



*Throughout these forty days, we beg you,
unseal for us the wellspring of your grace,
cleanse our hearts of all that is not holy,
and cause your gift of new life to flourish once again.*



Australian
GEOGRAPHIC

Sunday greetings to the members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on the First Sunday of Lent.

1. REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY WORD.



The **first** reflection for this Sunday is from the *Catholic WomenPreach* website and the preacher is Tia Noelle Pratt.

Tia Pratt, PhD is a sociologist of religion specializing in systemic racism in the Catholic Church.

She received her PhD in Sociology from Fordham University in 2010.

For more than twenty years, Dr. Pratt has researched and written about how systemic racism impacts African-American Catholic identity. She is the President and Director of Research at TNPratt & Associates, LLC an Inclusion and Diversity consulting firm in Philadelphia, PA and the curator of the #BlackCatholicsSyllabus.

She is currently working on a book, *Faithful and Devoted: Racism and Identity in the African-American Catholic Experience* with funding from the Louisville Institute and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion.

Her work has been featured in the edited volumes, *Young American Catholics*, and *American Parishes*, as well as *Faithfully*, *Commonweal*, *The Revealer*, *National Catholic Reporter*, and *America*. You can follow her on Twitter @TiaPhD.

Her homily includes:

It feels like we've had more suffering than one year can hold. It has truly been a Lenten year.

Yet, Lent brings with it the promise of Easter rebirth and renewal. We truly have gotten this far by faith. It is a faith that has been sustained by prayer and the promise of God's covenant with Noah and the promise that God's ways are love and truth.

As we reflect on this first Sunday of Lent and in the days and weeks to come, we must not forget the sacrifice and suffering we have borne and witnessed in the last year. Doing so would dishonor all of that pain and all of that loss. Instead, we must prayerfully embrace it because that will allow us to see the rebirth and renewal that comes with the light of Easter.

And through it all, we remember that . . .

God is good . . .

And all the time . . .

<https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/02212021>

The [second reflection](#) is from Fr. Steve Bevens SVD, from CTU, Chicago, and is titled: **Three Difficult Words.**



Our gospel reading today on this First Sunday of Lent ends with three difficult words: *kingdom, repent, and gospel.*

Difficult words on the one hand because we hear them so often that we are tempted to take them for granted. Difficult words on the other hand because of the gender-exclusive meaning of “kingdom,” the rather negative connotations of “repent,” and the tendency to understand “gospel” as just a story about Jesus. But these three words — which most scholars say express Jesus’ core message, and which may have been Jesus’ exact words — are really radical and life-changing words. They are words that are truly appropriate for us as we begin the season of Lent.

First of all, Jesus proclaims the kingdom of God in a land that is occupied by the kingdom of Caesar: the Roman Empire. But this kingdom is very different from the kind of force and violence that Rome represents. Jesus is proclaiming the possibility of a new kind of world. Pope Francis has called this a “revolution of tenderness.” African American theologian Willie Jennings speaks of “revolutionary intimacy” as the message that Jesus offers. Feminist theologians and others play on the English word “kingdom” and speak about the “kindom” of God, a new family. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza talks of a “discipleship of equals,” where all domination of any kind is ended. Gregory Boyle, the priest who works with gangs in East Los Angeles, speaks about a vision of “radical kinship.” Irish theologian Enda McDonough writes eloquently of the age of “flourishing in community.” A better world is possible! This is what kingdom really means.

All you have to do, says Jesus, is to accept that it is possible and begin to live in a new way. This is the point of the word “repent,” which is intimately connected with the word “believe.” Repent and believe are words that are not, in the wonderful phrase of Canadian novelist Rudy Wiebe, about feeling bad, but thinking differently. Repenting is about reimagining how the world could be, dreaming a new dream, going beyond what seems possible, thinking with people in a new way — these last two phrases connected to the Greek word for repent. To borrow the powerful words of Amanda Gorman, repentance is about being “brave enough to see” the light, “brave enough to be it.”

This, then, is the gospel. This we know as “good news.” But it is more than that. It is amazing news, incredible news, too good to be true, as Andrew Greeley once wrote. The great Sri Lankan theologian D. S. Niles once said that the good news of the gospel is like one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. Pope Francis has written that preaching the gospel is sharing joy, pointing to beauty, and inviting people to a delicious banquet. The great Dutch theologian Edward Schillebeeckx once wrote that “being sad in Jesus’ presence” was “an existential impossibility.” Jesus, he said in another place, was like a joyful song.

These three difficult words, then, are actually wonderful words to hear as we begin this season of Lent. Lent offers us a new beginning, a chance to change our lives, a chance to change our world. In a homily he gave three years ago, about these same readings on the First Sunday of Lent, Pope

Francis said that “Lent is a time of repentance, yes, but it is not a time of sorrow! It is a time of penance, but it is not a time ... of mourning. It is a joyous and serious commitment to strip ourselves of our selfishness, ... and to renew ourselves according to the grace of our Baptism.”
Radical intimacy. New imagination!

Today’s first and second readings, along with the responsorial psalm, call to mind God’s covenant – God’s promise to be always with the world and never abandon it. Notice that the covenant referred to is the covenant with Noah, which is a covenant with all peoples, and indeed with the whole earth. The “radical kinship” that Jesus proclaims is an invitation in these days of Lent to open ourselves up to the fulfilment of that covenant which he says is “near at hand.”

It might not seem so near. We are still in the throes of COVID-19, on our way toward a half-million deaths in this country. The January 6th assault on the Capitol showed us how politically divided we are – more than perhaps we ever imagined. George Floyd’s death did the same with racism. Millions worldwide have lost their jobs and are struggling to feed their families and make ends meet. But there is new political hope, and there is the vaccine, and there is a chance to recommit ourselves to one another and to our earth once more in these days of Lent. We can do this through acts of kindness, taking pleasure in the warmth and hope of the coming spring, practicing the asceticism of really listening to one another, visiting one another in a socially distant way once we are vaccinated, praying for those we find difficult to love, or sacrificing a bit of our substance for just causes.

Another world is possible! The Kingdom! Being brave enough to see and be the light. Repent! God has not and will never abandon us. Gospel!

Rev. Steve Bevans, SVD

LOUIS J. LUZBETAK, SVD PROFESSOR OF MISSION AND CULTURE, EMERITUS

2. For those of us unable to gather for Sunday eucharist, 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://brisbanecatholic.org.au/multimedia/on-demand-web-casts/>

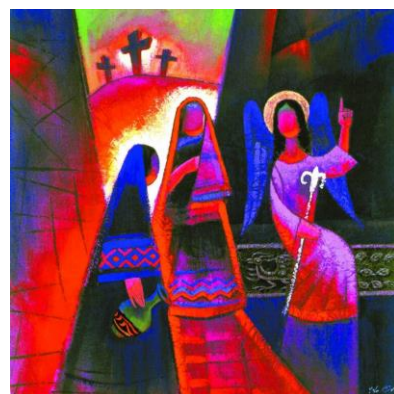
Live-streamed daily eucharist continues at Lavender Bay, Sydney . . . prayerful and uplifting. Start time is 0730 Mon-Fri:

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

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, Paul White, Arthur Devin, Liliana Toohill, Libby Shields, Marko Babic, Dermot Peters, Max Gardiner, Bernice Lippiatt, Pat Toohill, Trish Merlehan, Pat Shannon, Bernadette Pinchin, Simon Greatrex, Neil O'Connor, Cate Mitten and sick members of parish families and those beyond our parish boundaries.

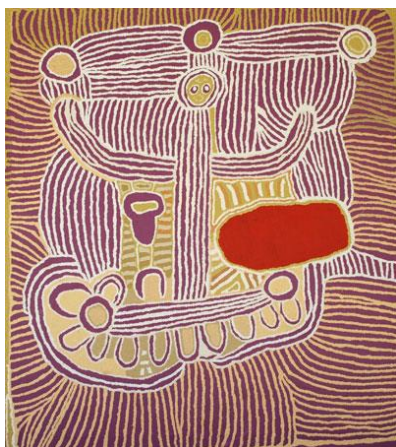


4. We pray for two people who died recently: **Stefano "Fano" Tua** (whose funeral is on this coming Monday) and **Kevin Curran**, Cork, Ireland. Kevin is Angela Kearney's uncle. *May they rest in peace and may their families receive God's loving consolation at this time.*



5. *Boonah Parish happenings . . .*

Our **SUNDAY EUCHARIST** schedule is:



Saturday
5.00pm (Boonah church)

Sunday
7.30am (Harrisville church)
9.30am (Boonah church)

Desert Eucharist by Linda Syddick Napaltjarri (b. 1937)

Our **WEEKDAY EUCHARIST** schedule for this week, 1st Week of Lent, is:

Monday 22nd February 7.00am, **Boonah** church

Tuesday 23rd February 7.45am, **Boonah** church

There will be no Mass on Wednesday or Thursday this week.



♦ We began the great season of Lent last Wednesday. *Thanks* to all who celebrated Ash Wednesday. We had two strong assemblies of faith at Boonah on early Wednesday morning and a similar group at Peak Crossing in the evening. It was wonderful to experience a cross-section of parishioners at Peak. More than a few of us shared a simple meal afterwards and friendships were made and renewed!

We also had a whole-of-school celebration with the children and staff of the parish school close to midday: a Liturgy of the Word with the Distribution of Ashes. *Thanks* to the members of the 'Liturgy Committee' for the roles they took on for this first day of Lent. Each of Year 6 students join a committee to enhance aspects of school life.

♦ Our local SVDP conference met last Wednesday and it was good to be able to support the members as their spiritual advisor. Let's keep the work of Vinnies in our prayer during Lent. We already know that 'demand' is on the rise locally due to the decrease in various financial supplements provided by the Federal Government. And let's also keep sharing our food resources please as the larder is taking a bigger hit than before.

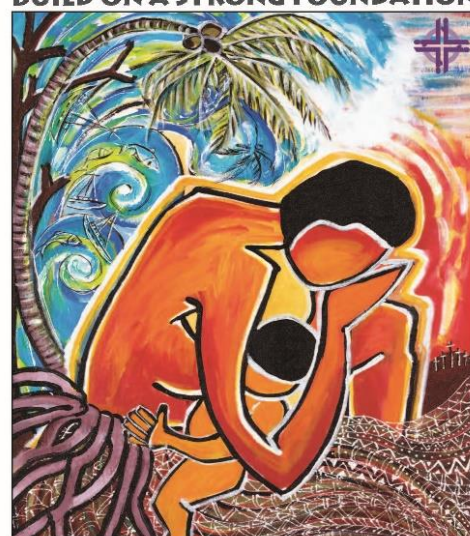
♦ *Advance notice for World Day of Prayer 2021!*
Boonah Catholic parish is the host local church this year:
Friday 5th March and it **starts at 10.00am**.

Some free resources such as a promotional video and music are available on the following link:

<https://www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org/free-resources/>

We need to know local numbers please. Remember we have a maximum seating capacity of 80 people and this includes Christians from local churches. Contact Marcia Wimmer or email me directly. *Thanks!*

BUILD ON A STRONG FOUNDATION



World Day of Prayer • March 5, 2021

Proposed by the WDP Committee of Ministers • Published by World Day of Prayer USA • www.wdp-usa.org • 312.870.2166 • Art by Jellicoe Pitt

6. FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP by Pat Marrin – 16th February 2021.



NCRonline.org/cartoons

7. We continue to share a few short articles on aspects of the funeral liturgy. Here is the fourth one.

Returned to the Elements

God the Creator made Adam and Eve out of the dust of the earth, breathing into each of them divine fire, the spark of life which we call the soul. It is fitting, then, when one of our loved ones has died, that we return the body to God through committing it to the ground or to the fire, or, in rare cases, to the sea. And we mark this momentous act with a rite, the third and last part of the Order of Christian Funerals, the rite of committal. It is a brief and poignant gesture whereby we “give back” this one whom we have loved so much, in sure hope that one day again we will be together, with all the saints and angels in the city of God.

The rite of committal is in some ways a continuation and conclusion to the funeral liturgy. We carry the body from the church to the grave, or the ashes from the crematory to the grave. The Order of Christian Funerals says plainly, “Whenever possible, the rite of committal is to be celebrated at the place of committal, that is, beside the open grave or place of interment, rather than at a cemetery chapel.”

It used to be thought that seeing the open grave would be too traumatic, or that having loved ones actually lower the body into the grave or even witness it would scar them for life. Well, guess what? Death is traumatic. And the death of a loved one does scar us for life.

But the very human and sacred act of committing the body to earth or fire or sea helps us negotiate that trauma and live through that pain that scars. Funeral directors may discourage you. Cemeteries may charge extra. But go to the grave! Accompany the body to the place of cremation. Take the ashes to the cemetery. Don’t abandon the body of your loved one to “the industry,” however helpful such good people are. It’s the human — it’s the *Christian* — thing to do.

The rite of committal begins with an invitation to prayer, a kind of reassembling after the procession. A short verse from scripture is proclaimed. A prayer is said over the place of committal. Some final intercessions for the loved one and the mourners are said, summed up the Lord’s Prayer. This is a significant moment — the last time we will say the prayer that Christ taught us over the body. A concluding prayer is said and a blessing over the people. Singing can — and should — be a part of this.

This is the basic structure. To it, the *Order of Christian Funerals* allows us to add customs from our culture: gestures of farewell, for example, like sprinkling earth on the coffin or laying a hand on it one last time before it is planted in the earth or given over to fire or water.

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8a. During the 40 days of Lent, I will offer three articles each Sunday for our reflection. The first one was sent to me by a 'friend of the parish'. *Thanks Elizabeth!*

In an age of cancel culture can I find room in my heart for empathy?

On January 6 this year, like millions of people throughout the world, I could not drag myself away from the television as supporters of Donald Trump stormed the Capitol Building in Washington, DC. Of all the images of that day, the one that haunts me most is that of a young female protestor. She was about 20 years old and petite compared to the hairy beefy protestors around her. She wore a star-spangled beanie and was one of the whipped-to-a-frenzy mob on the steps of the Capitol chanting, or rather screaming, "USA! USA! USA!" It was the depth of rage, hatred and venom etched on her face that disturbed me. I felt dismay and outrage. My outrage stemmed from the realisation that her outrage was built on the lie that the US presidential election was stolen. Lies, "lies told for power and for profit" as Joe Biden said in his inaugural address, had fuelled this insurrection. Outrage has become the currency of the day. But I need to press the pause button and examine my own response, particularly since listening to an ABC Big Ideas podcast, titled The Age of Online Outrage.

Ashley "Dotty" Charles was the witty, thought-provoking speaker. She believes that there is much that could legitimately fuel her outrage but, as she explained in the podcast and in her recent book, *Outrage - Why Everyone is Shouting and No One is Talking*, she believes she needs to be selective about any activism born of outrage. If we jump on the outrage bandwagon for all and sundry, she says, we can miss what matters most, we can be confused about what we really stand for and what deserves our considered, rather than violent, response. Dotty Charles explores the public shaming and tribalism that is endemic on social media, the playground of "purveyors of hate". Much of our outrage, she claims, is driven by a lot of unconscious ego and self-righteousness. I am offended and, therefore, I must be the principled one; look at me and see how noble, morally superior and virtuous I am.

Actor Rowan Atkinson concurs. In a recent interview with UK outlet the *Radio Times*, Atkinson says that the online cancel culture is like a "medieval mob roaming the streets looking for someone to burn". The star of *Mr Bean* and *Blackadder* says that online witch hunts create a simplistic, binary view of society, of the good and the bad and the worthy and unworthy. The internet is awash with ridicule, name-calling and unfounded accusation. Online users serve as prosecutor, trial and jury of complete strangers. They presume to know and subsequently judge, with spiked venom, the intentions and hearts of those whose views differ from their own. I am not active on social media, but it occurred to me that the dynamic is the same when much of my outrage, much of my critique is fed by unconscious ego and a self-righteous moral superiority. It's tricky discussing religion within my family but, oh, what a wonderful feeling of camaraderie when we start talking politics! We bond by having a common political enemy to dissect and demonise and Donald J Trump was a godsend. We bond and feel better about ourselves by condemning another.

Sociologists tell us that we create community by scapegoating. It is "easier to form community against something rather than around something, and to define ourselves more by what we are against than by what we are for," says spiritual author Ronald Rolheiser in *Sacred Fire: A Vision*

for a Deeper Human and Christian Maturity (159). And psychologists tell us that we all carry some inherent feelings of shame and we seek ways of ridding ourselves of such unconscious negative feelings.

If I feel put down, put upon or humiliated, I can reduce these feelings by criticising and blaming someone else. This can be highly addictive, and we witness how this is amplified on social media where outrage has become, Dotty Charles says, the default setting. I am not immune and at times, I catch myself sounding like a “grumpy old woman”, quite at home within the 21st Century’s culture of complaint. So, what to do?

Even though outrage is subjective, there are truly unjust things that I am and must be outraged about – hate crime, domestic violence, our government’s treatment of asylum seekers, deaths in custody of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, the destruction of the Amazon rainforest for starters. Gospel values need to be both the measure of the “what” of my outrage and the “how” of my response in some form of action and intent. Dotty Charles pleads for engagement and dialogue as healthy antidotes to toxic outrage. Beyond outrage, indignation and justified critique, can I find room in my heart for any empathy for those who feel aggrieved? Can I try to understand their outrage?

It is Lent so a good time to “watch my language” and give up harsh words rather than sugar and sweets. I pray for the grace to be more mindful of the urge to judge and blame; to realise that gossip is rarely harmless, and that “detraction”, defined by the Webster Dictionary as “belittling or disparagement, a lessening of reputation or esteem especially by envious, malicious, or petty criticism”, is alive and well.

As I reflect on the Gospel readings for the coming 40 days, especially the passion narratives of Holy Week, I wish to learn from Jesus’ response to the outrage of the “mob” who, in similar vein to the angry protestors on the steps of the Capitol Building, chanted and screamed, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

Ronald Rolheiser writes:

Jesus takes away the tensions and sins of the community by absorbing them, carrying them, transforming them, and not giving back in kind. Jesus took in hatred, held it, transformed it, and gave back love; he took in bitterness, held it, transformed it, and gave back graciousness; he took in curses, held them, transformed them, and gave back blessings; and he took in murder, held it, transformed it, and gave back forgiveness.

As uncomfortable as it may be, I need to remind myself that all of us, including hate-filled mobsters, terrorists, and leaders who fuel insurrection, all of us are made in the image and likeness of God. This Lent I will pray for victims of outrage and those who are fuelled by outrage, especially one petite young woman wearing a star-spangled beanie.

Patty Fawcner is an Australian Good Samaritan Sister. <https://www.goodsams.org.au/article/2021/02/>

8b. A Good Appetite.

Fasting is not an isolated discipline, but one of a trinity of holy practices: *Prayer. Fasting. Almsgiving.* Each of these gives support and meaning to the others. Prayer befriends the soul. It re-fixes our sacred purpose and turns us toward the tasks at hand. Fasting befriends the body — which is to say that the body is good, very good, and worthy of whatever form our fasting must take. Almsgiving befriends our neighbour with whom we share what we might otherwise have hoarded.

To fast, accompanied by prayer and almsgiving, is to be healed. Fasting is good for the body, the “body politic,” and the “mystical body.” Fasting helps to make the body whole.

Fasting is necessary now if we are ever to enjoy feasting. A good appetite allows us to enjoy the earthly gifts that we have been given. So fasting is not so much a deprecation of the flesh, but a sharpening of earthly joys. *The Talmud* says: “One will have to give an account on the judgment day of every good thing which one might have enjoyed — and did not.” Fasting helps us savour God’s goodness.

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8c. The Jesuit journal *America* has a podcast called **Jesuitical**. It is for young Catholics and each episode features a guest. To mark the start of Lent, the two hosts interview Fr. Richard Rohr, a Franciscan from New Mexico.

I was surprised to discover I enjoyed this interview and how Rohr dialogues and speaks with these two people. It is long and the interview starts at 11:16. *Enjoy! There are some great insights and responses . . .*

<https://cms.megaphone.fm/channel/AMMD2442073612?selected=AMMD3160370901>

9. FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP by Pat Marrin – 18th February 2021.



10. On this Sunday of Lent, I want to mention my personal deep unease with the events that have been unfolding during the week in Canberra: the alleged crime perpetrated against the female staff person (who used to work) in our Federal Parliament.

I watched the entire TV interview last Monday night. I struggle to understand so many public responses during the week.

My reactions over these days are similar to those I had when watching and reading so much of the testimony of survivors and of the parents of children which was given during the Royal Commission.

Then, I couldn't – and still can't - fathom the responses of many Church leaders as well as that of our institution, the church.

Now, I can't fathom the responses of many elected leaders and the institution of Federal Parliament.

Perhaps we need to hear and heed the voice of the One who is in solidarity with all people who are broken by others: *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh* (Ezekiel 36:26).

John
pastor,
Boonah Catholic community.