



Image from *Assembly* (Vol 14:3, March 1988), page 398,
from the Notre Dame Centre for Pastoral Liturgy.

Easter greetings to the members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on the Sixth Sunday of Easter.

1. REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY WORD.

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

Jane lives in Dublin, Ireland and is the *Laudato Si'* Officer with Tròcaire (the overseas development agency of the Catholic Church in Ireland). Prior to this, Jane was a parish pastoral worker with the Archdiocese of Dublin serving in parish ministry for many years. A graduate of St. Patrick's College Maynooth, Jane holds a Masters Degree in Theology (specializing in New Testament Scripture) as well as a Masters in International Development from Kimmage Development Studies Centre, Dublin.



Jane qualified as a Spiritual Director in 2015 having journeyed with Ignatian Spirituality through the Manresa Jesuit Centre for Spirituality, Dublin. Jane has spent various periods of time volunteering in India and through this has gained a keen interest in Eastern Christian spirituality. In 2017, she qualified as a yoga and meditation teacher and is passionate about the integration of these practices within Western Christianity.

In 2018, Jane embarked on a Climate Pilgrimage, carrying the message of *Laudato Si'* from Italy to Poland to the UN Climate Talks (COP24). This, she describes, as a real experience of 'ecological conversion' and since then she has dedicated her time to share the wisdom of *Laudato Si'* with others, especially in the areas of ecological education and spirituality.

For the past ten years, Jane and her friend Triona Doherty, have shared the writing of the DeepEnd column, reflections on the Sunday Gospels, in Intercom Magazine (Veritas, Dublin). Their first book, a collection of these scripture reflections, will be published by Messenger later this year: *The Deep End: A Journey with the Sunday Gospels in the Year of Luke*.

Her homily concludes:

The Easter Story is one of transformation and calls us to Hope. Greta Thunberg, the young Swedish climate activist, rightly says, "Hope is found in action. When we start to act, hope is everywhere. So instead of looking for hope - look for action. Then the hope will come." Signs of resurrection are all around us, where people are living out this call to love one another in hope-filled action.

- I find hope when I see parishes, signing up to be Eco-Parishes.
- I see love of neighbour when I see young people rising up to call politicians to account on the failure to address this crisis.

- I find hope when I see a local parish turning their lawn into a wildflower meadow.
- I see love of neighbour when the parish centre implements recycling stations.
- I find hope when people of faith come together to plant trees wherever they can.
- I see and hear love of neighbour when our liturgies lament the destruction of biodiversity and our prayers invite communities to respond to the cry of the earth.
- I find hope wherever people are living out the call of Pope Francis to a profound interior conversion where our relationship with God's creation is concerned.

So, this Easter Season, let us commit to transformation, to really reflect on how we emerge from this pandemic onto a different path. Like the psalmist today we are invited to "Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done wondrous deeds... Sing joyfully to the LORD... sing praise." (Psalm 98).

"Truly, much can be done!" (LS, 180).

Here is the link to her homily:

<https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/05092021>

The second reflection is from Julian McDonald, a Christian Brother in Australia.



The Jesus presented in John's gospel, giving his parting words to his disciples on the evening before his death, didn't mince his words. He gave them a command, not a mere recommendation, to love. All those wanting to walk in the footsteps of Jesus were expected to demonstrate that love was their distinguishing characteristic.

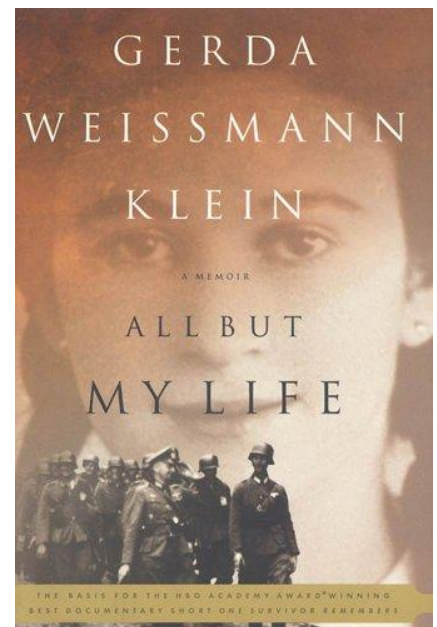
While we all know that we are made for love and that, as Christians, we are called to love everyone we encounter, we know from experience that there are people whom we find difficult to love. They rub us up the wrong way; we find their personalities, opinions and actions off-putting

and even abrasive and objectionable. Yet in today's first reading we hear John saying: "Let us continue to love one another because love comes from God" (1 John 4, 7). In our gospel-reading for

today, we are told that love is the Christian's mark of authenticity. Love is so central to the life of anyone who claims to be a disciple of Jesus that John identifies loving as the one and only commandment that Jesus prescribes for his followers: "This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you" (John 15, 12).

Still, there is something in us all that suggests strongly that we don't like commands and directives. We resent being told by others to do things, even if the one telling us is Jesus himself. Moreover, we don't like conditions being hung on us, and being told, in the same breath, that fulfilling them is the only way of demonstrating that we are genuine. But doesn't it sound like that when John attributes to Jesus the words: "You will live in my love if (my emphasis) you keep my commandments" (John 15, 10)? I dare to suggest that the "if" reflects the difficulty that translators have, and that Jesus (and John) are telling us that, whenever we reach out in love, we are reflecting the capacity for love that God implanted in the human heart and which Jesus modelled for all humanity in the way he lived and related. Jesus loved us unconditionally and surely does not want us to impose conditions on ourselves and on others as we and they reach out in love to one another.

And let's keep reminding ourselves that we Christians don't have a monopoly on the love market. All love reflects the love of God planted deep within our being. In a very moving memoir (*All But My Life*, 1957, Hill & Wang publishers), Gerda Weissman Klein recounts how she survived the atrocities of a concentration camp and the ordeal of a 300-mile death march from Germany to Czechoslovakia. Her lasting memory of the Holocaust is of her dear friend Ilse Kleinzahler, who had grown up with her and who was transported with her, both 16-year-olds, to a slave-labour factory in Grünberg, Germany. One day, on their daily march from their barracks to the factory, Ilse (whose name in Hebrew means "God's promise") came across a raspberry in the gutter. Unnoticed by the guards, she picked it up and kept it safely in her pocket all day long. Gerda relates: "Ilse, had carried it in her pocket - the temptation to eat it herself must have been incredible - and gave it to me that night. She had plucked a leaf through the barbed wire, washed it and gave it to me with that slightly bruised raspberry sitting gently on it. Most people think of the Holocaust as unrelieved horror. I want to remember how people helped each other, how there was friendship and love and caring." Of the 2000 young women who set out on that long march into Czechoslovakia, Gerda and Ilse were among the 300 who survived the ordeal. But Ilse died just three days before rescue came from the American



advancing forces. She was kicked in the head by a brutal SS guard, and died. However, on the very morning of the day died, Ilse had given Gerda a potato and had encouraged her to promise "to hold out for just one more week". Gerda, also tells of a female SS guard, Frau Kugler who had "the face and bark of a bulldog" but who proved to be "a warm caring human being" who dragged Gerda and three other sick girls to their work places and propped them up against their machines, thereby saving them from the notice of a German agent who had come to identify the sick to be sent off to the gas-chambers of Auschwitz. Gerda later wrote: "Frau Kugler put a lie to the lips of all those officers and guards who said they had no choice." Gerda's story is eloquent testimony to the fact

that genuine love finds expression in countless ways and in those in whom we least expect to find it.

As we know, Shakespeare wrote a play entitled *Love's Labour Lost*. We know from our own frailty that sometimes our love falls short, gets lost or goes unnoticed because we put the labour, ahead of the love. We know, too, that there are times when loving is difficult, when the people to whom we want to reach out are prickly, grumpy or very demanding. Moreover, they sometimes remind us that we are supposed to be kind and loving, without counting the cost. But we would be deluding ourselves if we thought that Jesus found it easy. The rejection, abuse, torture and humiliation inflicted on him over the days that led to his execution hardly gave him feelings of satisfaction. Yet the very fact that his love for all humanity was what motivated him to let his executioners have their way was the ultimate act of love. And Jesus calls us, too, to love, even when we are not buoyed up by the feelings we think ought to accompany loving.



Moreover, John, in his First Letter, reminds us that authentic love must find expression in action: “If anyone boasts of loving God, and has no time for his brothers and sisters, he or she is a liar” (1 John 4, 20). In his account of one of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, John underlines that love goes hand-in-hand with reaching out to our sisters and brothers. Jesus asked Peter three times: “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Three times, Peter attested that he did. And Jesus replied that the way to demonstrate that love was go out and “feed my lambs, tend my sheep and feed my sheep” (John 21, 15-17). Action speaks for loudly than words!

We cannot let this Sixth Sunday of Easter go by without giving some attention to the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles. This is a story of the way in which God’s Spirit was at work in bringing together Peter and Cornelius (a non-believer, but a very decent man) and leading them to collaborate in shaping a future that neither one had even imagined. Cornelius had a visitation from an angel who urged him to seek out a man called Peter, who lived 30 miles away in Joppa. Cornelius sent his servants off to locate Peter. Meanwhile, Peter, too, had a vision in which he was urged to eat foods that pious Jews refused to touch. On his three-fold refusal to give in to what he regarded as a temptation to evil, he was told firmly that nothing that God had created could possibly be regarded as unclean. Peter awoke from his dream to find Cornelius’ servants knocking on his door. Had he been true to his Jewish tradition Peter would have refused to have anything to do with a Gentile. However, he went with Cornelius’ servants and discovered a Roman centurion and his family who had been moved by God’s Spirit. This encounter had a profound impact on the early Christian community, for it led Peter and all the early Christians to realise that the only qualification required to follow Jesus is a readiness to love.

The [third reflection](#) for this Sunday is an Australian voice.

It is from the new series called *Australian Women Preach* which was launched on *International Women's Day*, 8th March 2021. It runs for thirty weeks leading into the Plenary Council which starts in October 2021. This initiative is from "The Grail in Australia" and "Women and the Australian Church".



The preacher for the Sixth Sunday of Easter is Danielle Anne Lynch.

Danielle is a theologian, musician, and teacher, working in Brisbane. Her work in systematic theology encompasses theology, music, and songwriting. She also works in mission, liturgy, religious identity and culture, and religious education. Danielle's book on music and theology *God in Sound and Silence: Music as Theology* was published in 2018.

Her album *Into Silence*, a collection of original songs exploring life in all its dimensions, including spiritual and faith aspects, was released in 2020 and is available on online platforms including Spotify, iTunes, and Youtube and is available in CD format.

The music on this podcast has been created by theologian, musician, songwriter, and teacher Danielle Anne Lynch. You can listen to more of Danielle's music on Spotify, Itunes or YouTube.

<https://soundcloud.com/andrea-dean/9-may-9-danielle-anne-lynch>



2. 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, Bernice Brault (nee Gilloway) and sick members of parish families and those beyond our parish boundaries.

A friend of the parish sent this mention of the people of India in their bulletin. It seems very appropriate to share. I have adapted it for our parish:

As India struggles with a record surge in COVID-19 deaths we pray for the sick and suffering, and for the response of their government. More than twenty priests from India are ministering in the Brisbane Archdiocese, and all are in regular contact with relatives in their home state of

Kerala. Kerala has escaped the worst of a COVID-19 second wave because of the work of the Church. Still the pandemic has caused record deaths across the Indian sub-continent and there is widespread reporting of a lack of medical supplies. We pray for the people of India, as their country is burdened with illness and with fear: heal those who are sick, support and protect their families and friends, and comfort their loved ones here in our communities.

On Wednesday, Auxiliary Bishop of Brisbane, Ken Howell, sent the following message through and suggested we might like to share in our bulletin:

We are all concerned about the pandemic situation in India. Some parishioners may wish to make a donation towards emergency relief and Caritas is providing an avenue for this.

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India has nominated this Friday, 7th May, as a day of prayer for the sick and suffering. You and your parishioners may wish to join in prayer with the Catholic people of India at your regular parish mass on this day or in some other way.

CARITAS APPEAL

Caritas Australia, in partnership with Caritas India, is providing support to vulnerable communities as the nation is devastated by massive increases in COVID-19 infection rates. The communities which Caritas works with are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19, with poor access to clean water and Personal Protective Equipment. We are accepting donations through our Asia Emergency Appeal which can be found here: <https://caritas.org.au/donate/emergency-appeals/asia-emergency-appeal/>

Please consider giving generously towards this as we support these vulnerable communities now, and assist them as they start to rebuild their lives in the future.

3. FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP by Pat Marrin – 4th May 2021.



4. We celebrated the funerals of two parishioners last week and we welcomed family and friends from across Australia and from overseas to both funerals.



Elvie Stenzel was a long-time parishioner and we extend our sympathy and condolences to her daughter, Mary Ellen Muller and her extended family. Elvie's grand-daughter Caitlin teaches here at our parish school.

Her funeral was celebrated on Tuesday last week, 4th April, at the Boonah church.

Elvie was present in the faith community at Sunday Mass, the rosary group and many activities in town for many decades.

May she rest in peace.

*"Faith is what gets you started. Hope is what keeps you going.
Love is what brings you to the end."*

We gather to give thanks for the life of

Elvie Winifred Stenzel

*Began life's journey on 20th January 1922
Called by Christ to Eternal Life on 27th April 2021*

Jay O'Neill was the husband of Mary O'Neill. Mary is one of our musicians at the Boonah church, playing both organ and piano as is required.

We extend our deepest condolences to Mary and their two children, Michael and Matthew. Matthew is in the UK and so the live-streaming enabled him to be present in real-time to his father's funeral.

Jay's funeral was celebrated on Wednesday last week, 5th April, also at the Boonah church.

May he rest in peace.

I also wish to acknowledge the care and presence of local funeral directors, Sommerville Bros., a local family owned and operated funeral service by Gaylene and Vic Salomon. *Thanks Helen, Vic, Leon and staff Joanne and Ramon.* As well, due to travel realities across the country and beyond, the staff of *Tasteful Transitions* enabled the live-streaming of both funerals for family and friends. *Thanks Fiona and Michelle.*

<https://www.somervillebros.com.au/>

<https://www.tastefultransitions.com.au/>

We gather to give thanks for the life of

James John O'Neill
"Jay"

29th October 1940 - 28th April 2021



All Saints' Parish, Boonah
Wednesday, 5th May 2021 ~ 10:30am
Presiding Priest ~ Fr John Fitz-Harbert

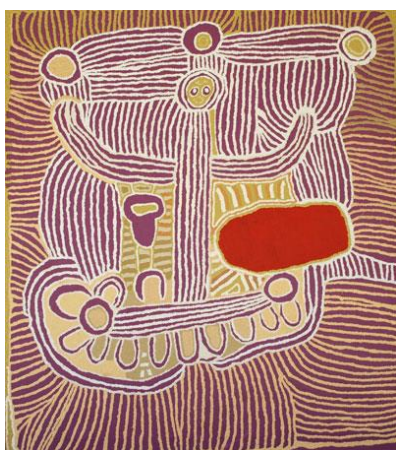
5. *Boonah Parish happenings . . .*

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:



Desert Eucharist by Linda Syddick Napaltjarri (b. 1937)

Saturday
5.00pm (Boonah church)

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

Our **WEEKDAY EUCHARIST** schedule for this week, 6th week of Easter, is:

Monday	10 th May	8.00am, Boonah church
Tuesday	11 th May	5.00pm, Boonah church followed by dinner at The Commercial Hotel (if open)
Wednesday	12 th May	6.00pm, Peak Crossing church followed by dinner at The Peak Pub
Thursday	6 th May	8.00am, Boonah church

▪ **EVERY SUNDAY** when we gather for the Sunday eucharist, there are baskets (of some or another) at the entrances of our two churches.

We are invited to bring a gift of non-perishable food or goods for people seeking help from our local St. Vincent de Paul.

There is a great response each Sunday from the assembly at Harrisville. *Thanks!*

There is also an emerging and positive response from the two assemblies who gather at Boonah. *Thanks!*

I know the local conference very much appreciates our support.

I was hungry and you fed me
Matthew 25



▪ **BOONAH ST. VINCENT DE PAUL NEEDS OUR HELP!**

There is an opportunity to help raise funds to support the work of our local conference within the Boonah and Fassifern district.

What is it? To provide **GATEKEEPERS** and assist with parking duties at the upcoming Boonah Show, Friday 28th May and Saturday 29th May.

What am I asked to do? Donate 2 or 3 hours of your time on Friday or Saturday, 28th and 29th May.

When? Between 5.00am and 8.00pm on either day as a team member.

Who? You, your relatives, your friends and neighbours.

John Greatrex would love to hear from you by SUNDAY 2nd MAY 2021:

07 5463 4100

0407 962 625

j.greatrex@bigpond.com



▪ **THANK YOU** to all who support the weekly Sunday collection. Your gifts enable the parish to meet its expenses and to function like an everyday household. If you would like to give weekly or monthly in a planned way, please see me.

The new envelopes for the new giving year have arrived. So we will be getting them out to regular givers soon.

A few people have seen me about giving electronically. Thank you! Please see me for the simple paperwork if you would like to give this way.

▪ **THANK YOU** to those amongst us who, week by week, *send out* the FlockNote invites, *prepare* the churches for the celebration of Mass, *coordinate* the arrival and departure of the assembly especially on Sundays, *exercise* liturgical ministry in necessary ways (readers, sacristans, servers, organists, PowerPoint preparer and operators), and *clean* the churches after the celebration of the liturgy as we are required to do in this time of COVID-19.



▪ I have shared in a previous bulletin that when I was in year one at Banyo Seminary in 1986, some of us travelled to Inala Parish for a concert by Peter Kearney. On that evening, Peter sang his own song *Unless the Grain of Wheat Falls*. It is rich in imagery and simple in melody. It is one of my favourite Australian compositions.

You might enjoy listening to it. The back-story is on the link as well as the lyrics:

<https://peterkearney.bandcamp.com/track/72-unless-the-grain-of-wheat-falls>

You might like to consider supporting the work of Peter. There are links to his music and products which make great gifts! Your purchase also supports a local musician!

6. Fr. Ron Rolheiser OMI is a well-known writer. He has a weekly reflection that draws from past and present reflections. Thanks for feedback from a few readers who enjoyed his reflection last week. This reflection was penned on 19th August 2007:

OUR UNFINISHED SYMPHONY

Our life is a short time in expectation, a time in which sadness and joy kiss each other at every moment. There is a quality of sadness that pervades all the moments of our life. It seems that there is no such thing as a clear-cut pure joy, but that even in the happiest moments of our existence we sense a tinge of sadness. In every satisfaction, there is an awareness of

limitations. In every success, there is the fear of jealousy. Behind every smile, there is a tear. In every embrace, there is loneliness. In every friendship, distance. And in all forms of light, there is the knowledge of surrounding darkness. But this intimate experience in which every bit of life is touched by a bit of death can point us beyond the limits of our existence. It can do so

by making us look forward in expectation to that day when our hearts will be filled with perfect joy, a joy that no one shall take away from us.
(Henri Nouwen)

In this life there is no such a thing as a clear-cut, pure joy! I want to reiterate those words, coined by Henri Nouwen, in the light of some criticisms that I received to a recent column which quoted Anita Brookner saying that, in marriage, the first duty of each partner is to “console the other for the fact that we cannot not disappoint each other.”

That line provoked a number of critical reactions, ranging from: “Not true!”, “Unduly pessimistic!”, “He should stick to sacred rather than secular sources!” to “I am worried that this can give the wrong signal to young people who are getting married, suggesting that marriage will disappoint them!”

I appreciate the criticism, especially the last point, but feel that the real message was missed. In essence, I wasn't commenting on marriage, but on life in general, where, sadly, our fantasy of finding some “messiah” to take away all of our loneliness tends to be precisely what makes us too restless to remain happily inside of our commitments, including marriage.

I'm not so worried about sending a bad signal to a young couple contemplating marriage if I tell them that inside of marriage they will not find a panacea for their loneliness. I am more worried that I would be sending them the wrong message if, like our romantic novels and movies, I should give them the impression that the final answer to every loneliness lies in simply finding the right mate. Over-expectation and subsequent disillusionment kills a lot of marriages. If I marry someone because I nurse the fantasy that this other person is the final solution to my loneliness, I am doomed not just to be disappointed but also to place every kind of unrealistic and unjust expectations on my partner. Only God can fully measure up.

St. Augustine began his autobiography with the now-famous line: “You have made us for

yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you!” Thomas Aquinas taught that “every choice is a renunciation” and that is why commitment, particularly a life-long commitment in marriage, is so difficult. Karl Rahner famously stated: “In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable, we finally learn that here in this life all symphonies must remain unfinished.” And those of us who are old enough remember the haunting line in the old *Salve Regina* prayer: “To thee to we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.”

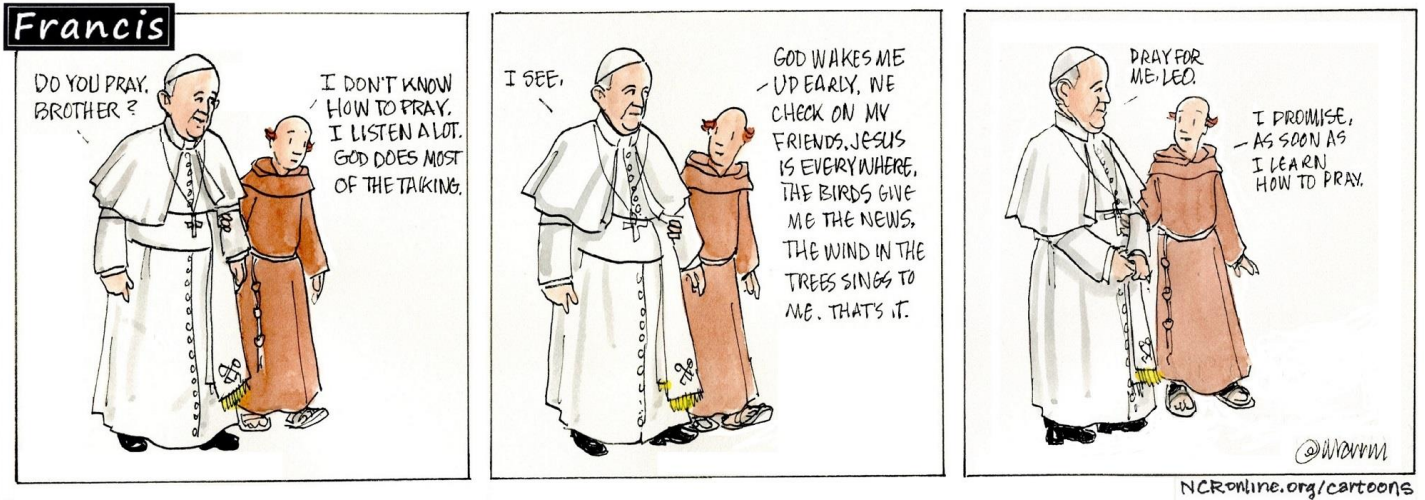
What each of these captures, in essence, is precisely what Nouwen states, that in this life there is not such a thing as clear-cut pure joy and that we will live more peacefully and happily if we can accept that and not put false pressure on life, on our loves ones, and on God, to give us the full symphony right now.

Every day of their lives, my parents prayed words to the effect that, this side of eternity, they were “mourning and weeping in a valley of tears”. It didn't make them sad, morbid, or stoic. The opposite: It gave them the tools that they needed to accept life's real limits and the real limits and imperfections within community, church, family, and marriage. They were happier for knowing and accepting that.

My worry is that today we aren't equipping our own children in the same way. Instead, too often, we are helping them nurse the false expectation that, if they do it right, they can have it all already in this life. All that is needed is to have the right body, the right career, the right city, the right neighbourhood, the right friends, the right vacations, and the right soul mate and they can have the full symphony here and now.

It's not to be had, and Anita Brookner's maxim that in marriage we “cannot not disappoint each other” simply states, in secular language, that no one, no matter how good, can be God for somebody else.

7. FRANCIS, THE COMIC STRIP by Pat Marrin – 6th May 2021.



8. Last week we acknowledged the 75th anniversary of the Pilbara Strike.



On the 15th May (next Saturday) the Church universal celebrates the 130th anniversary of the great letter of Pope Leo XXIII: *Rerum Novarum*.

Last Sunday the ABC's *Soul Search* hosted by Meredith Lake was broadcast.

It was titled: **THE POPE AND THE WORKING MAN'S PARADISE: RERUM NOVARUM AT 130.**

From *Soul Search's* frontpage:

Once upon a time, Australia was described as 'a workingman's paradise.' But does that ring true – either in the past, or now?

Work can be a difficult issue, from the conditions we work in, to the pay we receive, to the place of work in our lives as human beings.

On *Soul Search* today, we're examining work, and at one of the world's most influential discussions of it. 130 years ago this month, Pope Leo XIII put out a statement on capital and labour. Known as *Rerum Novarum*, or its English translation 'A spirit of revolutionary change,' the encyclical was a controversial document, even in 1891, and it had a big influence here in Australia.



To explain the spirit of the times and the context that gave rise to Pope Leo XIII's statement, Meredith Lake speaks with Dr Bruce Duncan, Redemptorist priest, , an expert in Catholic social thought and lecturer at Yarra Theological Union in Melbourne.

Then we look at the labour movement in Australia, especially during the crucial decade of the 1890s, and into the 1990s with the establishment of the basic wage by Justice Higgins in the Harvester case. Professor Michael Tate, diocesan priest of the Church of Hobart, whose own public life has also spanned law, politics and the church, explains more.



We've been looking back at the workingman's paradise, and the establishment of a basic wage for white males – but what about all the work done by women? It's something on Julie Macken's mind, as an advocate and a feminist, seeking social justice with the Catholic church today. Julie is a Research and Project Officer with the Justice and Peace Office, Church of Sydney.

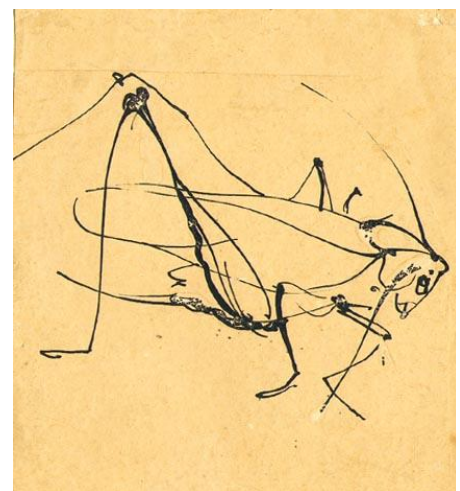
It is a thoroughly enjoyable and enlightening 54 minutes:

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/soul-search/the-pope-and-the-working-man%E2%80%99s-paradise:-rerum-novarum-at-130/13322792>

9. POEM:

Mary Oliver
The Summer Day

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean--
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life?



10. *Church in India celebrates announcement of first canonization of lay person*
Nirmala Carvalho, 5th May 5, 2021



Statue of Blessed Devasahayam in St. Francis Xavier Cathedral, Diocese of Kottar in India. (Credit: Kumbalam/Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 3.0).)

MUMBAI, India – India’s newest saint is “a model a beacon for us and for future generations,” according to one bishop.

Nilakandan Pillai was born in 1712 in what is now the Indian state of Tamil Nadu, in the south of the Indian subcontinent. When he was baptized, he took the name “Lazarus” – Devasahayam in the local Tamil language. He stopped using the name “Pillai” after his conversion, since it was a Hindu caste name.

After his conversion, Devasahayam suffered severe harassment and persecution – including beatings and imprisonment – until he was finally shot and killed in 1752.

His body is now at Saint Francis Xavier Cathedral in the Diocese of Kottar.

“We know already – and it is taken by the people – that Devasahayam is a martyr and a saint. it is only on the official announcement of the Church that we were waiting,” said Bishop Nazarene Soosai of Kottar.

“More and more people come to this place, having a deep faith in our martyr Devasahayam, who had a deep faith in God,” the bishop told Crux.

“This has a universal significance, as much for the Church in India and Asia. Today we are called to exhibit in our own surroundings a deep faith in God, and I am particularly happy that the Church has come forward to canonize a lay person, the first lay Indian saint,” he said.

Soosai said the canonization is especially important for the modern situation in India, where “fanaticism and fascism are on the rise.”

“Ordinary people have shown by their lives and by their deaths the deep faith they had in Christ. This should be highlighted more and more rather than – as often we highlight – priests, religious and founders of congregations. Ordinary people live worthy Christian lives amidst their hardships and trials everywhere in the world,” the bishop continued.

“Therefore, acknowledging the faith that Devasahayam had shown by his death should be taken as a model today in India and even for countries in Asia where we are unable to come out openly to proclaim our Christian faith,” he added. “I believe he is a model, a beacon, for us and for future generations.”

Jesuit Father A. X. J. Bosco, a Dalit human rights activist, also told Crux Devasahayam’s canonization was important for today’s India.

“We are in a time of persecutions; many pastors especially from the Pentecostal churches are beaten up, arrested and thrown into prison, nuns including Mother Teresa sisters are attacked; chapels and houses of prayer are damaged; anti-conversion legislations are enacted; there is no religious freedom; Christian NGOs who are doing charitable works are deprived of FCRA [Foreign Contribution Regulation Act]. At this juncture, Blessed Devasahayam, who faced persecutions boldly, is a great exemplar for Christians who are bearing the brunt of Hundutva [Hindu nationalism]; he shows the way of a faithful disciple who never hesitated to follow Jesus carrying his cross,” the priest said.

Bosco also expressed his relief that the caste name “Pillai” was no longer being used on Vatican documents, as it was before Devasahayam’s beatification, saying otherwise “it might have demeaned the status of sainthood, and Blessed Dhevasagyam instead of being a blessing and inspiration, would have become a sign of shame and division, because caste is a sin and to adhere to caste means rejecting the values of the Gospels and our Indian constitutions.”

He also said he hoped the upcoming canonization would be a blow to clericalism in the Church.

“In the beginning of the Church, there was no distinction as clergy and laity. Leadership in the Church was shared by all,” he said.

He said the canonization of a lay person may initiate a change in the Indian Church concerning leadership.

“We may start appreciating and encouraging lay leadership and the hierarchy, which is rigid, may be inspired or forced to create spaces for laity to share the power structure,” he said.

Father Devasagaya Raj M. Zackarias, the former national secretary for the bishops’ commission on scheduled castes and scheduled tribes – those taking up the lowest rungs in Hinduism’s caste system – said the upcoming canonization is “an invitation for all of us to bear witness in this trying time.”

“From the time of the missionaries there were so many lay faithful who lived a saintly life,” he told Crux.

“The universal Church will continue to recognize the lay faithful who live simple committed Christian lives in the remote villages,” the priest said.

Source:

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-asia/2021/05/church-in-india-celebrates-announcement-of-first-canonization-of-lay-person/>

11. A BLESSING FOR MOTHERS:

We bless you and we praise you,
God of our mothers!
You are the God of Eve,
mother of all the living.
You are the God of Sarah,
who laughed at childbearing in old age.
You are the God of Rebekah
who favored her second-born, Jacob.
You are the God of Leah,
mother of tribes,
and of Rachel,
who mourned and wrestled and won.
You are the God of Hannah,
who strongly sang your praise for
Samson,
and of Naomi
who faithfully walked with Ruth.
You are the God of Elizabeth,
who bore the Baptist
and of Ann, the grandmother of Jesus.
You are the God of Mary,
Spirit’s spouse and mother of our
Savior,
given by Christ on the cross to be the
mother of us all.

We thank you, God, for the gift of our mothers,
for grandmothers and godmothers and
mothers-in-law, too.
Send your Holy Spirit upon our mothers,
at whose breasts we were fed,
by whose hands we were cleaned and
clothed, at times corrected,
in whose laps we learned to sing and speak
and play and pray,
at whose side we hear your word and
celebrate your mysteries.
Heal their pains and disappointments.
Forgive all that needs to be forgiven.
Give to them the good that they have given
others.
Welcome to your bosom those who have died.
Fill this world, O God, with a mother’s love!
We ask this through your Son Jesus Christ,
who desires to gather us together
as a hen gathers her brood under her wings.
He lives and reigns with you and the Holy
Spirit,
one God forever and ever.
Amen.

12. Fr. Brendan Byrne is an Australian Jesuit priest in Melbourne. He is a renowned scripture scholar and recently penned this piece which some of us will find illuminating, revealing and both personally and communally inviting as we edge closer to the Plenary Council in early October this year.

Truth-telling and the Plenary Council

Fr Brendan Byrne SJ | 03 May 2021

Because Anzac Day fell on a Sunday, I found myself, at the end of a parish Mass singing *Advance Australia Fair*.

Reading both verses projected on the screen brought home to me for the first time how impossible it would be for Indigenous members of the community to identify with the text. 'For those who've come across the seas, We've boundless



plains to share'. But who are 'We'? Presumably, 'those who've come across the seas' are the waves of immigrants since World War Two. But what about those who 'came across the seas' since 1788 and took possession of those 'boundless plains'? Are they the 'We'? I suspect so. But what about those who were here for tens of thousands of years before them and had those lands taken on the basis (*terra nullius*) that they simply didn't exist? Can we coopt them into the 'We' simply by singing over and over these untrue and largely fatuous lines?

These questions turned my mind to the Plenary Council, a topic and a prospect on which John Warhurst has been providing informed and thoughtful suggestions of late in *Eureka Street*. (<http://www.eurekastreet.com.au>)

REGAIN TRACTION

There is no question that the Council has lost most of any traction it had in the minds and expectations of Catholics over the past couple of years. The biggest, albeit unmentioned, question among its episcopal promoters must be how to regain that traction to an extent sufficient to allow the meeting to respond at least in some degree to the aims originally set out for it.

My sense is that this will only be the case if a genuinely prophetic element enters into the agenda and if that prophetic call bears not on internal matters – governance, clerical celibacy, and so forth – but on pressing issues of Australia society as a whole. In the wake of the abuse crisis and the Royal Commission, the church will not gain credibility by focusing on itself. It will only win back respect by directing out beyond itself and its more domestic concerns the love – of God and of neighbour – that its *Instrumentum Laboris* speaks of again and again.

There is one concern that the Catholic community by its very nature is well equipped – indeed essentially equipped – to address. The ‘original sin’ staining the national conscience is the cost inflicted on the original inhabitants to gain possession of ‘those boundless plains to share’. The massacres, lasting well over a century, extending to every state and territory, are well documented; the evidence is uncontestable and digitally accessible for all who care to know. Genocide is not a term to throw around lightly and ought be carefully defined. But there is no doubt that expectations and in some cases hopes for the extinguishment of the indigenous race existed for decades, well into the last century.

No person living today bears guilt for what took place generations ago. Guilt is not the issue. In this sense to speak of an ‘original sin’ is inexact in terms of the classic theology of Original Sin, itself a doctrine sorely in need of credible reformulation.

NATIONAL ACKNOWLEDGMENT NEEDED

What is required is national acknowledgment of the cost – the organised massacres, including women and children; the dispossession of land; the break-up of families and communities; the imposition of culture, albeit in some cases with good intentions. We possess our ‘golden soil’ and ‘wealth for toil’ at a terrible cost – a cost not paid by ‘we’ who sing the song but by those the song neither names nor includes.

In more than a dozen places the *Instrumentum Laboris* does call for conversion; in fact, conversion was the subject of one of the six thematic papers drawn up earlier in the process. But, when one is profiting, as all contemporary Australians are, from a great wrong that has been done, conversion means, at least as a first step, acknowledging the cost. The original cost cannot be repaid but its lingering virulent effects, all too well known, in the indigenous community, can be owned and, in consultation and dialogue, addressed.

Conversion, after all, is central to response to the Gospel, the presupposition for the advance of the reign of God that the Church is tasked to proclaim. If, as the *Instrumentum* regretfully acknowledges (§47), the sacrament of Reconciliation has fallen into desuetude, that is probably because its totally private focus over recent centuries and its preoccupation with sexual sin have ceased to strike ordinary Catholics, now much more educated, as in any way relevant to the eradication of evil on societal scale.

Yet reconciliation lies at the heart of Christian faith. It is the core business of the Church. God was in Christ, freely reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor 5:18), and the task of the Church is to proclaim that gracious and supremely costly offer to humankind.

LIVING RECONCILIATION

But reconciliation with God is not the end of the process; reconciliation, as made clear in the parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt 18:21–35), is something the reconciled must live out and pass on. Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount instructs the disciples, ‘If you are taking your gift to the altar and remember that your brother or sister has something against you, first go and be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift’ (Matt 5:23–24). We know our indigenous brothers and sisters have something against us. Can we go to our altars and celebrate our liturgies without first attending to that reconciliation or at least

committing to do so? Would St Paul say to us, with the same devastating simplicity as he said to the Corinthians in view of similar social neglect, 'It's not the Lord's Supper that you're celebrating' (1 Cor 11:20)?

The document does make frequent mention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, acknowledging the antiquity of their existence in the land, the richness of their culture and wisdom, as well as the suffering that has been inflicted upon them by those ignorant of the richness of their culture (§§39–40, 76, 80, 88, 100, 177). A major section towards the end (§§176ff) is headed 'Renewing Our Solidarity with First Australians and All Those on the Margins'. The document goes on to quote at length Pope John Paul II's address at Alice Springs in 1986, which still reads tellingly today. But one may question whether lumping indigenous people together with other marginalised groups as a problem to be attended to is respectful of their unique status.

At this point (§178) the document offers a promising, albeit tentative, suggestion:

'Despite a range of successful initiatives with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by some dioceses, religious institutes and Church agencies, the Plenary Council may prioritise the question of how the Church can include and empower First Peoples to take their place more fully within Church and society'.

It is not clear to me how the two parts of this statement hang together – how the 'range of successful initiatives' might somehow make unnecessary the need for the Council 'to prioritise the question'. But at least the suggestion that the issue might become a priority for the Council is a significant admission – as is the further statement (§179) that the Council 'is an opportunity for the Catholic Church in Australia to make a public response to the (Uluru) Statement from the Heart, which called for ... 'a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history''.

TRUTH-TELLING IS ESSENTIAL

'Truth-telling' is surely the essence of the matter, as it was in South Africa, Rwanda, and other instances of significant reconciliation. The Church has not found it easy to accept the truth brought home to us by the Royal Commission. Yet the Church constantly hears the Gospel reminder, 'You will know the truth and the truth will make you free' (John 8:32). Of all institutions, the Church should be the first to acknowledge the painful truth about the conquest and occupation of the 'boundless plains', especially who paid the cost. The Church that venerates the cost paid by Jesus in bringing divine reconciliation to the world is well equipped to take up the prophetic task of bringing home this truth to the wider society of our land.

There are reiterated calls towards the end of the document for boldness and courage, for speaking out with *parresia* – a further Johannine term (§§163, 197). The faithful are invited 'to live fully the implications of their baptism in all dimensions of their lives ... so that they might more effectively share in Christ's priestly, prophetic and kingly office in the Church and in the world' (§86). Of that triad – prophet, priest, and king – one tends to hear a lot more about the priestly and kingly than the prophetic. Yet if the Plenary Council is not prepared seriously to take up the prophetic dimension of Christian life, then it will itself be settling for the 'life of mediocrity' that, in the words of John Paul II, it deplores (§86).

'Prioritising' the question of 'how the Church can... empower First Peoples' (§178) will mean including it among four major issues that the Council must address if it is to have any credibility both within itself and in Australian society as a whole. I would list these as

- repentance for the legacy of clergy sexual abuse;
- the situation of women in church and society (including domestic violence);
- the environmental crisis;
- and, as addressed here, truth-telling about the original occupation of the land.

MAJOR AGENDA ITEM

The Council must be prepared to make hearing from those entitled to speak on these issues major items on the agenda, relegating more 'domestic' matters to secondary status.

Yes, in each case but especially in the last, it will be controversial and divisive. But that has always been the way of the prophetic from Amos and Jeremiah, to Jesus and beyond. To quote Paul again, 'Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine' (1 Cor 11:19). But at least controversy will stir interest and give hope of dispelling the apathy currently threatening to frustrate the enterprise as a whole. It may even help the Church regain some of the credibility that has been lost in spades in recent years.



Next Sunday we celebrate the solemnity of the Ascension and the following Sunday, Pentcost!

John

pastor

Boonah Catholic community.