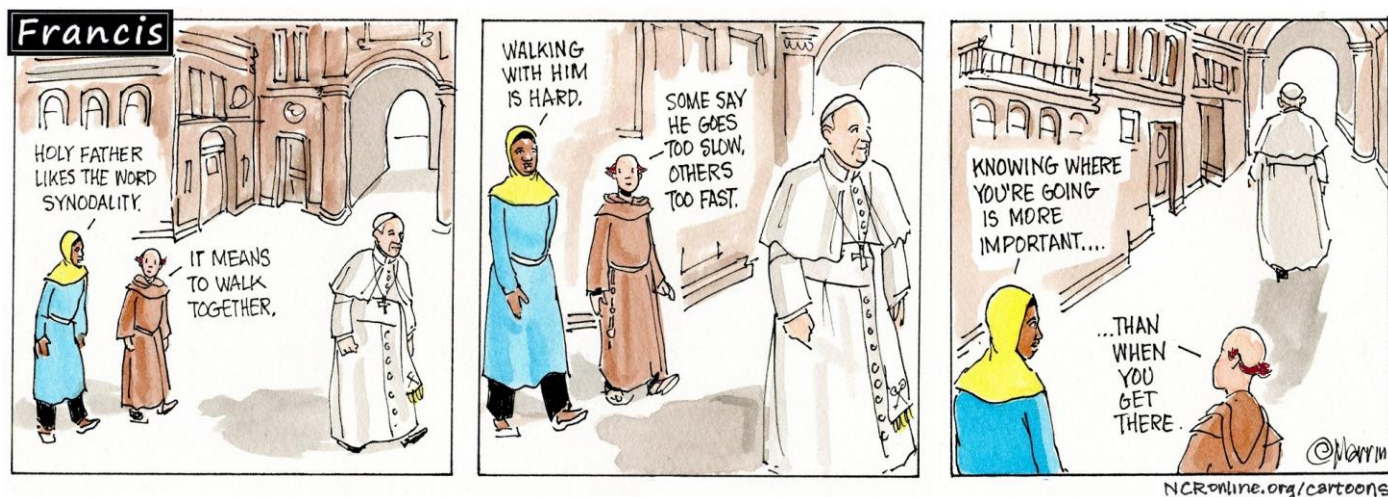
One learning is to ask **all members of the assembly (the congregation) to be seated five to ten minutes before we start.** Let's all aim to be at the church at least 15 minutes before start time.

As we arrive these are the things we must do: take attendance details of those not 'booked in', mark those attending on our list, gratefully receive money gifts, distribute new packs of envelopes for 2020/2021 to envelope givers, catch-up and greet our sisters and brothers, and be shown by ushers to the marked seats. (Thanks to ushers/'bouncers' James and Ben!). This all takes time and hence my invitation and strong encouragement to arrive earlier than usual.

So tomorrow morning we gather at Harrisville church at 0830 and at Boonah in the Fr Ellis Hall at 1030.

Again I thank the small team behind the scenes: Anne Artesi and sons; Chare Brandon and children; the Judge family; Fiona Hogeveen; Shane Seymour; Chris Dwyer; and John Nunan.

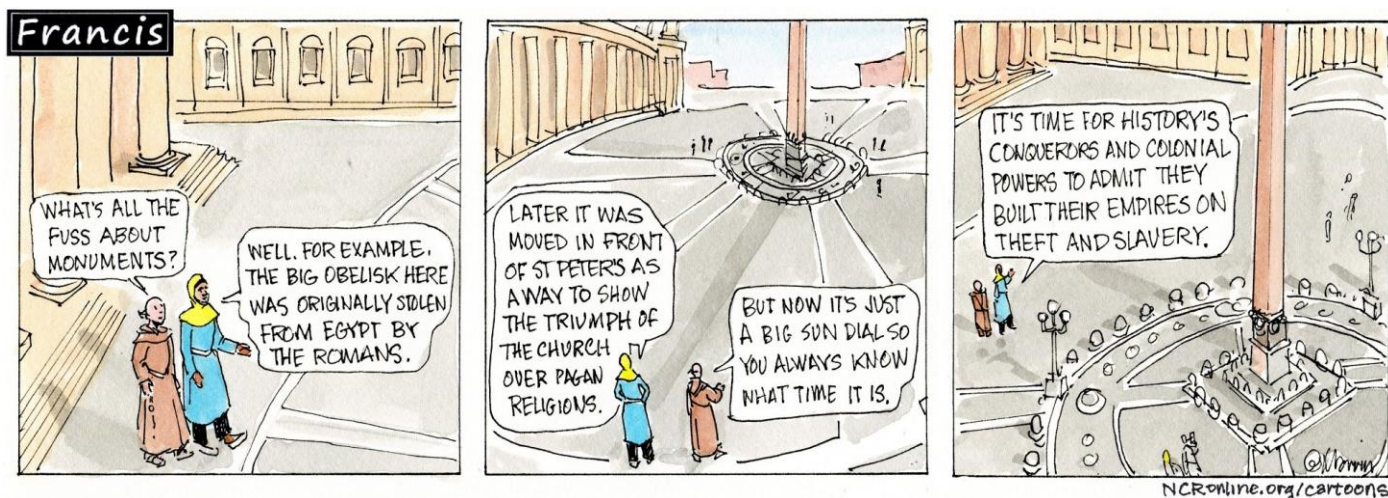
6. FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP by Pat Marrin.



7th July 2020

7. **THE CATHOLIC LEADER** digital edition is still being 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.

8. FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP by Pat Marrin.



9th July 2020

10. In the Australian press there is a lack of diversity and perspectives and an unwillingness to present faith perspectives in the public forum. As the reach of the US appears to be everywhere, I found this short reflection on 7th July by Jesuit priest, Fr Tom Reese, helpful:

American exceptionalism needs a reboot

On the Fourth of July we celebrate the United States as an exceptional country — at least, we used to. It wasn't just us who saw America this way: When American leaders spoke, the world listened. Why? We were seen as leaders of the free world with the strongest economy and a vibrant democracy. We bragged that we were a nation of immigrants, united in common purpose with respect for each other. We were also more religious than other developed countries.

Not all of this was true, of course. The land we live on was stolen from Native Americans, who we subjected to genocide. Much of our economy was built on slavery and the exploitation of immigrants. Racism has endured and each new wave of immigrants has been greeted by prejudice from those whose only distinction was having arrived earlier.

In developing our economy, we have plundered the land and polluted our rivers and air. Our small family farmers have become an endangered species as agribusiness has gobbled up the land and profits. Water tables are shrinking, and pesticides and chemicals are everywhere. Public schools in Black and white districts are still separate and unequal.

And as leader of the free world, we have too often adopted the tactics of our adversaries in disregarding civilian casualties in military encounters, supporting tyrants as our allies, practicing torture on enemy prisoners and using assassins against enemies.

And for all our military might, we have not won a major war since 1945.

Yet despite our sins, we preached that all men (and eventually women too) are created equal. We believed in freedom and justice. We helped create international institutions where nations could debate and sometimes find common purpose.

Today, however, we have become exceptional in another way. Going our own way, with total disregard for the desires and interests of other countries, we eschew multilateralism, whether in trade negotiations or dealing with climate change. We undermine NATO, the World Health Organization and other international institutions that we helped create.

We have even become exceptional among developed nations in our inability to deal with COVID-19.

No longer the leader of the free world, we have become the crazy uncle living in the attic.

Some believe that we can return to the naive exceptionalism of the past by simply whitewashing history and condemning as unpatriotic any honest assessment of our sins. Everything would be fine if only prayer returned to public schools, if "In God we trust" were put on Mississippi's flag, if feminism and homosexuality were suppressed and if our gates were closed to foreigners, especially to those who don't look or worship like us.

Insisting on such backwardness won't solve our problems. To respond to COVID-19, global warming, political corruption and tribal and religious conflicts, we need leadership like never before. The world needs us as well. The European Union is fragmenting, China is intimidating smaller powers with its military and economic power, and Russia is no better than it was before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Meanwhile, the Middle East is in worse shape than it was before the First Gulf War.

For Christians, it should be easy to acknowledge our sinfulness and need for conversion. As individuals, we know we are sinners. Why is it so hard to admit that our nation has also sinned?

We need to relearn the practice of sacrifice, especially by those who are healthy and wealthy. We need to face up to the fact that the fight against COVID-19 is a marathon, not a sprint. Likewise, with global warming, our grandchildren will curse us for not making the sacrifices to save them from catastrophe. Reducing carbon emissions through a carbon tax and investing in renewable energy need to be started now.

Love of neighbour and care for God's creation are core values in the Scriptures. If we are only looking out for ourselves, then we are not Christian.

Not only do we need better political leaders, we need more prophets to challenge us and to call us to follow the path leading to a better

world for our grandchildren. If we do that, we will be truly exceptional.

[Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese is a columnist for Religion News Service and author of *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*.]



"Do I just convert, or do I have to declare moral bankruptcy first?"

11. One of our friends of Boonah parish drew my attention to this fine piece from our own Archbishop Mark Coleridge from 10th June:



When you've been around for a couple of millennia, you learn a bit about adjusting to changing times.

That's the Catholic Church: our two thousand years as a global religion have brought memories and insights from the most dramatic changes the world has known.

It was said of the Bourbons who followed Napoleon that “they forgot nothing and learnt nothing”.

Well, over a long period of time the Catholic Church has forgotten little and learnt plenty.

That’s one of the strengths we have to offer as we look to the challenges and opportunities that COVID-19 presents to this nation and the world.

Our Australian response can take many different forms, but our priorities need to be clear. And there is one priority above all others – the human being must be the focus of any response. Of course the economy matters, but only if it puts the human being at its heart. The economy was made to serve us; we weren’t made to serve the economy

The Church doesn’t have to go too far back into our history to find guidance for these times. In 1891, Pope Leo XIII published his now famous open letter *Rerum Novarum* on the Rights and Duties of Capital and Labour.

Leo was the founding father of what is called Catholic social teaching. And in this open letter he spelled out the relationships between the government and its people, focusing on the relationships between labour and capital which was a red-hot topic at the time with the rise of Marxism.

Rerum Novarum rejected socialism, supported the right of workers to form unions and also supported the right to private property. It was ground-breaking in many ways, not just for the Church but far beyond.

Leo’s letter was the first time the Catholic Church had really engaged with the modern world. Until then the modern world was seen as a threat more to be condemned than engaged.

Leo XIII had followed Pope Pius IX who had served for more than thirty years during a time of convulsive change in the world because of the industrial revolution, the bloody political revolutions that plagued the nineteenth century and much more. Increasingly through his long pontificate Pius turned his back on the modern world and so too did the Church.

But then along came Leo XIII to offer a genuinely Gospel response to a dramatically changed world, a voice that wasn’t ideological or political but evangelical in the best sense. This was new, and it began the tradition of Catholic social teaching which has found voice in every Pope from Leo to Francis.

We’re in a situation now where the world has changed, perhaps forever, and the principle duties and responsibilities of employers, employees and governments are as much in focus today as they were when *Rerum Novarum* was issued.

The governments of Australia have done well in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, especially since they, like the rest of us, had entered new territory and have had to make big decisions in a strange, fast-moving environment.

The Prime Minister’s recent National Press Club address laid out some fundamentals for the nation’s next steps, emphasising “access to essential services, incentive for effort, respect for the principles of mutual obligation ... all translated into policies that seek not to punish those who have success, but devise ways for others to achieve it”.

We now have a chance to shape society in ways that weren’t possible before this crisis. But that can’t be left just to our political leaders. The whole community has to be creative in new ways, building on the kind of creativity we’ve shown through the crisis. The Church wants to be part of this process, and it has a unique contribution to make – not as politicians or economists but as people of faith who have forgotten little and learnt plenty, especially about the human being and what makes for a flourishing human society.

We have our own distinctive voice and we have our own communities on the ground across the nation. If you put all of the Churches together, we have an extraordinary reach into the community. We’re in the small rural towns. We’re in the regions. We’re in the cities. We have tens of thousands of workers in schools, hospitals and at the frontline of social services. We’re everywhere.

The path ahead will require some tax reform, but not necessarily tax cuts.

It will require industrial relations reform, but not reduced working conditions and job security under the guise of increased flexibility.

It will certainly require leadership that can imagine an Australia where we have full employment and a standard of living that matches the dignity of the human being.

The strange thing is that COVID-19 which has been such a curse is also opening new doors which may lead to unexpected blessings. There are new opportunities. But the catch-cry of the crisis will still

apply: We're all in this together. The same sense of solidarity that is carrying us through the pandemic will carry us into the future. We are in this together – all Australians; and the Church wants to be a good companion on the road ahead, helping to identify new opportunities and what is needed to respond to them.

12. Saturday 11th July was the Memorial of St. Benedict. Many women and men across the centuries and the cultures of the globe have been and are inspired to live the baptised life through the prism of his *Rule*. The first word of his rule is *Listen*. This is a great new image:



Artist: Stephen B. Whatley, 2018, oil on canvas

Further information: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/stephenbwhatley/30728141557>