



The image is from the Stations of the Cross
by Indigenous artist Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann AM,
originally completed in 1974/75
for the new Catholic church in Daly River, Northern Territory.

1. REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY WORD.



The **first** reflection for this Sunday is from the *Catholic WomenPreach* website and the preacher is Nichole Flores.

NICHOLE M. FLORES, PhD, is assistant professor of religious studies at the University of Virginia.

She speaks, writes and teaches about the significance of Catholic ethics in plural social, political, and ecclesial contexts.

Her first book, *The Aesthetics of Solidarity: Our Lady of Guadalupe and American Democracy* will be available from Georgetown University Press in July 2021.

In 2015, Dr. Flores was honoured with the *Catherine Mowry LaCugna Award* for best academic essay in Catholic theology from the Catholic Theological Society of America.

Nichole earned an A.B. in government from Smith College, an M.Div. from Yale Divinity School, and a Ph.D. in theological ethics from Boston College.

Her homily is titled: **PALM SUNDAY.**

In the midst of this year of suffering
It is easy for our attention
To be drawn to the words of woe
Expressed in our Palm Sunday scriptures.

Have you felt abandoned this year?
Have you cried out,
“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

Have you felt abandoned as a parent,
Stripped of already meagre social, economic, and spiritual resources
Available For caring for your children?

Have you felt abandoned as a single person,
Facing loneliness for months on end
In the silence of your apartment?

Have you felt abandoned as a grandparent,
who could no longer see your sweet grandchild in person,
Losing a year (and counting) of precious time
To hold them in your arms?

Have you felt abandoned as a Black person,
A person of colour,
A queer person,
A transgendered person,
Who has witnessed the surge of violence
Against those relegated to our society's margins,
Heaping fear upon your fear?

Did you weep as you listened to George Floyd's cry for his mama?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Psalm 22 laments violence and injustice,
Foreshadowing the violent lynching
That Jesus will endure on Good Friday.

More than merely sorrow,
The psalm expresses deep fear and anger:
"Indeed, many dogs surround me,
A pack of evildoers closes in upon me;
They have pierced my hands and feet;
I can count all my bones.

Our Palm Sunday scriptures pierce our hearts
Foreshadowing the lance
that will pierce Jesus's side
in only days' time.

And yet, our scripture also contains
words of tenderness and mercy,
Rays of gentle light beaming
through the cracks of the tomb.

We see gentle grace
in the leafy palm branches
cut from the field
And the cloaks laid out on the street
to welcome our Lord to Jerusalem,
"Hosanna in the Highest!"

We feel the healing mercy
in the alabaster jar of perfumed oil
Broken and poured on Jesus's head.

The woman's work of mercy is interrogated,
"Why has there been this waste of perfumed oil?
It could have been sold for more than three hundred days' wages
And the money given to the poor!"

And yet, the Lord accepts her mercy
And speaks words of mercy for the woman who anoints him:
"Let her alone," he says.

"Why do you make trouble for her?
She has done a good thing for me...
She has done what she could."

She has done what she could.

Hear the Word of Lord, O Church!
She has done what she could!
Though a pandemic rages on,
She has found ways both big and small
To pour love out to those around her.
To her children.
To her community.
To her parents.
To her grandparents.
To those most in need of God's mercy.

She has done what she could!
Sacrificing comforts both big and small
To save the lives of others
To protect the common good,
Especially those most vulnerable to the ravages of the disease.

And even as the Lord's words remind us of all that we have done,
They remind us that we can still do more.

Have we done all we could do to defend Black men from violence?
Have we done all we could do to defend the dignity of our LGBTQ siblings?
Have we done all we could do to stand in solidarity
With the hungry,
The thirsty,
The stranger,
The naked,
The sick,
The imprisoned?

As we approach this Holy Week,
May we find comfort in the words of mercy poured out
Even in the midst of trial.

May we pour our mercy to those around us,
Especially as we all continue to walk through
the Valley of the Shadow of Death of this pandemic.

And may we pour out mercy to those most in need,
Doing all that we can to defend the lives and dignity of the children of God
Crying out for God's mercy.

The [second reflection](#) is from Julian McDonald, a Christian Brother from Australia, who ministers in Rome.



Compared with the Good Friday reading of John's account of the Passion of Jesus, Mark's version is very much understated. The first ten chapters of Mark's Gospel present Jesus engaging with the crowds and receiving their approval not only for his cures and miracles but also for the manner in which he identified with them as they struggled with the burdens put upon by religious leaders intent on demanding observance of the letter of the Law. Those ten chapters also reveal how Jesus had disagreed with the scribes and Pharisees in Galilee over the narrow ways in which they had interpreted their Jewish Scriptures and traditions. Jesus could not accept the way in which they put rigid and unfeeling adherence to law ahead of human need and well-being. Consequently, as early as chapter three of his Gospel, Mark notes that religious authorities were shaping plans for ending Jesus' life.

Mark does describe Jesus' short journey from Bethany to Jerusalem as one during which he received accolades from the crowd, who spread cloaks and reeds in his path. This journey, I suggest, was much more like a protest march than a procession of triumph. When he reached the city gates, he entered Jerusalem alone, not in triumph and quietly went into the Temple and looked around before returning with his disciples to Bethany. It was the next day, according to Mark, that he returned to the Temple and caused a commotion by overturning tables and driving out those who had turned the Temple into a market-place. He looked, pondered, and then acted.

The events that followed the anointing of his feet by an unnamed woman in the house of Simon were not witnessed by adoring crowds. They were largely confined to Jesus and his disciples. It was only Jesus who understood that his journey to Jerusalem was actually a funeral procession. He fully understood that he was a marked man. While his disciples may have shown signs of anxiety, they could not grasp what was about to unfold. They came to understand what eventuated only in retrospect, only after he had been executed and resurrected. We, too, participate in all the events of Jesus' psychological struggles in Gethsemane garden, his betrayal and trial, his condemnation, torture and execution, in the knowledge of his resurrection. We know that, despite our betrayals, our desertions and treacheries, his acceptance and forgiveness and love for us has not wavered.

Of note, too, is the fact that, while Jesus celebrated a Passover meal privately with his friends, Mark records no mention of directions to them to repeat the ritual offering of bread and wine among themselves or with anyone else. It was only in retrospect that Mark's Christian community interpreted this as the institution of the Lord's Supper, as what we now call Eucharist.

Having noted Mark's way of understating the events surrounding Jesus' final days, I invite us all to turn our attention to two seemingly insignificant aspects of Mark's narrative. - the conscription of Simon of Cyrene to assist Jesus in carrying his cross and the proclamation of the Roman centurion when he saw that Jesus had expired.

We've all come to admire people who voluntarily take up a cross by dedicating their professional expertise to the service of those who are less fortunate. They let go of personal advancement simply to benefit others, because that's what walking in the footsteps of Jesus means to them. One such person is Dr Tom Catena, a 57-year-old physician, surgeon and lay-missionary from New York, who has spent the last 13 years as the only doctor at a 435-bed hospital in the Nuba mountains of South Sudan. There's a kind of brightness about chosen crosses such as this. Moreover, we often find inspiration in the words and actions of those who choose them. When the local bishop directed all foreign Church workers to leave when their lives were at risk, Tom Catena refused, saying: "The way I saw it was that, if I left, that would tell the people here that my life is more valuable than theirs. And I don't believe that. That's not how Christ was, he gave his life for everyone." (*America magazine*, August 2018)

But there are other crosses that none of us chooses. They are the kind of cross inflicted by oppressors on ethnic groups like the Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar and the Uyghur people in Xinjiang Province, China. Then there is the baffling cross of the Covid 19 pandemic which has been carried by millions of people across the globe. All these crosses seem to me to make no sense whatsoever. That's the kind of cross that was forced on Simon of Cyrene, who arrived on the scene of Jesus' struggle to Calvary at the wrong time. Pressed into helping Jesus who had fallen under the weight of his Cross, Simon had no choice but to give in to the Roman soldiers who were in charge. We don't even know if he was a religious man going up to Jerusalem for Passover. Mark identifies him as "the father of Rufus and Alexander", suggesting, perhaps, that this family was known to Mark's community. Was Simon a reluctant participant or a willing helper? Had he undergone some kind of conversion by the time he got to the end of that ordeal? Did he flee the scene as soon as the soldiers had finished with him? There are times in our lives when we are drawn into the lives of acquaintances, friends, family members and even strangers, and asked or forced to assist them in carrying their crosses of terminal illness, creeping dementia, criminal charges, grief, loss and the like. Reflecting on Simon of Cyrene prods me to ask if I am a reluctant or grumbling participant in the crosses of those around me or whether I walk with them caringly and compassionately. Do I walk with them giving of my time and attention stintingly and grudgingly, feeling sorry for myself at being trapped into doing something unpleasant? Am I afraid of what others may think of me if I fail to give a helping hand? What strikes me about Simon is that he walked with Jesus, and ended up giving the Romans the satisfaction of executing their victim. Those of us with a passion for justice step out to demonstrate in the public eye because of unjust laws, because we believe that black lives matter, that firearms must be banned or that asylum seekers deserve to be welcomed. Yet we know that we may not live to see the change for which we advocate.



In the long run, our efforts, like Simon's, may come to absolutely nothing. What matters, however, is that our personal integrity demands that we embrace the Cross of Jesus whenever it comes into our lives and into the lives of our sisters and brothers. Failure to go that way means that we end up losing our humanity, and as the song of Marist singer Chris Skinner reminds us: "it is human that were meant to be" (Chris Skinner SM, Human).

Whatever the thoughts and feelings Simon experienced, he stands in stark contrast to Jesus, who day in and day out selflessly walks with us as we carry the crosses that come our way - crosses of our own making and crosses given to us by others. Sometimes we let those crosses feed our bitterness, at other times we allow them to transform us, to contribute to our growth and development as human beings, as followers of Christ. In his uplifting sonnet *As kingfishers catch fire . . .*, the poet Hopkins offers us words of encouragement and hope, assuring us that we can be Christ to others every day of our lives:

for Christ plays in ten thousand places,

Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his

To the Father through the features of men's faces.

He could just as accurately have stated that Christ's passion is repeated millions of times each day as his sisters and brothers shoulder crosses of terminal disease, injustice, persecution, prejudice and rejection. We know that we, too, will be numbered among them, that we may even be asked to fill the shoes of Simon of Cyrene. We also have the assurance that Jesus himself will accompany us every step of our journey to resurrection.



A few thoughts, now, on the unnamed Roman centurion who stood at the foot of Jesus on the Cross, and had a hand in his death. It was an American minister in the Unitarian Universalist Church, Kate Braestrup who first prompted me to reflect on the pronouncement attributed to that Roman centurion. Widowed with four children when her husband, a police officer in Maine, USA, was killed in a motor vehicle accident while on duty, Kate gained entry into an Ecumenical Seminary in 1997 and was ordained in 2004. She was motivated by the fact that her husband Drew had thoughts of becoming a minister himself, and the two of them had discussed that possibility at length in the months before he was killed. Kate combined theological study with rearing her young family. A journalist by profession, she has gone on to write books on spirituality, which have attracted the attention of the New York Times. In 2010 she

published *Beginner's Grace: Bringing Prayer to Life*. In this book, the centurion on Calvary is one of the topics of Braestrup's reflections.

In today's gospel reading there are no pyrotechnics associated with the moment of Jesus' death. Mark observes that, at the moment Jesus died, the curtain in the Temple sanctuary was torn in two and that the centurion who had witnessed the manner of Jesus' death declared: "Clearly, this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39).

The centurion's words emanated from what he thought and felt as he witnessed Jesus' agony and death. He concluded that he had been involved in the death of an innocent man. Somehow or other he was touched by the grace of God, not because of who he was, but because of who God is - endless love, hope, compassion and mercy for all of humanity. While we reflect on what happened to the centurion, there is an invitation to us, as we walk down from that hill of Calvary, to ask ourselves what we might do for the broken world of which we are a part. God's hope is surely that we will live differently because of what Jesus has done for us? Might that mean being a little more sensitive to those around us, making ourselves available to help them to carry their crosses, reaching out in forgiveness and tolerance to those who have hurt us, speaking the truth with courage, compassion, integrity and love? There is a rich abundance of material for reflection in the passion narratives of all four Gospels. But we all need to give ourselves time and space to do the reflecting.

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>

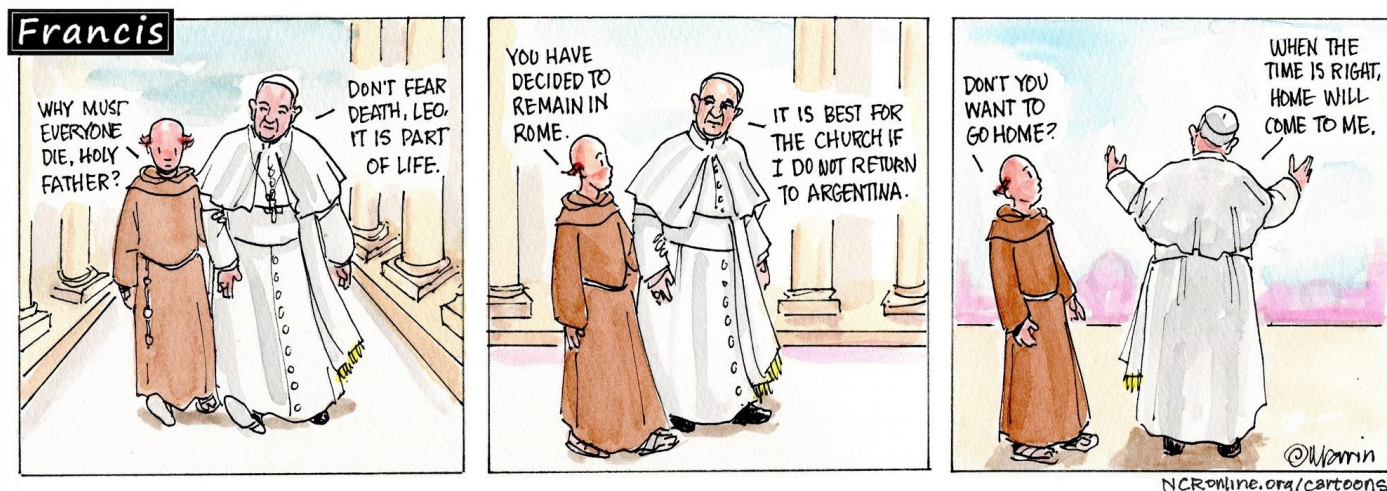


3. We pray with and for those who are sick in our parish and beyond: all across the globe infected with COVID-19; former pastor of Boonah parish Fr. Ellis Clifford, Chris Healy, Paul White, Arthur Devin, Liliana Toohill, Libby Shields, Marko Babic, Dermot Peters, Max Gardiner, Bernice Lippiatt, Pat Toohill, 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. Heather Dennis died during the week. I was able to visit Heather last Sunday and we celebrated the sacraments of anointing and viaticum. We extend our condolences and sympathy to her family and friends.

Heather's funeral is to be celebrated this coming Wednesday 31st March at 11am, Boonah church. *May she rest in peace.*

5. **FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP** by Pat Marrin – 23rd March 2021.



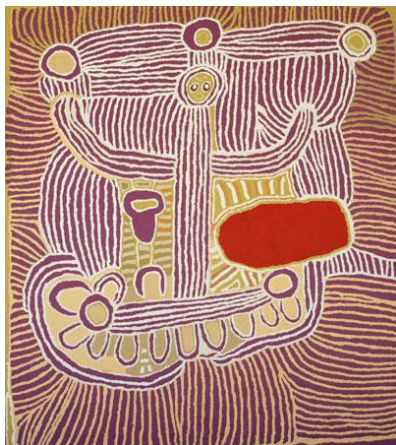
6. *Boonah Parish happenings . . .*

from commands to invitations,
 from laws to ideals,
 from threats to persuasion,
 from coercion to conscience,
 from monologue to conversation,
 from ruling to serving,
 from withdrawn to integrated,
 from vertical and top-down to horizontal,
 from exclusion to inclusion,
 from hostility to friendship,
 from static to changing,
 from passive acceptance to active engagement,
 from prescriptive to principled,
 from defined to open-ended,
 from behaviour-modification to conversion of heart,
 from the dictates of law to the dictates of conscience,
 from external conformity to the joyful pursuit of holiness.

When these elements are taken in the aggregate, they indicate a model of spirituality. This, they say, is what good Catholics should look like and this is how they should behave. That means the elements indicate what the Church should look like and how it should behave. This is a significant model-shift. This is a teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

- Fr. John O'Malley SJ, 2006

Our **SUNDAY EUCHARIST** schedule is:



Saturday: EASTER VIGIL
7.00pm (Boonah church)

Sunday: EASTER SUNDAY
7.30am (Harrisville church)
9.30am (Boonah church)

Desert Eucharist by Linda Syddick Napaltjarri (b. 1937)

Our **WEEKDAY EUCHARIST** schedule for this week, **HOLY WEEK**, is:

Monday 29th March 5.30pm, **Boonah** church

Tuesday 30th March 8.00am, **Boonah** church

Wednesday 31st March 6pm, **Peak Crossing** church *followed by meal at Peak Pub*

There are also several times when **FIRST RITE FOR RECONCILIATION** can be celebrated this week:

Monday 29th March 4.30pm – 5.00pm, **Boonah** church (*before Mass*)

Tuesday 30th March 8.30am – 9.00am, **Boonah** church (*after Mass*)

Wednesday 31st March 5.00pm -5.30pm, **Peak Crossing** church (*before Mass*)

Thursday 1st April 8.00am – 9.00am, **Boonah** church.

The **THREE DAYS OF EASTER** are the centre of our liturgical year. Our times are:

Holy Thursday night – *Evening Vigil of the Lord's Death* – 7.00pm, **Boonah** church

Good Friday – *Proclamation of the Lord's Death* – 3.00pm, **Boonah** church

Easter Vigil – *Evening Vigil of the Lord's Rising* – 7.00pm, **Boonah** church

Easter Sunday – *Day of the Lord's Rising* – 7.30am, **Harrisville** church & 9.30am, **Boonah** church

As well, a simple and sober **Good Friday Stations of the Cross** will be celebrated at 10.00am, **Harrisville** church

♦ **Liturgy Preparation for the Three days of Easter** (*the Paschal Triduum*)

On Tuesday morning last week the rain bucketed down and the waters around the town continued to rise. As we know, flooding occurred. A small group soldiered on as best we could for as long as we could. Thank you to those who came along and to those who sent their apologies. Some of our musicians met on Saturday morning to prepare the music for the coming Easter Triduum. *Thanks one and all.*

I really like this description of the heart of our Church year:

We begin as Holy Thursday ends.

Thursday evening we enter into this Triduum together. After listening to the scriptures, we witness the washing of the feet. The priest celebrant goes down on his knees with a pitcher of water, a basin, and towels. Jesus gave us this image of what the Church is supposed to look like, feel like, act like.

Next we take up a collection, but not the usual collection (which is for the Church and the poor). The liturgy makes it clear that tonight's collection is only for the poor. So bring the money you have saved with Lenten fasting. Like the washing of feet, this is a rehearsal for Christian life. Then we celebrate the Eucharist. The evening liturgy has no ending: Whether we stay to pray awhile or leave, we are now in the quiet and peace and glory of the Triduum.



And we continue through Good Friday and Holy Saturday.

We gather quietly on Friday and listen to Scripture, including the Passion from the Gospel according to John. We pray at length for all the world's needs.

Then there is another once-a-year event: The holy cross is held up in our midst and we come forward one by one to do reverence . . . All the while we sing, not only of sorrow but of the glory of the cross.

We continue in fasting and prayer and vigil, in rest and quiet through Saturday. This Saturday for us is like God's rest at the end of creation. It is Christ's repose in the tomb.

TRIDUUM

Until the night between Saturday and Sunday.

Hungry now and full of excitement, the Church gathers in the darkness and lights a new fire and a great candle that will make this night bright for us. We listen to some of the most powerful

scriptures in our Bible: stories of creation, Abraham and Isaac, Moses and Miriam and the crossing of the sea, poems of promise and rejoicing, the Gospel of the Resurrection.

Then we pray to all our saints to stand with us and we go to the font and bless the waters. There the elect renounce evil, profess the faith of the Church, are baptized, and anointed. All of us renew our Baptismal promises. For us, these are the moments when death and life meet, when we reject evil and give our promises to God. All of this is in the communion we call the Church. So together we go to the table and celebrate the Easter Eucharist. Easter day begins and we are ready for Fifty Days of rejoicing.

And then on Easter Sunday Alleluia is our Song.

The Three Days to Save ©1991, 2009 Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 3949 South Racine Avenue, Chicago IL 60609. Web site: www.LTP.org. Adapted from original text written by Gabe Huck.

Admission Free

Book your tickets online now
Tickets are required for entry

THE MOOGERAH PASSION PLAY

Follow us on:

2021

Live at the Lake Theatre, Moogerah Dam

MARCH 27TH & 28TH | APRIL 2ND & 3RD
PERFORMANCES START AT 5PM

<https://moogerahpassionplay.org.au>

Dear All Saints Church,

The Moogerah Passion Play is a non-for-profit volunteer run organisation which performs the Easter Story every year on the beautiful shores of Lake Moogerah in the Scenic Rim region, Queensland.

Unfortunately COVID-19, like it did with many other organisations, churches included, has changed the way our play operates and we are therefore an entirely ticketed but still 100% free event. We would therefore love greatly if you could spread the word and encourage your congregation to attend over this year's Easter period, as it's a great opportunity for the whole family to experience the word of the Lord through the use of drama.

I do hope this piques your interest and that we will see you all at our upcoming performances. The dates have been provided in the attached poster.

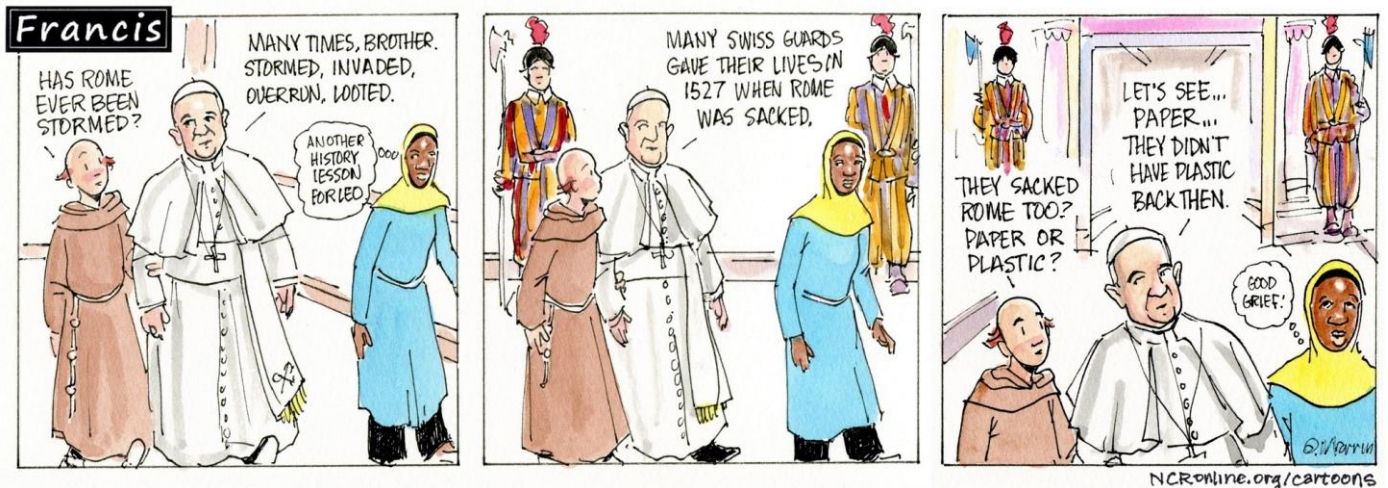
If you have any more questions about ticket purchases, etc., you can contact The Moogerah Passion Play Association President, Chris Young on 04 992 777 63.

Once again, we hope to see you during this year's performance season.

Kind Regards,

Gwen Behrendorff | MPPA Publicity Manager

7. FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP by Pat Marrin – 25th March 2021.



9. Did you know? The Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference decreed more than 35 years ago that Fridays other than Good Friday are not obligatory days of abstinence from meat, provided an alternative form of penance is practised:

Abstinence for meat, and fasting, are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. On all other Fridays of the year the law of the common practice of penance is fulfilled by performing any one of the following:

- (a) prayer – as for example, mass attendance; family prayer; a visit to a church or chapel; reading the Bible; making the stations of the cross; praying the rosary; or in other ways;*
- (b) self-denial – v.g. not eating meat; not eating sweets or dessert; giving up entertainment to spend time with the family; limiting food and drink so as to give to the poor of one's own country and elsewhere; or in other ways;*
- (c) helping others – v.g. special attention to someone who is poor, sick, elderly, lonely or overburdened, or in other ways.*

ACR LXII, 4, October 1985



Look upon us, O God,
and see the floods that devastate the earth.
Grant hope to our troubled hearts
and new life to the damaged land.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

(ROMAN MISSAL 2008)

8. During the 40 days of Lent, I have been offering three articles or visual reflections each Sunday of Lent for our reflection.



8a. Last Sunday Fr. Frank Brennan gave a homily for the Fifth Sunday of Lent. Some of us may be interested to listen:

<https://catholicoutlook.org/fr-franks-homily-21-march-2021/>

8b. I came across a short animated movie for children about the Passion of Jesus adapted from the gospel of Mark. It offers unexpected insights into Mark's Passion:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1ssgKEadTL8>



8c. Gerard O'Connell wrote a short piece that appeared in AMERICA, the weekly Jesuit journal. It is titled: "Pope Francis: Moral theology must concern reality and people, not just principles".

Francis' words caught my eye: *Moral theology cannot be only about principles and formulations, but must respond to the reality of the person in need.*

https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2021/03/23/pope-francis-speech-moral-theology-cdf-statement-240303?pnspid=1PFtqqBFXBCNSNaMSy5u414QiSNCHJuFiE0wFMfT&utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=8491



John
pastor,
Boonah Catholic community.